

The posthumous transformation of forgotten or unknown muses into contemporary fashion icons

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Abstract

The history of fashion is graced by career-long legendary collaborations between *couturiers* and society figures praised as their muses, whereas more modern times highlight such liaisons replaced by the more pragmatic and temporary brand endorsement (Barron, 2021). Cultural references honoured with a style icon status throughout their lifetime such as David Bowie or Grace Jones can still be noticed influencing fashion collections in the recent years, indicating their relevance before a contemporary audience. A distinctive pattern can be noted at John Galliano who extracts lesser known human subjects from the past, honouring them through tribute collections. As highlighted by Luisa Casati and Renée Perle, Galliano's sources of inspiration appear either fallen into oblivion or withdrawn from the public life, with virtually inexistent prospects of becoming historically significant. Years after Galliano honoured them, his muses are recognised as standalone historical figures and fashion icons, gracing the collections of other designers. Such evolution indicates the opportunity to investigate the processes through which the fashion system can posthumously launch style icons whom a contemporary audience finds relevant to its values. The theoretical framework for the thesis includes Bourdieu's (1979) and Barthes' (1990) works on fashion as a field and a system, Benjamin's Tiger Leap thesis, Dyer's (1979) theory of the star as a sign, and Turner's (2008) observations on how celebrities end up recognised as symbols. A multi-method research design follows the establishment of Luisa Casati and Renée Perle as fashion icons. The methodology includes a field analysis recreating a designer's research efforts, a visual analysis of all muse-inspired imagery cited within garments and promotional tools, a content analysis of press reviews attained by the studied collections. The muses' public visibility demanded a content analysis of media headlines dedicated to them outside the fashion system, as well as a social media analysis of the #luisacasati and the #reneeperle hashtags. A field analysis of all the aforementioned forces is further employed to detect and trace the fashion system's influence in posthumously launching cultural icons.

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The moment in which I received Prof. Mike Featherstone's mail in which he accepted to be my thesis supervisor is still alive in my heart. Stuck in my studio in Nice during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, I remember crying over the phone with my mother, not knowing if I can still move to London. His mail arrived like a beam of hope. Before embarking in my MPhil journey, I told myself that even if I don't get to become a professional researcher, I can hardly think of a more uplifting experience than studying eccentricity and those whose aesthetic vision is yet to be properly honoured. It will be the best gift I could have offered myself.

Throughout these four years, I realised that my bond with Prof. Mike Featherstone and Dr. Tomoko Tamari has been indeed providential, for more than their contribution to my relocation. Every conversation and meeting unveiled new and new angles through which my research could be addressed, and thus, their guidance allowed me to discover not only disciplinary fields, but also a sense of purpose and significance. My professional identity has always been that of a storyteller, but through each reference they recommended, I discovered new ways in which my work could be transformed into a mission. As scholarly works overlapped with life stories, I discovered new facets to authenticity, as well as the sensitivity and depth of misunderstood spirits. Clashing with self-sabotaging perfectionism, the enriching insights I came across by following each angle revealed through our conversation transformed me into a very problematic student who constantly threw her babies away with the water. As deep as my gratitude goes to them, so does my guilt and shame for every draft that didn't look like the previous ones.

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I. Introduction

Fashion gained its status as an art form by accommodating a conceptual dimension which called upon various societal issues, extending the technicalities of a craft towards the transmission of meaning (Geczy, Karaminas, 2012:1) The ability of fashion to promote various values has been brilliantly captured by Hebdige (1979:13) in his analogy raised over how aesthetics function for ideologies the way brick and mortar schools facilitate learning. The discourse affirmed by fashion designers connects fragments of imagery to aesthetic reinterpretations. Cultural framing further allows extending the message aimed through their work to reach a given ideology. Outside of abstract values, designers have also used their work to pay tribute to certain individuals who inspired them. The present thesis is dedicated to the fashion designers' influence in promoting lesser known figures from the past who haven't organically prevailed as historical figures and facilitating their transformation into standalone cultural references.

1. Background

Interviews with fashion designers, as well as monographs of fashion brands signal a predilection towards exploring references from the past as potential sources of inspiration. Upon his appointment as Creative Director of Christian Dior, John Galiano decided to become acquainted to his new responsibilities by visiting the *Maison's* archives (McDowell, 1997). Dries Van Noten, however, opted for researching and reviving decades-old sketches of *couturiers* such as Madeleine Vionnet (Blanks and Frankel, 2017). Known as fashion archeology, such strategy has been accepted as what Bourdieu calls a 'collective practice' (1990:54).

As observed by Finkelstein (2007), fashion operates on a continuous recycling of ideas. The reuse of past references finds an encouraging terrain in the broad acceptance of innovation within the fashion industry. Outside creation, innovation can also be achieved when engaging in alterations or adjustments of existing works (Burns et al, 2015). Such interventions can be noted in various processes from technique to the integration of meaning, including transhistorical associations (Geczy and Karaminas, 2012:102)

Literature in fashion sociology describes innovation in relation to the impact of a designer's work. Since the classical theories of fashion, the reception of innovation in fashion has preoccupied scholars more than the processes behind its creation. From a *bourdieusian* perspective, the influence designers reach through their collections falls within the structuring effects of their *habitus*. The source of inspiration represents a manifestation of the designers' critical abilities reaching intimate processes such as cognition, amongst others. Therefore, from a *bourdieusian* perspective, the selection of a source of inspiration qualifies as the structured dimension of the *habitus*. However, the impact they may have on the media visibility attained by the source of inspiration can be regarded as a structuring effect.

Returning to past references can be assimilated as a marker of innovation, as such practice is usually noted with the avant-garde (Vinken, 2004). Through his Tiger's Leap thesis, Walter Benjamin argues that images returning from the past must echo the present's own concerns. (Bruzzi, Church Gibson, 2000:99) Values dominating an epoch can objectively be located within an analysis of its macroenvironment (Kim et al, 2011:18). However, the tendency to conceal pressuring concern leads to a spectacle society preoccupied by superfluosity (Evans, 2005).

Lesser known figures from the past are more likely to belong to an *ahistoric* past (Lehmann, 2000) which captures tabus rather than socially accepted values. When reflecting on Benjamin's remark, fashion archeology can reach sources that did not get a chance to ever been forgotten, since their creativity did not find a rightful echo within epochs that are said to be marked by other figures. The ahistorical past is more likely to belong to outcasts (Bruzzi, Church Gibson, 2000:106). Exclusion from the officially documented history stands out as a consequence to the refusal to adhere to society's convention, a position assimilated to authenticity (Bell, 1978:19). In regards to self-expression, outcasts exhibit styles which have not been integrated into the mainstream aesthetics recorded across history. Connecting to self-expressions that emerged outside of documented aesthetics, ahistorical references provide an opportunity for designers to access a wealth of creativity less accessible through conventional research routes.

Our times regards eccentricity as a matter of agency and of making one's voice heard (Arnold, 2001, Kaiser, 2013). If revived, ahistorical references are likely to be integrated as a contestation of the spectacle society (Bruzzi, Church Gibson, 2000:94), touching upon the perennial yearning of affirming one's identity.

2. Rationale

Fashion has become a key mediator for art throughout the twentieth century, delivering a valuable compendium for its semiotic content to an uninitiated audience (Geczy, Karaminas, 2012:1). Through its cultural influence, fashion may affirm a similar impact to that of biopics which stand out as the most common cultural products facilitating the posthumous celebration of forgotten figures from the past. Honoured through the 2016 biopic 'Hidden Figures', Katharine Jackson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson, the three African-American women mathematicians who helped launch rockets for NASA during the Space Age are eloquent examples for the power of film to connect the wider audience to remarkable, yet lesser known individuals from the past. The cultural influence of biopics provided a fertile basis for an argument in favour of honouring forgotten or unknown figures from the past through a more accessible medium. Limitations to such argument can be connected to the wider audience reached through film, in contrast to the affinity towards high fashion.

Frida Kahlo's transformation into a contemporary fashion icon reflects the potential cultural impact created when the wider audience are introduced to style references they were less familiarised with. As the most expensive Latin artist fetching \$1.5 million at a 1990 Sotheby's auction, Frida was far from an obscure figure. However, it is Julie Taymor's 2002 movie starring Salma Hayek which can be credited as the catalyst behind the Fridamania phenomenon, popularising the Mexican painter to an audience who was less acquainted to her art. Four years prior to Salma Hayek's 2002 interpretation of Frida Kahlo, the Mexican painter has been honoured by Jean-Paul Gaultier in his SS 1998 collection. Since the release of the Salma Hayek movie, Frida's style has been celebrated in collections launched by Kris Van Assche (2008), Riccardo Tisci (2010), Valentino (2014), Missoni (2015), and most recently, Christian Dior (2024).

Frida Kahlo curated a deeply personal style developed around the complexity of a dual heritage to be further nurtured by her political affiliation. Introduced to relieve the pain brought by her disability elements such as corsets have now transformed Frida into the dark muse of contemporary designers. Dated 1933, a letter to a friend has Frida noting how her look was imitated by what she described as 'gringa-women' (Newman, 2019:52). Five years later, fellow Surrealist Elsa Schiaparelli created La Robe Madame Rivera (idem, 55). Despite such appreciation, Frida Kahlo wouldn't necessarily confirm the influence of a trendsetter. Furthermore, from Elsa Schiaparelli to Jean Paul Gaultier, no fashion collection appears to have evoked Frida's style.

Though Jean Paul Gaultier's predates Salma Hayek's interpretation, the fashion industry holds no merit for Frida's revival as a cultural icon. The Fridamania phenomenon can be regarded as representative to the fashion industry's response to potential references from the past whom its audience had recently become acquainted to. However, thanks to John Galliano's vision, the fashion industry can be credited for reviving and popularising Luisa Casati and Renée Perle.

As previously argued, fashion design can be regarded as a medium through which an individual's legacy can be transformed into semiotic content. When honouring muses from the past, Benjamin's thesis of the Tiger's Leap suggests that fashion uses such references to draw attention around concerns challenging its times. Through their own status and popularity, designers present such references as relevant to a contemporary audience. Furthermore, they also extend that person's cultural significance from the fields in which they gained prominence to fashion. Should designers replicate the arguments through which stakeholders involved in the production of biopics select the lesser known figures to honour through film, their sources of inspiration could evolve as fashion icons.

Literature on biopics highlights promising analytical opportunities through which a popular medium such as film can create contemporary icons from individuals extracted from the past. Approaches to research and methodologies can be therefore applied to the fashion industry. Cloarec's (2018) analysis of three biopics of Margaret Thatcher reveal how the same individual can be brought to life through three distinctive characters. While some works focused on the Head of the UK Government, 'The Iron Lady' (2012) equally explored the vulnerable old lady living with dementia whom, as the supermarket scene shows, some of the younger generations might not recognise. The Fridamania phenomenon emphasises how the same imagery can inspire more than one designer and consequently, determine the creation and simultaneous circulation of

multiple meanings attached to the same visual elements (Aragon, 2014) The biopic highlights the challenge of combining what really happened with the impression left by those particular events (Moulin, 2016).

As previously argued, lesser known figures from the past are likely to be remembered as outcasts. Consequently an accurate understanding of their potential legacy cannot be achieved without identifying the elements of contrast to the approved values of their time. Social factors characterising the lesser figures' times stand out as fundamental for understanding their prospective historical impact, as highlighted by Tweg's (2000) analysis on how 'Dance with a Stranger' (1985) recreates Ruth Ellis' juridical legacy as the last woman to be executed in the UK. If translated in fashion, social factors are essential to emphasise the lesser known figures' position to their own times with a direct impact on how relevant they get to be perceived by ours, given the effect of the aforementioned 'outcast' label.

3. Research scope

In current speech, the term '*fashion muse*' appears to circulate in connection to the inspiration one may generate through their individual sense of style. The impact of fashion muses on society has preoccupied fashion historians (Steele, 2005, Arnold, 2001, Breward, 2004), rather than sociology scholars. Most recent research includes Barron's (2021) parallel between the historical collaboration between *couturiers* and muses and the contemporary brand endorsement liaisons between designers and models or influencers. Barron's (2021) study raises a noteworthy peculiarity. The sometimes career-long collaboration between *couturiers* and muses, duos amongst which he mentions Audrey Hepburn and Hubert de Givenchy or Yves Saint Laurent and Catherine Deneuve, had been grounded on a mutual creative contribution. In practice, designers can also promote muses from historical figures.

The bidirectional creative flow noted by Barron (2021) undergoes in such circumstances a key mutation. Just like any living source of inspiration, the historical muse is presented as an allegory for the designers' artistry and values. In exchange, the designers reassert the muses' relevance as cultural references. Designers therefore become cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1984:335) to the historical muses' memory.

The research explores the manifestation of such processes in the case of lesser known figures extracted from the past and granted public visibility through the fashion system's practices and cultural influence. The study therefore focuses on individuals fallen into oblivion, who didn't organically prevail as historical figures. Introduced to a contemporary audience by John Galliano and popularised as style icons through the works of other designers following him, Luisa Casati and Renée Perle stand out as most eloquent case studies illustrating such dynamics. The research scope does not include historical figures, dead celebrities, or individuals who have been revived through other media, outside of the fashion system's intervention.

The analytical boundaries englobed within the research scope demands establishing the sources of data. As to be emphasised across the thesis, the fashion designers' core products are located not into garments *per se*, but in season collections. However, iconographies affirmed from their sources of inspiration are integrated in communication tools of which catwalk shows are the most impactful, as the direct anchors for press mediation.

Beyond every medium accommodating a muse's iconography, the cultural influence which can be attributed to the fashion system is extended from collections and promotional tools accompanying them to the media coverage they attract. The research must be therefore conducted on the seasonal collection the communication tools integrated in each studied designer's marketing strategy and to press reviews their work attracts.

The data collection includes both elements of imagery, as well as text. However the muses' transformation into cultural references also demands studying their reception. Consequently, the sources of data shall also integrate headlines dedicated to the two muses and published outside the fashion system, as well as the longitudinal development of the #RenéePerle and #LuisaCasati hashtags on Instagram. The two muses' assimilation as cultural references is studied within a timeframe calculated to surpass the media coverage of the analysed fashion collections.

4. Theoretic framework

Defined as both a decorative art, as well as a social phenomenon, fashion has preoccupied a multitude of disciplines including semiotics, consumer behaviour, retail management, and art

history. However, sociology accommodated its initial theorisation, originally exploring the transmission of taste within a society with a direct impact on consumption paradigms.

The selection of relevant literature has been dictated by the research scope of the present thesis. Therefore, addressing the research aim highlighted the imperative of prioritising scholarly works exploring influences affecting the creation and not the assimilation of fashion, without, however, disregarding the consumption. Barthes' (1967) outlook on fashion as a system and the analysis conducted by Bourdieu and Delsaut (1976) on the strategic goals of established *couturiers* and newcomers provided the foundation for the reviewed literature. Formulated around the high fashion segment and not the overall apparel industry, the two core theories accurately responded to the research scope from the perspective of the impacted market.

Interdisciplinary areas of research such as fashion theory and fashion studies perpetuate the argument of *Haute Couture* as an art form endowed with a cultural dimension separating it from the mass market apparel. Therefore, the research scope could also benefit from the assumption of a cultural influence held by the high fashion segment. Such perspective opened the opportunity of exploring the limits to which scholarly work from the area of cultural production can highlight the peculiarities of the high fashion segment against the mass market apparel. Definitions attributed by Becker (1982) to crafts and commercial art, DiMaggio's (1987) conclusions on the adhesion to genres, and the facets identified by Peterson and Anand (2004) as determining the formation of cultural perspective proved insightful in such sense.

A key communality found in the theories of Barthes' (1967) and, respectively, Bourdieu and Delsaut (1976) comes from the impact of external influences, notably synergies created with the press and various agents of legitimisation.

The question of legitimisation however, raised the necessity of understanding the actual standards of artistry and technique separating the work of one designer from another. An overview of the mission statements of the four most influent professional bodies in high fashion¹ highlighted innovation and originality as criteria for assessing the creative value of members and applicants. Bourdieu's (1976; 1993) perspective on innovation, as highlighted within the tension he and Delsaut (1976) attributed to the established *couturiers* and newcomers signalled a noteworthy fracture which shall be developed in the literature review.

The history of fashion signals the contestation of rules at the heart of the creative vision through which established *couturiers* made their debut. Therefore, as to be developed in the literature review, the initial credo of *couturiers* and fashion designers opened the opportunity to complement the theoretical framework with Becker (1982:233)'s definition of the maverick. Closer to our times, Godart (2010) signalled the challenges of evaluating both fashion, as well as creativity in general. The open perspectives perpetuated by professional bodies in regards to fashion illustrated a highly insightful set of observations raised by Alexander and Bowler (2021) in regards to fields challenged by legitimacy struggles. Opportunities for potential correspondences to fashion design have been researched in the sociology of art and knowledge. However, claims of an approximate equivalence between the concepts of innovation, originality, and authenticity opened a critical perspective over the extent to which brands can revise their ideology.

The integration of human subjects as sources of inspiration for fashion collections is explained through the semiotic dimension of garments. The technical processes and the discursive effects activated by such integration are covered through the concepts of recontextualisation (Hebdidge, 1978) and articulation (Polhemus, 1990). The communicational dimension of fashion collections introduced through articulation indicated an opportunity for Dyer's (1979) theory of the star as a sign to explain how the semiotic content behind a human subject's biography is harmonised with that of the brand's ethos.

Literature (Lehmann, 2000; Evans, 2005; Rocamora, 2015) on revivals and recurring ideas from the past pointed out towards Walter Benjamin's concept of the Tiger's Leap as the main theoretical background used to explain the promotion and assimilation of historical references as relevant to a contemporary audience. However, the research scope of the thesis is focused not of historical figures but on lesser known figures from the past whose 'rediscovery' is attributed to fashion designers. Such peculiarity indicated the opportunity to explore the Tiger's Leap thesis through Lehmann's (2000) argument of the ahistorical past. In contrast to transhistorical references extracted from the officially recorded past, ahistorical sources reach chronicles of outcasts, tabus, and other elements judged unworthy to be documented.

¹ he Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode, Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana, British Fashion Council, and the Council of Fashion Designers of America

Barthes' (1967) writing on the semiotic dimension of fashion suggests the research aim resolved when muses end up recognised as icons outside the collections for which they have been integrated into the designers' collection. Consequently, the muses had to be recognised as embodiments of various values. Such mutation illustrated the evolution noted by Dyer (1979) indicating an opportunity for extending the research towards celebrity studies.

Redmond and Holmes (2006) synthesised the main theories which allowed the establishment of celebrity studies, highlighting additional angles to position in literature both the designers' efforts to present their source of inspiration as relevant to their consumer base, as well as the audience's reception of the muse. Translating the designers' own connection with the muse, as well as the efforts to direct such attachment to emphasise their brand signalled similarities with the tactics and communication strategy captured in the concept of manufactured charisma. However, the outcome suggested by the research aim implied the recognition of celebrities into symbols, (Dyer, 1979; Turner, 2008). Especially under the time-sensitive fashion calendar, the creation and maintenance of relevance demanded an insight on literature in the celebrities' lifecycle (Lacey 1998:35; Nayar 2009:54; King, 2015). An outlook towards the muses' reception nevertheless highlighted the necessity to study the parallel semiotic content attached to celebrities by fans (Dyer, 2003).

5. Methodology

The research aim is addressed through a multi-method research design developed around two case studies, Luisa Casati and Renée Perle, both introduced in contemporary fashion collections by John Galliano. Research units for Luisa Casati shall include collections presented by Alberta Ferretti (2016) and Dries Van Noten (2016). Research units for Renée Perle include collections launched by MaxMara (2022) and Emilia Wickstead (2024).

Revived after decades of obscurity and honoured across years by multiple designers, two case studies are representative of the fashion system's influence in transforming lesser known individuals from the past into cultural references relevant to a contemporary public.

Once Europe's richest heiress and most eccentric society hostess, Luisa Casati died in poverty and oblivion. Her bankruptcy is related to the credo of transforming herself into a work of art, an ideal she honoured through a highly performative lifestyle. Luisa Casati dedicated her entire wealth to the ambition of transforming herself into a living work of art. Rediscovered as a source of inspiration by John Galliano, Luisa Casati's legacy has been the core concept for season collections launched by Alexander McQueen (2007), Karl Lagerfeld (2009), Alberta Ferretti (2016) and Dries Van Noten (2016). Fashion history books, as well as press reviews credit John Galliano with rediscovering Luisa Casati after a decades long obscurity. Prior to Galliano, Luisa Casati inspired a Norman Norell collection in 1960 and Marisa Berenson's fancy dress at the Rothschild family's legendary 1971 ball. Her persona provided the structure for the Contessa Sanziani character in Maurice Druon's 1954 novel *La Volupté d'être*. No creative projects inspired by Luisa Casati are documented after Ingrid Bergman portrayed the Contessa Sanziani in Vincente Minelli's 1976 movie *'A matter of time'*.

As her three years affair with Jacques-Henri Lartigue came to an end in 1932, Renée Perle left her brief modelling career behind and completely retired from public life. Relocated from Paris to the South of France where she died in 1977, Renée left a personal archive of over 340 photographs documenting her affair with Lartigue. Three decades after her death, her heirs discreetly released the photos after Sotheby's and Christie's auction houses showed an interest in Lartigue's work. No biographical details were known of the Romanian-born Renée other than her previous work as a fitting model for Doeuillet. John Galliano honoured Renée in his AW 2005-2006 collection for his namesake brand, describing her as the *'a kittenish Parisian coquette'*. Renée returned as a contemporary fashion muse inspiring MaxMara for the SS2023 collection. Emilia Wickstead has also recently presented her SS 2024 collection based on Renée.

The research units selected allowed following Luisa Casati's and Renée Perle's trajectories, from the moment they were first mediated by the fashion system to their eventual establishment as cultural references.

As the foundation for the research design, the case study method allowed identifying both commonalities, as well as distinctive elements specific to both the two muses, as well as the collections they have inspired. One of the main virtues of the case study method stands in the opportunity of developing an individualised methodology which responds to every researcher's unique goals.

The two case studies integrate a multi-method research design set around two pillars: detecting the influence which can be claimed by the fashion system in promoting the two muses to the public (1) and assessing the extent to which the two muses are recognised as standalone cultural references (2). The theoretical framework signalled how a designer's work should never be approached isolated from agents of legitimisation. Consequently, the impact of fashion collections is assessed by analysing the arguments influencing press mediation.

The first phase of the methodology covers all stages within the collection's development from the designers' research efforts to the integration of muse-related imagery in the garments and promotional tools. A content analysis of the press reviews provides an outlook in the criteria upon which media representatives agents of legitimisation endorse the work of fashion designers. The research design also includes background data on the designers' position in the fields, the stakes and interests challenging their work, and macro factors which may reflect upon the choice of a muse. Focused particularly on their employment and brand ownership, the selected background data highlights the limits and influences to their decision making prerogative.

Any evolution noted in the discourse attached to them allows verifying the extent to which they may be still regarded as signs within John Galiano's work or they are recognised as standalone symbols. The circulation of references within the public sphere indicated the imperative of extending the research design to also capture a longitudinal outlook on the interest dedicated to them. Such perspective imposed studying how the two muses have been assimilated by the audience across time.

Therefore, the multi-method research design shall also include a content analysis of both articles dedicated to the two muses, as well as the themes under which the #luisacasati and #reeneperle hashtags circulated on Instagram. A field analysis integrating all data obtained highlights the influence which can be claimed by the fashion system in the muses' evolution as fashion icons. The field analysis highlights a mediation chain through which semiotic content accompanying fashion collections. However, a deeper understanding of how such semiotic content is either preserved or altered can be achieved when integrating background data on the stakes and intersects affecting the designers' works.

6. Research aim

Literature on either fashion studies or celebrity studies has not yet addressed the situation in which designers find inspiration in lesser known figures from the past whom they promote as muses, being praised as instrumental to their 'discovery'.

The research aim of the thesis is to investigate the influence held by the fashion system in creating or reviving fashion icons from individuals extracted from the past.

Consequently, the research should identify the rationale for which designers might consider extracting lesser known figures from the past (1), the practices through which human subjects are promoted through their works (2), and the processes through which the audience assimilates their sources of inspiration amongst their own cultural references (3).

The research aim cannot be addressed by excluding the reception of the lesser known figures and their evolution as prospective cultural references outside the fashion system.

7. Research questions

1. What are the dimensions and synergies through which fashion designers reassert their cultural influence?

An extensive understanding of the designers' cultural impact cannot be achieved without identifying the entities and factors which affect their work, either by increasing the visibility around their artistry or by restraining their creative freedom.

2. What are the processes and platforms through which fashion designers and brands facilitate public visibility for other individuals than themselves?

Introducing or popularising a lesser known figure from the past to an unacquainted audience represents an act a cultural mediation. Outside garments, real life practice indicate multiple channels through which designers may promote other individuals than themselves. A review of the processes employed within each channel allows tracking the semiotic content

communicated through it, while also assessing its effectiveness in familiarising the public with the designer's sources of inspiration.

3. What are the processes through which individuals attaining public visibility through the work of fashion designers get to be recognised as standalone celebrities?

A fashion icon as a standalone cultural reference is recognised through certain values derived from her individuality. The audience are presumed to initially associate a lesser known figure from the past to their discoverer. Resolving the research aim must address the factors which could determine the audience to relate a muse to other values than the image association with the designer first honouring her legacy.

II. Literature Review

The first section of the literature review explores the entities and ramifications sustaining, transmitting, or constraining the designers' creative expression. The cultural impact of the fashion designers is further explored in regards to both the integration of various references in their work, as well as to their influence on values and tastes. As a creative enterprise, fashion design is described in literature as facing the pressure of both artistic exigencies, as well as profit expectations. Therefore, the first section of the literature review is concluded through a critique of theories formulated around the conciliation of conflicting stakes and interests which may arise from creative ambitions and economic responsibilities.

The second section of the literature review evaluates the impact of what Bourdieu described as agents of legitimisation and the influence they might exercise on the opportunities faced by fashion designers to fulfil their stakes and interests. A conceptual demarcation of originality and authenticity facilitates an understanding of innovation as the core argument for legitimisation in the fashion field. As to be revealed, fashion designers are more likely to prioritise (Lang, 1988:79) legitimacy earned from institutions of consecration and diffusion (Bourdieu, 1933:133), rather than the audience. Such a tendency sets the structure of the present section, separating the arguments earning legitimacy from professional bodies and cultural intermediaries as instances of consecration and diffusion, as well as from the public as the end consumer of fashion.

The third section analyses the creation of semiotic content as a source of innovation. The previous section of review highlighted the concept of innovation as the core argument for both peer recognition, as well as the public's reception. The current section is introduced by an overview on the two dimensions attributed in literature to fashion: materiality and meaning. Materiality refers to techniques, fabrics, and other physical components of a garment, whereas meaning is associated in literature to the creation and transmission of semiotic content. The present section further explores the concepts of citation, articulation, and recontextualisation through which fashion designers extract and reinterpret semiotic content from other sources. The section further examines the rationale for which designers would consider references from the past as potential sources of semiotic content and strategies through which they promote them as relevant to a contemporary public.

The fourth section of the literature review surveys the concurring influences and processes facilitating the two muses' evolution as standalone cultural references. Barthes' (1990) signification schemes indicated that the source of inspiration is reduced to being perceived as a sign within a designer's collection. The muses' establishment as standalone cultural references is accomplished when recognised as an icon. The consensus found in literature around the celebrity status indicates the imperative for the two muses to deliver a discursive dimension while also inspiring social representation. As to be further developed, the discourse through which the designers' communication present the muses as relevant to our times provides the foundation for their celebrity construct.

1. The fashion field and its cultural influence

The first section of the literature review assesses the processes and ramifications that capture the cultural impact of fashion designers and their work. The reviewed literature offers a sociological perspective to arguments posed in other disciplines advocating for an acknowledgement of fashion as an art form. As the core processes determining fashion as a social phenomenon, apparel production and distribution are placed within literature into a system. The section further explores the cultural impact of fashion, as derived from both its status as an art form, as well as its impact on the formation of tastes. Limitations to its societal influence are assessed under the pressure posed by financial interests challenging the designers' work.

1.1 *The high fashion industry: a system*

A key consensus in literature emphasises a 'collective' characteristic which signals how the fashion industry should be studied beyond the designer's role, reaching representatives of other fields. The prospective cooperation between multiple participants has been first noted in the two major paradigms through which fashion reaches consumers: press mediation (Barthes, 1967) and

physical distribution (Blumer, 1969). For Barthes, the concept of 'fashion' englobes not only '*what women wear*', but also what the public '*looks at and reads about*' (Barthes, 1990:80). Therefore, the concept of fashion implied not only objects (the garments *per se*), but also how such items are perceived and communicated. Blumer (1969:278) proposed a distinctive perspective on mediation, studying the influence of distribution on the formation of consumer tastes². The complexity of mediation synergies has been further explored by Blumer's former student Davis (1991) who places the fashion industry into a '*vast institutional apparatus*' which includes not only brands, but also the press, buyers, organisers of Fashion Weeks³, advertisers, and other players.

When publishing his findings, Barthes (1967) was the first to refer to the fashion industry as '*a system*'. The idea of a system also transpires from 'the six essential conditions' the fashion field operates under, according to Blumer (1969:286-287): (1) '*the movement of change*' which implies the reassessment and revision of beliefs (2) receptivity to new styles or '*proposals of new social forms*' (3) 'the relatively free opportunity for choice' between designs (4) the presumption of value associated to '*competing models*' which hinders or dismisses the prospect of objective evaluation (5) the image association between the proposals and '*prestige figures*', and (6) receptivity to '*the emergence of new interests and disposition*' driven by either '*outside events*', '*new participants*', and '*changes in inner social interaction*'. Davis' (1991) critique of Blumer's (1969) theory converges towards the omission of other stakeholders sustaining the '*vast institutional apparatus*' developed around the fashion industry, and thus, disregarding their input towards the formation of collective taste.

Across literature, the perspective of fashion as a system has been perpetuated in regards to the participants connected (Crane, 2012; Godart, 2010), but also to the emergence and circulation of values and beliefs across these networks (König, 1973; Kawamura, 2005). The two perspective appear to be connected within Polhemus' (2011:31-37) argument over how the change of fashion -thus, the proposal of new images and values- is conducted '*deliberately*' across a '*structured*' and '*organised*' pattern.

The ramifications created by fashion as a system highlight the possibility to analyse the industry through Bourdieu's field theory. Such perspective is also proposed by Godart (2010) who advocates towards a study of fashion brands through an intersection between organisational aspects, struggles and interests. Bourdieu defined fields (1993: 30, 184) through the co-existence of forces and struggles that either transformed or preserved such forces. The concepts of *habitus*, *doxa*, and capital are pivotal to Bourdieu's field theory.

In their analysis of the fashion field, Bourdieu and Delsaut (1975) argue that a *couturier's* '*magic signature*' (the *griffe*) transforms materials in objects of meaning and status. Such deployment appears to illustrate the composition of the *habitus* as a 'structured' manifestation with 'structuring' effect, engaging practices and generating representations. The *griffe*, however, also leads to the artistic vision in the spirit of which *couturiers* establish a fashion house. Consequently, understanding a brand's ethos demands exploring their founders' *habitus*, a concept defined by Bourdieu as a system of predispositions for the way social agents contract their schemes of perception, assessment and actions. The influence of the founders' *habitus* on the brand's organisational ethos transpires from both procedural aspects such as technique, as well as from the meaning created (eg: iconography, aesthetics, militancy, etc). Such connection can be noticed both for brands in which the founders hold their influence in decision making, as well as in historical houses where, as Bourdieu and Delsaut (1975:7) argue, conservation represents a strategy for handling struggles within a field.

The organisational *ethos* can be noted in the individual practices (Bourdieu, 1990:54) through which fashion houses conduct their activity. However, the industry also exhibits collective practices adopted by each of its players (eg: launching collections). Such practices are perpetuated as a '*pre-reflexive intuitive knowledge*' (Grenfell, 2014: 119) which signals the system's *doxa*, a concept first mentioned by Bourdieu in the context of observations about what 'goes without saying' within traditional societies.

Bourdieu and Delsaut (1975:15) indicate how debuting in the fashion field leads newcomers to the challenge of imposing new symbols under the pressure of competing with the legitimacy held by established *couturiers*. Bourdieu made legitimacy a pillar of each of the four capitals or forces separating participants within a stratified field. Legitimacy establishes the position

² Blumer's observations inspired Hirsch (1973:639) to analyse other creative industries such as book publishing under the argument of a collective effort which goes beyond the writer's work.

³ The industry's professional bodies.

fashion brands can claim into their field ⁴, which is connected to the capitals they can access (Bourdieu 1993: 30) and holds direct implications over the *doxa* they are exposed to (Bourdieu, 1993:96)

The ramifications signalled by proponents of a perspective on fashion as a system can be associated with the social capital. According to Bourdieu (1986: 242), the concept of social capital englobes the connections that in certain conditions can be institutionalised as elements of legitimacy while also facilitating the acquisition of economic benefits. In the fashion system, the social capital is particularly attached to liaisons in retail distribution and cultural mediation.

Under Bourdieu's definition (1986: 242), fashion brands attain economic capital through elements that can be immediately and directly converted into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights. Beyond the factual ownership of an asset, as highlighted in the previous subsection of the literature review, the concept of property rights raises an interesting observation when confronted with the limits under which intellectual property is feasible for seasonal designs.

Bourdieu (1986: 243) defined cultural capital through three key dimensions: the embodied state, the objectified state and the institutionalised state. Godart et al (2015: 979) points out that the industry's products can be located not into garments as standalone objects, but in fashion collections. Indeed, practices perpetuated within the fashion industry as *doxa* have designers present garments through stylistically-coherent compilations whether seasonal or cruise collections. While collections can be assimilated to the objectified state, values transmitted through the fashion collection reflect the embodied state⁵. The institutionalised state can be assimilated to the artistry under which the collection is promoted, whether *haute couture*, *Demi-couture*, or *Ready to Wear*.

Defined by Bourdieu (1986:16) as the transformation of prestige or honour into resources, the symbolic capital can be connected to the designer's recognition as an artist. Both Godart (2010:88), as well as Kawamura (2005:63-64) mention the fashion industry's strategy of promoting designers as stars. Such strategy illustrates Schinkel's (2003) observation cited by Smith (2006) over how the presumption of artistic genius becomes essential to the acquisition of symbolic capital. To Kawamura (2005:63), the stratification system found within the fashion field represents an effect of the status competition which indicates the imperative to study the markers of prestige. Sources, arguments, and influences of legitimacy are dedicated a distinctive section within the present literature review.

1.2 Understanding the fashion system's cultural influence

When describing fashion as "*a collectively manufactured cultural practice*", Bourdieu and Delsault (1975) open a perspective on the crafts and artistry perpetuated through the procedural aspect of the creative act, as well as on the meaning communicated through its finite product. For Blumer (1969), the ability to change values and beliefs represents the first fundamental condition of fashion. König (1973: 38) goes as far as advocating for the recognition of fashion as an '*independent social institution*' due to its impact of society and the collective psyche.

Recent literature within the sociology of fashion (Kawamura, 2005; Kaiser, 2008, and Godart, 2010) confirms cultural production as a bountiful terrain to extract a theoretical framework which allows capturing both perspectives. Such strategy of turning towards cultural production is encouraged by observations found at Blumer (1969), König (1973), and Bourdieu and Delsaut (1975) over the transmission of meaning through fashion.

As previously mentioned, Kawamura (2005), Kaiser (2008), and Godart (2010) appeal to cultural production to capture the synergies and transmission of meaning through fashion.

Kawamura (2005:40) applies conclusions formulated by White and White (1965) on French painting to define fashion as '*an institutional system*' operating through a '*network of beliefs, customs and formal procedures*' which create an '*articulated social organisation with an acknowledged central purpose*'. However, Kawamura's (2005) perspective can be rather limited to the emergence of an organisational ethos within fashion brands.

⁴ Furthermore, each position within field is challenged by its particular *doxa*, which can be distinctive from that recognised for the entire field. For example, *haute couture* responds to a different *doxa* than other segments of the fashion industry, such as *Pret-à-Porter*.

⁵ The embodied state shall be explored in the third subsection of the literature review dedicated to related to the creation of meaning

Kaiser (2008:24) proposes the “*circuit of style-fashion-dress*” developed upon the “*circuit of culture*” formulated by du Gay et al (1997: 3). In her model, the representational component within the circuit of culture is replaced by distribution which she regards as encompassing both the physical movement of garments across retail channels, as well as the transmission of styles (2008:31). The identity factor in the circuit of culture is replaced by subject formation. By maintaining the production, consumption, and regulation from the circuit of culture (du Gay et al. 1997: 3), Kaiser (2008:24), attempts to combine the transmission of meaning with the channels developed around various participants. However, her model can be rather applied to the creation and perpetuation of fashion’s aspirational component.

Godart (2018: 72–88) assimilates fashion to cultural products which circulate in markets that connect different social and cultural structures. Adapting Breiger’s (1974) approach to social networks, Godart (2018) argues that cultural elements create social structures when connecting various producers, whereas liaisons emerging between them generate the appearance of cultural structures defined under the works they launch. Godard (2018)’s perspective is valuable for understanding subfields within the fashion system with a restrictive access for new entrants, such as the case of professional bodies (eg: the Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode). However, Godard (2018)’s arguments pose a key limitation. Especially in the social media age, the system has shifted towards a free market where any aspiring designers can debut and set their work at a given market segment. However, the market becomes too dispersed to actually support such structures on the long term, limiting Godart’s (2018) claim.

In their study over the creation of cultural perspective, Peterson and Anand (2004) talk about ‘six facets of production’, which can also be applied in the fashion system. Technology (1) can be assimilated to procedural aspects, which, in high fashion emphasise the importance of craftsmanship as a quality standard. Law and regulation (2) include an undisputed statutory framework such as the anti-counterfeiting legislation but also a key peculiarity applicable to the fashion system under the reserves of intellectual property procedures. The industry structure (3) is noted in the tension faced by fashion houses to remain independent under the continuous expansion of luxury conglomerates. The organisation structure (4) can be regarded as an emanation of the ethos under which the founder envisioned the delivery of their craft. Occupational careers (5) represent the main element through which Crane (2012) suggests the study of the fashion industry. As a response to Crane’s conclusions over fashion as a system, Kawamura (2005:50) warns over the necessity to separate the input of designers from that of other professionals involved in the industry (eg: marketers, stylists, etc). However, the growing interdisciplinary attributions faced by Creative Directors who are also responsible on the collection’s broad marketing direction limit the relevance of Kawamura’s (2005) claim. The sixth facet of cultural production proposed by Peterson and Anand (2004) can be found in the market. In the fashion system, the market element is reflected in the segments approached.

Understanding the cultural impact imposes an outlook towards its influence on tastes. As previously mentioned, for Blumer (1969), such societal impact highlights the core condition of fashion. From its initial theorisation, decades of scholarly work has been formulated around the desire for using style as a social differentiation. Directions captured within the transmission flow of styles across the social strata led to the establishment of diffusion theories which also explained the emergence of trends and their evolution into fads or fashion. However, as Crane (2012:15) signals, our times are characterised by interclass and intra-class mobility, inevitably affecting the relevance of diffusion theories when studying the most recent years in fashion. Furthermore, more recent literature (Gazzola et al, 2020), Bae et al, 2023, Roster, 2024) tends to question the relevance of trends.

According to Crane (2012:133), class fashion explored by diffusion theories has been replaced by consumer fashion which led to an increased stylistic diversity affecting ‘*consensus*’ about what styles may be considered fashionable at a given period of time. Andrew Hill (Breward, Evans, 2005:67) describes this as a ‘*historical moment of supposedly unprecedented individualism*’. Cited by Gaimster (2011) trend forecasting expert David Wolfe describes how the market has become ‘*too heterogeneous, too fragmented, and too unpredictable*’ to be decoded in the same accuracy previously accounted. Imitation tends to be conducted randomly, adding to its unpredictability (Bentley et al, 2007). However, online metrics captured at every stage of the purchase decision allow businesses in the fashion system to reach more precision in anticipating the consumers’ tastes, a challenge previously described by Davis (1991) as ‘*a relatively unstructured technique*’. The formation of ‘*taste communities*’ (Sweetman, cited by Entwistle 2001:58) or micro-groups (Lipovetsky, 2007:101) appears to be more relevant to the study of consumers’ taste than trends.

As observed by Blumer (1969:286) in his arguments against the class differentiation thesis, taste remains, nevertheless '*a subjective orientation*', which highlights psychological or existential motives as drivers towards the consumption of fashion. Blumer's former student, Davis (1991) stands out as the first scholar to respond to his theory. From Blumer's (1969)'s stance over how fashion delivers '*order in a potentially anarchy and moving present*', Davis signals an effective route for designers to reach relevance by connecting to the audience's desires and discontents, as well as their relationship to dress and self-representation. Closer to our times, Crane (2012:3) observed the desire for class differentiation remaining valid in the consumers' own professional life, whereas outside of it, styles are shaped according to values regarded as '*meaningful*' for each individual. Crane's argument can be partially supported by Peterson (1997:72)'s observation on how taste also connects to what '*political and social attitudes and values*' the consumers may regard as '*correct*'. If applied to fashion, Peterson (1997)'s conclusions indicate that values associated with a designer weight at a similar extent to objective aspects related to the materiality of a garment. However, two observations can be noted on Peterson's conclusions. The first demands a demarcation between the values actually promoted by fashion designers and the tendency noted by Lipovetsky (2007:38) over consumers tend to develop their own *imaginarium* on what values their favourite brands may affirm. An additional limitation derives from the '*correct*' description used by Peterson, which could imply both the assumption of an alignment to one's personal values, but also an ethical position guiding consumption. Though confirmed on surveys applied at a given timeframe on various age groups (eg: gen Z), such assumption cannot be extrapolated to the entire market. Featherstone (1991) mentions the market's hedonistic exigencies explain the inclination towards the aesthetic dimensions of consumption. When exploring the driving forces behind fashion, Entwistle (2006) was the first the signal the system operating on an '*aesthetic economy*'. There, since it is exactly the aesthetic dimension which separates fashion culture from the mere apparel production (Kawamura, 2005; Godart, 2010) to what extent can '*correct political and social attitudes and values*' be measured against the visual component of styles? The consumers' critical lens inevitably leads to Bourdieu's (1984:49) position over how an individual's cultural capital reflects upon their taste, creating a marker of distinction.

A necessary point of reflection can be placed on the extent to which the cultural capital can still determine taste within today's market and the array of information it is exposed to. As observed by Featherstone (2007:35), the new cultural intermediaries such as the press and the advertising industry have become as lifestyle creators became assimilated to intellectual expertise. Under the impact of a growing exposure to a diversified information, Peterson (1996:901) noted that highbrow consumers stand out as omnivore, or receptive to a wide range of sources of inspiration. Peterson's (1996) study contradicts the assumption that consumers of high cultural capital would automatically not be open to lowbrow or middlebrow references, an attitude he described as snobbery, citing Levine's (1988) previous reference. Therefore, Blumer's (1969) claim on how tastes are formed collectively when exposed to the same social spaces is still relevant to our days. However, Blumer's (1969) argument must be adapted to the global opportunities the online environment connects us to. Online metrics captured at every stage of the purchase decision allow businesses in the fashion system to reach more precision in anticipating the consumers' tastes, a challenge previously signalled by Davis (1991) as '*a relatively unstructured technique*'. Furthermore, through frameworks such as segmentation which shall not be explored as they connect to other disciplines, such insights are available not only for the consumers' direct relation with fashion products, but also in their attitude towards institutions of diffusion.

In his response to Andrew Hill (Breward, Evans, 2005:67) over the apparent sameness of street style, Adam Briggs points out that identity expression may have been swift from lines, colours and adornments towards values captured in fashion branding (Breward, Evans, 2005:81) A similar position can be found in opinions compiled by Godart (2010:74) in regards to the importance of labels over that of actual designs. The idea of brand values leads to the fore-mentioned co-existence between the fashion house's official branding and the *imaginarium* noted by Lipovetsky (2007:38). When raising the prospect of a delayed, yet still possible market receptivity for the avant-garde, Crane (2012:154) argues that the acceptance of new styles doesn't imply '*a major shift in worldview on the part of the public*'. Therefore, even within the context of stylistic diversity consumer attachment to a given brand may increase receptivity towards aesthetics which can be affirmed by their favourite label.

1.3 The impact of financial interests over the fashion system's cultural influence

The first author to include the industry's economic interests within his conclusion was Blumer (1969:285) who describes the fashion field as '*professionally exploited under conditions of intense competition*'. His former student, Davis (1991:14) was the first to signal the existence of a "*bottom line*" requirement of marketability, which may create a divergence with the designers' aspirations of being recognised and '*going down in history*' as innovators. The prospective '*success d'estime*' as he calls it may stand out as an even more important stake for designers than the financial figures reported through a collection. However, Davis (1991) also adheres to Blumer's conclusions of an '*obdurate reality*' under which financial stakes temper eventual 'creative risks' designers might consider in their aspirations. Consequently, scholarly works on the economic interests impacting the work of fashion prioritise barriers to their creative liberty and opportunities for innovation. However, as to be developed in the critical outlook on the literature further explored, the rise of new patterns and paradigms for distribution and consumption may affect the relevance of the theories dedicated to the manifestation of economic interests in fashion imply.

The compromise towards which the economic pressure may push designers to implies readjusting their artistic vision to comply to consumers' taste. As argued by Davis (1991) failure to deliver creation responding to the consumers' desire '*to be in fashion*' represents the main reason for which designers lose their relevance within a market.

Under the pressure of a *hyper-segmented* market (Crane, 2012:10), the fashion systems falls within the third profile of culture production paradigms identified by Peterson and Anand (2004:318): '*competitiveness managed by oligopolistic control fostering diversity without innovation*'. Such position can be argued through the absence of radical innovation which may hinder market feasibility, dismissing styles as unwearable. As Svendsen (2006:58) signals, the constraints related to market feasibility and profitability limited the manifestation of avant-garde in fashion to *haute couture* (Svendsen, 2006:58). In practice, *haute couture* tends to be safeguarded as a promotion tool assimilated to a demonstration of artistry. Furthermore, *haute couture* collections are produced in one specimen, never reaching stores. However, for Crane (2000:154) it is exactly the struggle to reach relevance in a highly competitive and hypersegmented market that directs some designers toward the avant-garde and accept radical innovation. Crane's (2012:154) stance over how technology and electronic media had influenced such approach can be connected to Scott's (2012) argument over what they define as the 'buzz' element which they regard as a source of social capital. However, though radical innovation represents an effective strategy for visibility, it may not convert into financial results.

In their analogy between the fashion field and the two poles of the political spectrum, (Bourdieu and Delsaut 1975) mention subversion as a creative strategy of newcomers and conservation as the core tactic the dominant *couturiers*. However, the evolution of historical houses (eg: Balenciaga, Louis Vuitton, Gucci) in the past decade highlights a swift move towards different creative terrains that those in which they've established their signature aesthetics. How can such deviation can be interpreted under the dichotomy proposed by Bourdieu and Delsaut (1975:15)?

Creative conservation implies a non-adhesion to trends, a strategy Polhemus (2011:37) qualified as 'anti-fashion' when describing a designer's ability to maintain a consistent style which becomes recognisable from one collection to another. However, as Davis (1991:5) argues, adopting a position outside the trend cycle still stands as a reaction to its flow. Therefore, the 'anti-fashion' designers become as dependent to trends as those who adjust their creativity to them. Polhemus' (2011) thesis on anti-fashion opens an interesting point of reflection. His argument over the consistency of style remind of the strategy of conservation connected by Bourdieu and Delsaut (1975) to historical houses. However, the refusal to align to the trend cycle may imply not only a conservative attitude, but also disruption, an angle to which Godard (2010:30) connected the '*anti-fashion attitude*'. Disruption, however, also reminds of both the maverick profile identified by Becker (1982:233), as well as the heresy under which Bourdieu (1993:34) qualified going against the *doxa*. The founders of historical houses debuted as disruptors, but remained relevant through what Bourdieu and Delsaut (1975: 7) qualified as conservation. A point of reflection, however, arises in connection to what values should be conserved from a disruptor's creative credo? Godard (2010:30) warns over how diversity dilutes the '*anti-fashion attitude*' which ends up '*losing its relevance*'. However, how can innovation be adjusted to a diverse market and what values should be affirmed in its promotion?

The pressure to innovate, as well as the exigencies of safeguarding certain quality standards (eg: craftsmanship) places the high fashion industry within Bourdieu's definition of cultural entrepreneurs. In contrast, prioritising cost efficiency through scale production, lower quality standards, and other practices, the apparel industry's mass market segment falls within conventional entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the characteristic of '*temporarily renouncing economic profit*' signalled by Bourdieu (1993: 83) extends the definition of cultural entrepreneurship to the investments injected by luxury conglomerates within the revival of underperforming, bankrupt, or defunct brands. However, the high market dominance of luxury conglomerates has been criticised by Crane (2019) who argues that their continuous expansion perpetuates the idea of fashion as a commercial enterprise. An outlook on their recent acquisition strategy indicates the contrary. Luxury conglomerates benefit of higher resources which allow them to postpone the return of investment in underperforming brands, whereas independent fashion houses face greater financial pressure for economic viability in order to sustain salaries, raw material sourcing, and other urgencies. In contrast, even if they debuted through subversion (Bourdieu&Delsaut, 1975:15), such tension pushes independent fashion houses towards Bourdieu's definition of heteronomous fields in which financial motivations have a significance equal to, if not greater than, creative drivers (1993: 38).

The assumption of economic interests influencing the creative processes in fashion transpires from Blumer's (1969) methodology when formulating his theory on the emergence of collective tastes. By following the decision making chain within the distribution of designs from brands to the end consumer, Blumer (1969) is the first to provide an alternative perspective on the formation of collective tastes outside the social class differentiation argument explored and perpetuated throughout classical theories on the transmission of fashions. Blumer (1969) developed his theory under the argument that collective tastes are shaped not by the designers' initial vision, but the selection of garments from that particular collection fashion buyers end up distributing in their stores. Though signalling such mediation chain, Blumer (1969) admits not being able to provide insights on the parameters according to which buyers end up selecting the garments they'll offer for sale. Through her study on buying decisions conducted at Selfridges in London, Entwistle (2006) identifies the perpetuation of similar aesthetics, as new designs are selected according to the sales results registered for the previous selection which indicate the most popular styles. Potential limitations to Entwistle (2006)'s conclusions may be related to its date of publication. In today's market consumers have direct access to a fashion brand's entire fashion collection through both its official digital channels, as well as that of affiliates. Therefore, could a study conducted on brick and mortar retail in a period in which e-commerce was still in its infancy be considered relevant? Literature in consumer behaviour indicate how the tendency of documenting shopping experiences on social media (Pantano and Gandini, 2018) or the phygital paradigm for visual merchandising (Pangarkar et al, 2022) maintain the relevance of brick and mortar retail. Furthermore, Entwistle's (2006)'s claim still applies in areas in which luxury brands have not extended their own retail channels and are exclusively available through one distributor.

2. Legitimacy in the fashion system

Legitimacy reflects the levels of capitals designers can access through the position of authority they may claim in the fashion system (Bourdieu, 1993: 30). In his study on cultural production, Bourdieu (1993:133) connects legitimacy to institutions of '*diffusion or consecration*'. Depending on the field, legitimisation can derive from one or multiple institutions (Bourdieu, 1993: 122). The institutions of consecration he mentions are associated with the guardianship of the *doxa*. Kawamura (2005:54) regards professional bodies such as the Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode as the foremost institution of consecration. However, Bourdieu (1984:335) also mentioned the increasing importance attributed to media, advertising, fashion, and market insights, which he amasses under the term '*the new cultural intermediary*'. Representatives of professional bodies illustrate a similar level of authority and expertise as aestheticians under Becker's (1982: 135) classification. In contrast, what Becker (1982: 131) qualifies as critics can be connected in the fashion system to the influence of editors.

The present subsection of the literature investigates the role of innovation in the designers' legitimisation under limitations posed by a fashion *doxa*, followed by an analysis on how their media liaisons and the publics they connect with influences their field position.

2. 1. The influence of innovation on legitimacy in the fashion field

The attempt of assigning a specific *doxa* to the fashion system is sensitive to its prospective status as an art form, a craft, a social phenomenon, or a business endeavour. In his Theory of Cultural Production (1993), Bourdieu also signals the manifestation of heterodoxy, or the alternative to the *doxa*. According to Bourdieu and Haacke (1995, cited in Fowler 2006:107), innovation occurs when '*artistic autonomy transgresses doxic conventions*'. Consequently, innovation occurs when the creative act enters the terrain of heterodoxy. The stakes characterising the fashion system converge towards the pressure to innovate. Furthermore, implying both the concrete purchase of garments, but also the public's exposure to its aesthetic dimension, the social implications of fashion strongly connect it to mass consumption which is regarded by Bell (1978:66) as the paradigm through which legitimacy is attributed to those capable of innovating. Therefore, the fashion system's *doxa* is resumed not only to quality standards in craftsmanship, but also to its ability to deliver aesthetics innovation.

In his analysis between established Maisons and newcomers, Bourdieu described Courrèges as a '*revolutionary*' and Yves Saint Laurent as an '*orchestrator*'. Such perspective demands explaining the creative credo under which *couturiers* debuted in the fashion system. The high standards of craftsmanship charactering *haute couture* imposes an outstanding level of technical expertise. However, their position towards innovation and the artistic values driving their work qualify history's greatest *couturiers* as *mavericks*, a creative profile defined by Becker (1982:233) as artists who debuted under the conventions of their time but who ended up challenging such precepts through various dimensions such as style or technique. Crane (2012:133) assimilated fashion designers to the profile of the artist-craftsperson identified by Becker (1982: 277). In her augment, she evoked the use of artisan expertise within artistic explorations which may be directed towards subversion. However, she also admits the prospect of designers reassessing their motivations according to the stage reached in their career or to various other interests. Jones et al (2016) proposes an update to creative typologies proposed by Becker by also including *amphibians* who hold a stronger entrepreneurial character, by strategising a mélange of features to appeal to a targeted audience. The dual dimension of fashion as both '*an artistic activity*' as well as '*an economic endeavour*', as Godart (2010:10) points out makes the 'amphibian profile' eloquent to describe organisation within the system.

Barthes (1990:44) resumed innovation to the ambiguity and the unexpected character in which the new arrangements (compositions or stylings) may emerge (1990:300), arguing that both the number of vestments, as well as that of their combinations remains finite (1990:44). Groys (1992) raises an insightful point of reflection over how novelty cannot be achieved in its purest sense, as it would imply a complete detachment from all the existing creations. Consequently, pure novelty also requires a complete detachment of all the references which could be approached or contested within possible stylistic combinations. As Groys points out, novelty is envisioned as '*endless variations on what already exists*'. A similar perspective is developed by Burns et al (2015) when defining innovation as not conditioned by a first instance. In contrast, according to Burns et al (2015), novelty is confirmed by originality to anything else in the particular field of reference. Such perspective led to the necessity of investigating possible definitions for the concept of 'originality' which is mentioned within the mission statement of all the four leading professional bodies associated with high fashion.

The concept of originality is treated distinctively by social sciences and humanities. While social sciences are interested in method when assessing originality, humanities focus on the approach (Guetzkow et al, 2004; Godart et al, 2020). Sociology focused on originality when exploring the advancements of knowledge and the creation of art. Both areas of research place originality in relation to existing works and to the impact it produced, reaffirming innovation and imitation as also influencing the launch of new projects (Becker 1982:276, Jones and al, 2016, Godart et al, 2020). Bernard (2021) proposes the term 'fecundity' for all instances in which originality has ignited new 'artistic or figurative traditions'. The maverick's influence as defined by Becker (1982:233) can be assimilated to 'fecundity'. A distinctive connotation to the concept of originality is introduced by Wei (2021) who regards it as referring to objective parameters such as the release date of a project and, thus, exclusively applicable to tangible elements. Wei (2021) signals how the concept of original has become in the current speech interchangeable to that of authenticity, which could rather be used to describe the impression inspired by works. Present in the terminology of various disciplines such as aesthetics, art history, sociology, or intellectual property, the concepts of originality and authenticity may operate as synonyms, such as they are attributed distinctive meanings. Authorship and origin preoccupy scholars of intellectual property

(Torsen, Anderson, 2010) and its applications, such as art valuation, whereas aesthetics raise the question of creative value. Cultural production assimilates authenticity to an expression that is not influenced by society's conventions (Bell, 1978:19, Triling, 1972:100). In connection to the creative process, authenticity has been described as fulfilled either through an exquisite mastery of techniques or through the raw, untrained, and consequently, unaltered approach of a craft (Grazian, 2018). A middle terrain between the expressive dimension and technique is found in Baudrillard's (1994:4) claim over how an image ceases to be presumed authentic, as its construction alters with its intention.

The available definitions appear to partially complement one another, as each is focused on reflecting the references, creative intentions, elements of identification, authorship and reception of innovation. As the compiled theories have been formulated in cultural production, attempts to capture the possible cycle or synergies behind innovation beyond mentions of a collective effort would have not been realistic given the individualised character of each work in connection to medium, technique, and structure. Compared to theories of other disciplines such as the 4P model⁶ (Bessant & Tidd, 2013) in marketing, none of the definitions addresses the purpose for which innovation has been introduced. Such fracture could be, however, connected to the lack of focus or the de-prioritisation of the utilitarian component of fashion. Included in the sociology of science, the creation of smart clothing (Ju and Kyu-Hye, 2020) is based on a distinctive theoretical framework.

The renewal cycles within the fashion system reflect the difference suggested by Barthes (1990:40) between novelty and innovation which can be objectively sustained through his argument over the finite vestments. The concept of 'fecundity' could highlight a middle ground between the innovation and novelty, yet it remains nevertheless vulnerable to the delays to which the emergence of new expressions are acknowledged and also to the prospect of being connected to other sources rather than their exact creator.

The debate over the equivalence or difference between authenticity and originality lead to the dimensions through which a fashion brand's ethos can be individualised or distinguished within the fashion system. In his critique of mechanical reproduction, Benjamin (1935) connected the creative value to originality, which he regarded as the *prerequisite* of authenticity. Benjamin's argument on originality is particularly reflected on the artistry a designer must demonstrate in order to attain legitimacy in a field. Before analysing Benjamin's (1935) stance over originality being the *prerequisite* of authenticity, an observation is imposed. The fore-mentioned definitions of authenticity converge towards loyalty to one's beliefs and artistic credo beyond conventions within their field. However, the concrete intentions behind the creative act cannot be identified and thus, the designers genuine adhesion to the values they affirm cannot be verified. Therefore, Bourdieu's (2017) argument of using the principle of coherence and consistency can be regarded as the most comprehensive strategy for assessing the authenticity within the work of fashion designers. In the fashion system, the principle of coherence and consistency implies to verify the persistence of individual practices (Bourdieu, 2017:53) as a matrix on which references that create novelty from one collection to another. Such linearity of the designer's ethos and individual practices beyond any references explored within a collection illustrates how originality becomes the *prerequisite* of authenticity.

The idea of authenticity leads to the exploration of genre as a particular indicator institutions of consecration could consider when recognising a designer's work. However, findings formulated in cultural production or other creative fields such as film or music on the institutional establishment and audience assimilation of genres cannot be completely transferred and applied to fashion styles.

The closest classifications to the idea of 'genres' the fashion system accommodates may be connected to the creative affiliations (eg: Deconstructionism). The categorisation as merchandise might also provide a common terrain to the concept of genre for brands which have catered an utilitarian dimension on their debut (eg: activewear for Burberry, leatherwear for Jitrois, outerwear for Moncler). The legacy of *couturiers* and designers praised as fashion's greatest innovators highlight the artistic profile of a maverick, defined by Becker (1982: 233) as creators who found the conventions of their field '*unacceptably constraining*'. As a key characteristic pointed out by Becker (1982: 233), mavericks made their debut within those conventions. When affirming their individual style, mavericks 'overcome the habits left by professional training' (Becker, 1982: 265) and consequently, from the tendency to replicate genres. To Becker (1982:48) genre could be an indicator for creators to verify their adhesion to conventions. Comparing their creations to

⁶ Under the 4P model, innovation is connected to Product, Process, Position, and Paradigm

'previous attempts of making similar works in that medium or genre' could allow fashion designers to identify what differentiates them within the systems. Translating such strategy to the fashion system leads to efforts to build what in business studies is described as the '*competitive advantage*' through '*benchmarking*'. As a brand management strategy, conducted internally, within the fashion house's administration, the fashion house's study of peers/competitors is not revealed to its audience. However, such strategy is more expected to be found in the mass market apparel which -as concluded in a previous section of the literature review- falls within conventional entrepreneurship, rather than in high fashion, where it is through individual practices (Bourdieu, 1990:54) that designers earn legitimacy. To Bell (1978:44), however, modernism highlighted genre as '*an archaic conception*' replaced by the viewer's tendency of identifying new understanding in various elements. Bell's (1978:44) argument over how '*the fragment replaces the whole*' is eloquent for the preservation of a brand's ethos beyond collections and even beyond the works of creative directors succeeding the house's founder. Tracing the reception of genres and concepts, Bell's (1978:44) argument is particularly insightful to resolve how representatives of the media as cultural intermediaries and institution of diffusion communicate the coherence and consistency of individual practices from one collection to another, while explaining apparent fractures from the signature style the audience may perceive.

Distinctions related to genre intersects DiMaggio (1987)'s artistic classification systems (ACSs). Extending the ACS to the fashion systems highlights the impact of the market segments approached by designers on the position of authority they may claim within the fashion field. However, a significant limitation to be noted if applying the ACS to the fashion system comes from the fact that the framework is more appropriate to analyse the industry as a whole rather than an individual designer's positioning against genres, aesthetics, or categories. For DiMaggio (1987), genres are classified in accordance to differentiation, hierarchy, universality, and boundary strength. The high fashion industry exhibits differentiation in the contrast between the promoters of classic styles and those of the avant-garde. Such demarcation has noted by both Barthes (1967) in his essay on the contrast between Chanel and Courrèges, but also by Bourdieu and Delsaut (1975) in the study of Parisian *haute couture*. Within the high fashion industry, hierarchisation can only be proposed under elements of professional prestige such as membership to professional bodies. However, DiMaggio (1987) connected hierarchisation to the audience's cultural capital. Steiner's (1951) theory of counter-snobbery and the arguments raised by Douglas and Isherwood (1979) over the extended self and how consumers reject brands favoured by individuals they don't want to be associated with indicate the extent to which the high fashion industry might replicate DiMaggio's (1987) findings over a hierarchisation of genres. However, the revival of the logo mania phenomenon under arguments of 'self-irony' and its adoption by heritage brands such as Dior and Chanel limits the relevance of such perspective. Universality, as understood by DiMaggio (1987) can be assimilated to the referral-based sales policies practiced by certain fashion houses (eg: Hermès) which limit access for the general public to their products. The boundary strength may be connected to the contrast between subversion and conservation (Bourdieu and Delsaut, 1975:7) as strategies expected on fashion houses once established their creative direction. In practice, the adoption of logo mania, sportswear, and inconspicuous consumption (Van der Laan and Velthuis, 2016) indicate subversion from heritage brands such as Dior, Chanel, and especially Balenciaga. Through his ACSs DiMaggio (1987), concludes that genre distinctions are recognised by both critics, as well as audiences, influencing patterns of cultural production, distribution, and consumption. Within the fashion system, such a claim is confirmed in patterns of production, representation, and consumption, as retail distribution practices exhibit a demarcation between brands in regards market positioning and not genre⁷.

2.2 Field recognition

The common sources of legitimacy for a cultural producer have been identified across the literature in the technique understood as virtuosity (Bell, 1978: 99), genre classification (Grazian, 2018), peer recognition (Cattani et al, 2014) and association with institutions of consecration (Bourdieu and Delsaut, 1975) However, the fashion system raises a series of limitations to applying the same arguments perpetuated within cultural production.

Godard (2010) raises a concern over the impossibility of assessing '*style, fashion, and creativity*' in general. Kawamura (2005:54) regards professional bodies such as the Fédération de

⁷ Belonging to retail management and marketing, literature on such practice under which department stores shall not accommodate luxury brands next to mass market labels shall not be approached in this thesis;

la Haute Couture et de la Mode as the foremost institution of consecration. However, their mission statements may suggest receptivity towards a wide spectrum of creative expressions. Alexander and Bowler (2021) provide a highly insightful set of observations which could be used as a framework to verify a possible guardianship of the doxa (Schinkel, 2015: 216) and the standards they may affirm.

The fashion field reflects all three characteristics raised by Alexander and Bowler (2021) when hypothesising fields challenged by legitimacy struggles. The first resides is the absence of '*objective, strongly institutionalised evaluative criteria*' which determine '*ambiguous judgements*'. Transferring such a claim to the fashion system can be supported by Godart's (2010:74) argument on how classifying the levels of imitation in fashion would be a '*hazardous*' endeavour, '*if not impossible to implement in practice*'. The system's professional bodies⁸ represent the closest sources of "*objective, strongly institutionalised evaluative criteria*". Through professional bodies, the fashion systems safeguards the precepts of *haute couture* as the highest level of virtuosity. Therefore, the standards of *haute couture* might be assimilated to the fashion field's *doxa*. However, the high fashion field is not limited to *haute couture* which is preserved for promotional purposes as a demonstration of artistry, but also the Ready To Wear (*Pret à porter*) segment which reflects the traits signalled by Becker for commercial art where virtuosity is adjusted to '*the employers' requirements*' (Becker, 1982:291) However, the professional bodies' mission statements highlight an unanimous encouragement of originality which prevents a complete equivalence between *haute couture* and Becker's (1982:289) definition of academic art under the tendency of '*shifting one's concern from expressiveness to virtuosity*'. The limitations emerged when transferring views on innovation, originality, authenticity, and genre from cultural production to the fashion field have been extensively developed in the previous subsection. The barriers identified confirm fashion design as, indeed, being vulnerable to '*ambiguous judgements*' (Alexander and Bowler, 2021).

The second characteristic mentioned by Alexander and Bowler (2021) descends from the activity of '*multiple, disparate groups*' that may claim '*a stake in the game*'. Addressed more extensively in the following subsection of the present review, literature on the diffusion of styles highlights the challenges of a hyper segmented market (Crane, 2012:10). Characterised by '*an unpreceding levels of individualism*', as described by Hill (Breward and Evans, 2005:67), the new consumption patterns elevated by such market dynamics dilutes preferences towards specific brands, encouraging receptivity to a wider array of references and the designers proposing them.

The third characteristic attributed by Alexander and Bowler (2021) to fields challenged by legitimacy struggles stands in the '*changing stakes*'. Such dynamics can be reflected on a broad, system, level, where the expansion of luxury conglomerates affects various stages within the creative process from the designers' autonomy in decision making to the fabrics procurement and distribution chain. However, changing stakes can also be detected on a project level gathering participants with converging interests.

Highlighting the ambiguity and relativity through which the fashion system legitimises its players, the three characteristics observed by Alexander and Bowler (2021) suggest an opportunity for designers to impose their own individual practices (Bourdieu, 1990:54) as an argument through which they can reach consecration and preserve their field position.

2.3 The impact of media exposure on legitimacy

The impact of the media in facilitating legitimacy is connected to their coverage as an institution of diffusion (Bourdieu 1993:133) as well as their influence as cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1984:335). As an institution of diffusion, media representatives ensure public visibility for fashion collections. As cultural intermediaries, they are instrumental in communicating the designers' creative intentions. Such roles support fashion businesses in their cultural, social, and economic goals. However, to what extent can they influence the acquisition of symbolic capital?

The esteem designers aspire towards is reflected not in their liaisons with the audience, but in relation to their peers and to critics (Davis, 1991) Such prioritisation can be explained through how, through their institutional dimension, legitimacy reflects upon all of the four capitals or forces separating participants within a stratified field (Bourdieu, 1993: 30). The key stake of legitimisation resides in the opportunity for fashion designers to access symbolic capital for their work (Godart,

⁸ Fédération de l'Haute Couture, the Council of Fashion Designers of America, the British Council of Fashion, or the Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana

2010:3) According to Kawamura (2005:48), the application of the symbolic capital in fashion can be found in the prospect of brands to promote themselves through attributes their potential consumers aspire to access in order to '*differentiate themselves from those with whom they do not wish to identify*'.

The study conducted by Lang and Lang (1988:79) on the '*posthumous durability of reputation*' raise an insightful observation on how fashion houses could prioritise their interests. According to Lang and Lang (1988:79), it is the renown, or the public visibility, and not reputation, or the legitimisation descending from peers (Becker, 1982:354), that influences what they describe as the '*posthumous durability of reputation*'. As participants attributed the dominant position in the fashion field, historical brands capitalise on their founder's legacy. Therefore, the authority of such houses relies on their founders' '*posthumous durability of reputation*'.

However, when providing a definition to the concept of reputation from a sociological perspective, Lang and Lang (1988: 79) mention the condition of reaching a public that may be regarded as '*relevant*' for the individual's activity. If applied to representatives of the media, the connection to a '*relevant*' public becomes itself vulnerable to the audience reached by the particular outlet. The demarcation proposed by Kawamura between fashion journalists and fashion editors could facilitate an understanding of '*relevant*' audiences under the influence of a media outlet's editorial format. Working for daily news papers, fashion journalists are defined by Kawamura (2005:81) as '*only a reporter and not a critic*'. In contrast, through their role, fashion editors may combine writing with styling. As representatives of major fashion magazines, editors are described by Kawamura (2005:81) as maintaining the liaisons with brands and retailers. The categorisation proposed by Kawamura (2005:81) and especially, the limited influence attributed to fashion journalists has been contradicted by multiple representatives of the general interest media. Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) offer a more comprehensive concept to assert the authority of journalists or editors. High professional standards can facilitate for editors a level of authority coined by Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) as '*fashion capital*' which allows them to convince other peers more easily of their opinions. When proposing the concept of '*fashion capital*', Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) connected its emergence to the embodied knowledge, acquired by being '*inside*' a particular field of cultural production. Under such a perspective, the fashion capital can be especially claimed by editors through complex projects such as documentaries, monographs of brands, etc. The authority editors acquire through the high professional standards or projects facilitating the '*fashion capital*' (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006) can influence the reception of their work towards being assimilated to Bourdieu's (1983:331) definition of specific legitimacy.

The condition of a '*relevant*' public can be explored not only in regards to a media outlet's editorial format, but also in connection to the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1993: 46) which may be attributed to its readers. In his study of cultural production, Bourdieu (1983:331-332) sets a distinction between bourgeois and popular legitimacy. While bourgeois legitimacy descends from social classes associated with the dominant tastes, popular legitimacy can be elevated by the receptivity of a wider audience. Since the cultural capital of its readers reflects upon authority under which they are recognised, media outlets can influence both bourgeois, as well as popular legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1983:331-332) What kind of legitimacy -bourgeois or popular- should fashion designers prioritise? In their analysis of André Courrèges' rise to prominence, Bourdieu and Delsaut (1975) warn that avantgarde designers reach legitimacy when appealing to the dominant tastes. His magnum opus '*Distinction*' (1984) offers an exhaustive profile on the bourgeois public. However, consumption poles such the United Arab Emirates, as well as the recent statistics on the geographic distribution of luxury⁹ would rather suggest that the bourgeois profile identified by Bourdieu is only a fraction in the fraction of limited relevance in the brands' target market.

Beyond connecting to potential consumers, appealing to the '*relevant*' public becomes a pipeline for social capital. Especially through their digital activity, the audience appear as active consumers who may also provide agency for the products they appreciate (Linden and Linden, 2017: 55). On social media, members of the public appear to attract their own public (Turner 2015: 84), thus expanding the diffusion chain for fashion.

A media outlet's public influences the '*fashion media discourse*' which Rocamora (2009:54-62) accounts as the tool through which journalists propose a legitimate perspective on how a designer's work should be looked at. The media discourse is reflected within one of the two definitions attributed by Barthes to fashion which, according to him, includes, not only the garments released on the market, but also what the public '*looks at and reads about*' (Barthes, 1990:80).

⁹ The Asia Pacific region is reported to dominate the luxury market according to research conducted by Deloitte (2020) and Vogue Business (2022)

Consequently, the fashion media discourse encompasses both the texts presenting a designer's work, but also the photo shootings supporting them. An analysis of fashion reporting in *Le Monde* and *The Guardian* highlighted for Rocamora (2001) differences in discourse in regards to both values, as well as the language register. In their study on the legitimisation of the Outsider art, Alexander and Bowler (2021) noted that the emergence of new discourse did not affect the meaning created through the previous ones. Moreover, the expansion of legitimating discourses allowed '*old and new ideas to coexist*'. Therefore, the differences in discourse expand the values under which both the fashion designers' work, as well as their public persona -and in effect, their star status- can be assimilated by the public.

As suggested by Godart (2010:123), the media discourse influences legitimacy when introducing '*a cultural shaping of fashion*'. Such a claim opens two perspectives. The first can be related to the aforementioned use of the fashion media discourse to influence how '*fashion should be seen*' (Rocamora 2009:54-62). Therefore, '*a cultural shaping of fashion*' implies an effect on taste and the audience's critical filter which leads to an observation raised by Featherstone (2007:40) over how the new cultural intermediaries are assimilated to 'the new intellectuals' and their contribution to the inflation of symbolic goods. The second perspective which can be raised in connection to the '*a cultural shaping of fashion*' can be related to the compositions employed within the representational dimension of fashion. As previously argued, the fashion system is characterised as a collective effort which is found not only in the production, but also, in the representation of garments. By practice, fashion shootings connect magazines with brands, photographers, models, stylists, and other contributions. The level of legitimacy reached by each of these contributors in their specific fields influences their position and the liberty they are granted to introduce their own discourse (Craik, 1994). Such work develops as an arrangement in which one particular contributor's input enables the interpretation of elements introduced by another (Barthes, 1990). However, as a collective effort, projects such as fashion shootings activate *the reflexive component of the path towards earning legitimacy* (Fowler, 2006). For example, high profile photographers become '*agents of legitimation*', whereas features in magazines reach '*instances of consecration*' (Bourdieu, 1993:121). Such synergies also highlight the barriers newcomers face to access such transfer of legitimacy. Since mentions in the press depend on how media professionals assess a topic's degree of newsworthiness (Gunter, 2016), a project's public visibility remains vulnerable to the legitimacy attributed to its creators. As signalled by Cattani et al (2014), a creative producer's status is highly dependent and evolves upon the authority which is already recognised by their peers, highlighting a paradigm that deepens the gap between incumbents and outsiders. Status is strategically considered even in the selection of models for fashion shows, who, according to Godart's and Mears' (2009:671), are cast based on information sharing mechanisms in social networks. Therefore, though described as institutions of diffusion facilitating bourgeois and popular legitimacy, media outlets operate as agents of specific legitimacy. Such effect can be regarded as a consequence of the stratified structure of fields (Bourdieu, 1993: 133) which connect players of similar levels of legitimacy.

3. Fashion as a discursive medium

The present subsection is dedicated to the integration of cultural references within fashion design. Objects of fashion are presented in its dual dimension blending elements which can be perceived through senses (materiality) and a discursive substrate (meaning). The semiotic character of the meaning is further explored through the opportunity of accommodating various references which are aligned to whatever discourse designers' intend to affirm through each collection. The process through which such references are extracted from their original sources and reinterpreted in garments is described through concepts such as recontextualisation (Hebdige, 1979:13) and articulation. Walter Benjamin's theory of the Tiger's Leap is introduced as a platform upon which fashion brands can integrate historical references in their communication discourse to promote sources from the past as relevant to a contemporary public.

2.1 The semiotic component of fashion

The theorisation of fashion has been concerned not only with its diffusion across social strata, but also with its discursive component which particularly preoccupied scholars of symbolic interactionism. Focused on self-representation, symbolic interactionism offers a bountiful terrain in studying the communication dimension of style from the wearer's perspective. However, the

research aim of the present thesis demands investigating how a source of inspiration is integrated within a fashion collection. Therefore, the relevant literature to the thesis is concerned to the creation of meaning on a production level.

The discursive component of fashion can be explored through the concept of 'ideology' defined by Hebdidge (1979: 18) as 'a *struggle*' to appropriate signs. As Hebdidge (1979: 18) points out, such struggle 'extends to even the most mundane areas of life'. Such flexibility allows transferring the concept of ideology towards values used by designers to affirm their ethos. As a core pillar of authenticity, fashion designers safeguard a certain stylistic linearity, beyond the distinctive character of each collection. However, the individual practices (Bourdieu, 1990:54) include not only the procedural aspects of dressmaking, but also the themes which fashion theorists (Steele, 2008, Benbow-Pfalzgraf, 2002, Vinken, 2005) refer to as the conceptual dimension of collections. Therefore, the sources of inspiration behind collections are selected to reassert the designer's ethos as an ideology.

Barthes (1990:64) proposed a signifying matrix to follow how a stylistic component and its accompanying meaning are inserted in a garment. The example he provides is one of a boatneck collared sweater. The sweater is defined as an Object, the Collar as a support, and the boatneck a Variant. By purpose and social meaning, a sweater is regarded as a casual clothing item. A boatneck collar is associated with elegance. Integrating a boatneck collar to a sweater is regarded as shifting the item's meaning from casual to smart casual. Under the signifying matrix, the fashion brand would act as an Object, the collection's theme or source of inspiration becomes the Support, and the strategic communication goals aimed through the collection the Variant.

Delivering the creation of meaning within fashion, the collections' conceptual dimension can also be approached from the structured and structuring effects detected by Bourdieu (1993: 53) in his definition of practices. The structured effects include material (eg: cuts, adornments) or intangible (eg:colours) elements creating the 'syntax' of the collection's discursive components. Capturing the intended outcomes through which the respective practice is conducted, the structuring effects imply the transmission of whatever meaning the designer wanted to be communicated.

Through his example of a dinner invitation letter (1955:12) that changes its cultural value once expressed through calligraphy or in verse, Panofsky opens an eloquent analogy over how fashion designer can use both the materiality, as well as iconicity to integrate the conceptual dimension of a collection. The opportunities suggested in Panofsky's analogy can be illustrated through the concept of symbolic production (Bourdieu, 1984:9), which applied to fashion, can describe the practice of attaching a certain meaning to colours and other elements. Endowing an object such as a garment with a 'symbolic power' transforms it into an icon (Alexander et al, 2012:1). Therefore, in addition to the opportunity of reasserting the ethos, through the symbolic production employed in the design of various garments, fashion collections open an exhaustive opportunity to expand the designer's iconography¹⁰.

As pointed out by Alexander et al (2012:158), the transformation of an object into an icon is achieved through '*consensus making*' between '*various interested actors who form a collective sense of its value*'. Furthermore, according to Alexander et al (2012:158), an object cannot be regarded as an icon if not recognised as such outside the field in which such consensus has been reached. Such observation can be regarded as aligned to Hebdige's (1979) definition of ideology, leading to the imperative of assessing the extent to which signs are recognised as connected to whatever force intends to appropriate them. Therefore, the struggle facing fashion designers also includes assessing the mediation and assimilation of the meaning they create and communicate through their collection.

Applying Blumer's (1969) '*own axioms of symbolic interactionism*', Davis (1991) points out how meaning under which fashions are assimilated by the public differ from those originally envisioned by designers when sketching a collection. In his work the 'Fashion System', Barthes (1990) explored the impact of fashion journalism and photography on how the meaning intended by brands is transmitted and assimilated. However, more recent content analysis conducted by Van de Peer (2014:450) indicate that journalists manage to emphasise the intellectual dimension of fashion by deprioritising tangible elements such as techniques in favour of abstract ideas such as sources of inspiration. However, the meaning under which an object such as a fashion collection can be assimilated as an icon remains nevertheless vulnerable to the authority which can be claimed by the institutions of diffusion engaged in the mediation chain (Alexander et al, 2012:27).

¹⁰ Styles such as Dior's geometrical stitches or Valentino's stud patterns are eloquent examples

The prospects through which an object can be recognised as an icon are nevertheless sensitive to time. Vannini (2007) explores Blumer's theory to demonstrate fashion process as '*a social process of semiotic transformation*', reflected in the '*changes of meaning*' attributed over time to symbolic objects. For Vannini (2007), Blumer's theory describes fashion as '*a regulatory system of negotiable and emergent rules*' under which meanings attributed to symbolic objects might mutate. Revivals are particularly vulnerable to such dynamics.

3.2 The integration of references in fashion collections

References providing the semiotic component of garments could be extracted from various fields or media, not only past fashion collection. Grounding his observations on Levi Strauss' concept of bricolage, Hebdige (1979) introduced the concept of recontextualisation to describe the practice affirmed by the punk community when detaching objects such as safety pins from their original purpose and transforming them into elements of adornment. The rationale behind the new arrangement is comprehensively reflected in the analogy proposed by Hebdige (1979:13) when arguing how aesthetics function for an ideology the way brick and mortar schools serve learning. Though formulated on a subculture, and not to an organisational level, Hebdige's conclusions could lead to the conclusion that designers select their sources of inspiration to reassert their ethos. Such perspective appears to be confirmed in practice by the tendency of media representatives to use the designer's artistic credo to decode the references identified within a collection, illustrating therefore Bourdieu's (2017:53) principle of coherence and consistency. Calefato (2004:11) signals how the concept of innovation is set around '*the universal sign quality of social reproduction*'. However, in order for a work to be praised as 'innovative', it must be established on social discourses perceived as 'authentic'. Therefore, such as the use of sources of inspiration is expected in the fashion system, so should their selection be perceived as compatible to the brand's ethos.

If applied to elements of imagery, recontextualisation is delivered through the practice of citation. Belonging to literary theory, the concept of citation has been applied through semiotics in media studies, film studies (Crawford, 2015; Heinze, Krämer, 2015; Dyer, 2003; Mulvey, 1989) and fashion studies (Lehmann, 2000; Calefato, 2004).

As recycling can be conducted *ad infinitum* (Svendesen, 2006), the cited references lose their original meaning with every new recontextualisation (Lehmann, 2000). Consequently, all further recontextualisations connect exclusively to the original source and not to other works which have integrated it. When introduced in new compositions, these elements may be given new meanings, a practice described as articulation (Hebdige, 1978; Polhemus, 2011). As pointed out by Kaiser (2013:14) articulation implies connecting an element to a composition and attaching an expressive function to it. In the preface of the Fashion System, Barthes warns over how the message which garments end up transmitting through their value as signifiers is actually owed to the discourse under which they are presented by cultural intermediaries such as fashion magazines. Integrated in the designer's communication strategy, such expressive function will inevitably penetrate the fashion media discourse when explained in press releases and other tools reaching the institutions of diffusion. As noted by Lehmann (2000:27), attempts of retransmitting the ideology originally intended through an image may also end up circulating with various interpretations proposed by creators engaged in revivals. Therefore's such perspectives through which a reference has been approached could inevitably influence the filter of new creators trying to connect to that particular source.

As observed by Lehmann (2000:38), citations are always incomplete. An integral copy is at least discouraged, if not sanctioned within the fashion system for arguments related to expectations of innovation. As noted by Calefato (2004:125) in the case of historical dress, identical reproductions are assimilated to costume and performance, whereas retro styles are accepted as fashion works. Therefore, a garment based on a cited reference is more likely to reflect more of its creator's vision, rather than the representation of the source of inspiration. Polhemus (2011:45) provides an additional perspective over how the original meaning of a source gets to be diluted through recontextualisation. Studying the use of traditional costumes and street styles as sources of inspiration within the fashion system, Polhemus (2011:45), noted how such elements are transformed from symbols to signs (Polhemus, 2011:53) when integrated into works of fashion, whether collections or garments.

An additional factor contributing to the loss of meaning from one recontextualisation to another derives from what Baudrillard (1994: 45) describes as 'neofiguration'. According to

Baudrillard (1994) no adaptation from the past is revived in an identical form, but as upgraded version of the original, adjusted to the values of the time in which they are revival. Nevertheless, as Baudrillard (1994:45) signals, technical advancements that will inevitably enhance any attempt of an identical reproduction.

Godart et al (2020) raises an insightful perspective on how adaptation and recontextualisation can produce innovation, even though the references which they may transfer from one work to another are recognisable. To Godart et al (2020), the creative processes can be framed between antecedents and precedents. Antecedents refer to the fields in which a project may emerge, as well as the organisations -such as fashion brands- to which their creation may be attributed. A project's consequences, however, describe, according to Godart et al (2020) the audience it is presented to and the perception it generates. Therefore, innovation can occur even by introducing references to different audiences to those they would have reached through the source they initially emerged in. Polhemus (2011: 45-48) explained such transmission through the concept of '*fashionalisation*' which describes the integration of anti-fashion works within the organised system of fashion. However, Polhemus (2011:45) formulated his conclusions on traditional dress and street style. Therefore, the concept of '*fashionalisation*' is more appropriate to describe recontextualisation on a wider scale, such as that identified with a reference perpetuated systematically on a system level, alike the case of camouflage and other elements which may reappear periodically within various seasons. The concept of '*fashionalisation*' could be judged as too ambitious to describe the insertion of a particular source of inspiration into an isolated collection. Under such limitation, that particular reference is yet to be fully absorbed into the fashion system. Therefore, it is more likely to be associated with the fashion designer to have first explored it within their collection.

Polhemus (2011: 45-48) formulated his findings to explain how elements from outside the fashion system become part of the designers' collections. For Vinken (2005:64) introducing '*non fashionable elements*' into fashion designs creates an '*avant-garde effect*' which transcends fashion in its practices and expectations. Such avant-garde effect is likely to elevate their creator to a maverick status (Becker, 1982:233) consolidating the association between the designer and that particular source of inspiration which is likely to be assimilated by the public in the *imaginarium* they develop around brands (Lipovetsky, 2007:38)

2.3 The appeal of the past

The spectrum of contexts which fashion designers could explore for inspiration also includes the past. The rationale for conducting citations from past sources has been connected to Walter Benjamin's metaphor of the Tiger's Leap (Lehmann, 2000: 3; Evans, 2000: 106) which describes images returning from previous epochs to echo society's concerns. As Lehmann (2000: 286) points out, the Tiger's Leap can be transhistorical or ahistorical. The transhistorical approach is connected with events that have been officially documented. The ahistorical leap is connected with the unaccepted past of a parallel occurrence that mirrors history either through taboos or through concerns that never received recognition. (Lehmann, 2000: 3; Evans, 2000: 106) Ahistorical citations tend to explore outcasts, rather than the socially approved values and figures (Lehmann, 2000:285). However, in order for promote past references to a contemporary public, literature (Evans, 2012:92, Geczy and Karaminas, 2016:3) stresses the imperative of reformulating such citations through a semiotic discourse that highlights their relevance to the audience's values. Dewey (1980) and Panofsky (1955) provide comprehensive analogies for such requirement. For Dewey (1980:110), it is impossible for a modern day visitor to be graced with the exact same experience of the Pantheon as that inspired to an Athenian devout. In Panofsky's (1955:5) perspective, should a modern scientist entertain the idea of studying Newton or Leonardo da Vinci's writings or sketches, their interest is more likely to shift from mechanics towards history, as technological obsolescence reduces or eliminates the relevance of their designs.

The idea of relevance is mirrored in Walter Benjamin's warnings over how images from the past tend to disappear if not '*recognised by the present as one of its own concerns*' (Evans, 2012:22) Blumer (1969:280) also noted how references from the past are always selected through '*the filter of the present*'. However, as highlighted in the previous subsection of the literature review, fashion collections merge a material and a semiotic dimension, notably, the garments and the source of inspiration which influenced their creation. Therefore, any attempts to understand an epoch's perception of relevance requires investigating how references from the past are infused in the semiotic content and then harmonised with practices characterising contemporary fashion design.

Literature highlights two major prospects in regards to the reception of past references when integrated within a contemporary discourse: nostalgia and fetishism. According to the esteemed fashion historian Valerie Steel (2008, Vol1:78), the use of historical references within fashion collections is always grounded on an idealised past. The assumption of an idealised past leads towards Davis' (1979) conclusions over the emergence of nostalgia. As a synthesis of Davis (1979) study, the past is recollected or evaluated through an idealised perspective when current anxieties amplify positive memories. Overlooking, if not excluding, uncomfortable experiences, nostalgia intervenes upon a person's critical filter, affecting the objective assessment of an epoch (Davis, 1979). However, Davis' (1979) work explains nostalgia towards a lived memory, whereas fashion collections may also cite references from distanced epochs which the audience didn't personally experience. Attempts to appeal to nostalgia lead to an insightful perspective proposed by Riisberg and Munch (2015) over how the fashion and architecture fields relate to time for value creation. To Riisberg and Munch (2015) physical alterations produced by wear such as the patina are approached as Age Value. The connection highlighted between certain styles and significant moments in history elevate a Commemorative Value. The ability to identify the epoch in which a particular item is dated signals its Historical Value. A fourth dimension Present-Day value derives out of the subjective appreciation which facilitates the transformation of an epoch's products into heritage elements.

The second effect connected in literature to the reception of past references when integrated within a contemporary discourse is fetishism. According to Baudrillard (1994: 44) references of the past are more likely to reemerge fetishised. However, as argued by Baudrillard, such effect is more likely to be created around a nearer, rather than distant past. Collective practices (Bourdieu, 1990:54) perpetuated with the fashion system partially invalidate Baudrillard's claim. According to Polhemus (2011:41), innovation is conducted in fashion in relation to previous proposals such as collections to be replaced within a new retail season. The most recent revivals seem to connect to references within a 20 years' span (the celebration of the 1990es' aesthetics in the 2010es and that of the 2000s in 2020). Therefore, a reasonable point of reflection is found in the necessity to frame the concept of 'nearer past' according to the fashion *doxa*.

Iacono (2016) provides a comprehensive synthesis of the transdisciplinary theorisation of fetishism. His findings can lead to the conclusion that the fashion system operates on the dimensions signalled by Freud and Marx in the emergence and drivers of fetishism. Indeed, fashion can ignite -at least sensual, if not sexual- arousal towards certain garments and aesthetics, as the Freudian perspective suggests. Nevertheless, fashion also creates social relations around commodities, highlighting the Marxian approach on fetishism as equally valid. However, the fashion system tends to merge the Freudian and the Marxists understandings of fetishism. Though conducted on the Hollywood film system, Mulvey's (1996) observations on the '*economy of fetishism*' (1996:8) could also be transferred towards an understanding of the effect intended by fashion designers through the semiotic content integrated in their collections. According to Mulvey (1996:8), popular cinema can be regarded as a commodity connecting 'the commodity as spectacle' and 'the woman as spectacle'. Within the fashion system, the collection as commodity is transformed into a spectacle by promotion tools such as catwalk shows and ad campaigns. However, through their semiotic content, fashion collections elevate a certain psyche connecting the aspirations of potential consumers to elements of style extracting from their source of inspiration. The 'woman as spectacle' is found in this exact fusion between the imagery created by a collection and that assimilated by the public.

While nostalgia and fetishism explain the broad strategy under which history-inspired contemporary collections could be promoted, the concept of relevance still demands investigating how past references combined with contemporary practices in coherent arrangements. Benjamin's commentary over how the past and the present are connected through a phantasmic dialogue which is '*less literal and more structural*' (Evans, 2012: 92) highlight how, in new works, revivals transfer elements of style and aesthetics, rather than meaning. As product of their times, past references reflect what Castoriadis (1975:369) calls a social-historical psyche. The fusion between the historical meaning and the contemporary structure is likely to touch what Mulvey (1996:26) defined as "collective fantasy" or a Freudian understanding of 'unassimilated historical traumas' which prevail over time in 'narrative structures', 'psychic scenarios', and 'iconographies'. Therefore, the collective fantasy connects to the social-historical psyche.

According to Mulvey, recognisable myths transpire from the new discourse under which past references have been presented to the public. Her observations appear to be confirmed by a parallel conducted by Geczy and Karaminas (2018) over how the masculines aesthetics dominating the public sphere are nothing else than a new flesh added to perennial archetypes. In

their argument, they connect the hipster to the bohemian, the playboy to the libertine, and the superhero to the medieval knight. Operating on the '*collective fantasy*' allows fulfilling Benjamin's belief (Rocamora, 2015:94) over how the concrete importance of those images extracted from the past resides not in the objects they illustrated but in the values they represented. The strategy of connecting to the '*collective fantasy*' also fulfills Lehmann (2000:5)'s observation over how citations reaching as 'an eternalised ideal' grant fashion '*substantiality*', ensuring not only the perception of meaning, but also the relevance effect.

The contemporary structure englobes not only the material dimension of garments, but also branding elements which highlight the individualisation of a designer within the fashion system. Exploring the harmonisation of historical citations with branding elements demands connecting to the field position of designers and the interests they affirm within the fashion system. Semiotic content reflects the embodied state suggested by Bourdieu (1986:243) as a component of the cultural capital. However, legitimisation within the fashion system is particularly connected to the symbolic capital Bourdieu (1986:243). Therefore, when investigating the stakes and interests of fashion designers when considering a reference from the past, one must explore how they could use that citation to access symbolic capital.

4. The fashion muse: from sign to symbol

Under the significance schemes proposed by Barthes (1990:215), the act of citation transforms the selected reference into a language which can be further use to emphasise the designer's discourse. Should the designer consider using a human subject instead of any other reference, the language role becomes fulfilled by that individual's style. The discourse formulated around the muse transforms the fashion designer or brand as a cultural intermediary (Bourdieu, 1984:335) for her image or legacy. The following section is introduced through an overview on the processes through which human subjects are integrated in the conceptual dimensions of a fashion collection. As highlighted in the previous section of the literature review, the semiotics behind fashion collections reduce the human subject to a sign. Consequently, the research aim demands tracing the influences and factors which may determine their evolution from sign to icon. The research scope of the present thesis has been set around individuals extracted from the past and used by fashion designers as sources of inspiration. For ease of expression, such individuals shall be referred to as muses.

4.1 The fashion field: a platform for creating icons out of muses

Fashion muses are selected as a human representation of the designer's ethos. Works on inter-media adaption provide a comprehensive illustration of the synergies generated within the process of recontextualisation when applied on human subjects. Using a human subject as a source of inspiration for a fashion collection implies designing garments inspired by that individual's biographical elements, habitually their style. Such transfer recreates the transformational intermediality model observed by Schröter (2011) in her study of notable paintings or buildings featured in film or photography. According to Schröter (2011), the painting or building cease to be considered as standalone artefacts as they are absorbed within the composition of another medium. From a bourdieisian perspective, the muse's style or biography become structured effects, whereas objectives desired to be attained through the significance relationship become its structuring effects (Bourdieu, 1993: 53). However, beyond the designer's own objectives, additional structuring effects are noted in regards to the muses' public visibility. As a practice within the fashion field, citations from human sources of inspiration include various biographical elements which are integrated both in the garments' composition, as well as in various promotional tools accompanying the collections. Sources used by designers include imagery related the muse which can further set the foundation of the celebrity visuals they're associated with should they be perceived as icons. However, designers can also find inspiration in various textual references from proven biographical facts to anecdotes which can further accommodate a celebrity mythology (Herwitz, 2008, McDonald, 2013).

Exhibiting a similar deployment to the process of adaptation, the choice of a muse activates mutual textual exchanges (Whelehan and Cartmell, 2007: 28)¹¹ within the process of adaptation. The public visibility enjoyed by a creator's work inevitably migrates towards their source of

¹¹ A historical form of adaptation can be found in paintings recreating biblical or mythological scenes.

inspiration, increasing its recognition as a standalone reference (Bortolotti and Hutcheon, 2007). However, as Bortolotti and Hutcheon (2007) point out, in order for the reference to develop into a new product, a new vehicle is needed the collection loses relevance for the audience. Consequently, every new collection inspired by a lesser known individual from the past contributes to their transformation from sign (as fragment within a particular designer's work) to symbol (as fashion icon).

Within the mutual textual exchanges mentioned by Whelehan and Cartmell (2007: 28), designers participate to the muse's public visibility through the discourse formulated around her in the collection and its promotional strategy. The discourse exhibit a similar manifestation to what Bourdieu (1984:9) calls a '*symbolic production*', contributing to the emergence of a certain mythology to further support a celebrity construct developed around the muse (Herwitz, 2008, McDonald, 2013).

The same human source of inspiration can be approached by more than one designer. As demonstrated by Aragon's (2014) in her study on the Fridamania, the same imagery deriving from the same individual can be attributed multiple meanings which end up simultaneously circulating within the same field. Nevertheless, as Aragon (2014) points out, a strong component the original semiotic content behind that imagery -in Frida's case, her disability- could even be disregarded within the process fashion designers engage in order to create meanings for their collection. Furthermore, as Alexander and Bowler (2021) point out, the emergence of one discourse does not cancel another, as ideas end up coexisting. Consequently, the discourse each designer who honours the same muse formulates around her adds new semiotic content to the Mythology (Herwitz, 2008, McDonald, 2013).

The public visibility attained by their collections transforms designers in instances of consecration, while indirectly activating diffusion (Bourdieu, 1993: 133) through press mediation. As their 'discoverer', the designer holds the merit for the public's acquaintance to the muse who therefore becomes a celebrity through associations (Rojek, 2010). The authority claimed by designers in the fashion field is transferred upon the muse as a form of legitimacy (Cattani et al, 2014).

As previously mentioned, fashion brands benefit from promoting their designers's celebrity status (Gordart, 2010:88, Kawamura, 2005:63-64). Noted as the core argument behind the designer's celebrity status, the presumption of artistic genius (Schinkel, 2003) allows them to acquire or consolidate their symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986:16). Celebrity studies allowed identifying two core discourses through which designers are promoted as stars. The first comes from glory which is connected to extraordinary achievements (Litli and Jeffress, 2017). The direct return expected by brands can be detected in the concept of renown, though which, as Inglis (2015: 23) argues, an individual's merits further honour the organisation they represent.

Beyond the designer's own authority, the muses' transition from sign to symbol is holistically supported by the semiotic content developed around the fashion system as a field. An analogy proposed by Umberto Eco (Dyer, 1998:133) to explain the power of the stage could also be transferred to the fashion field. According to Eco, a drunk stepping on a stage is assimilated by the audience to a performance, even through in a regular, day to day setting, any manifestations of intoxication are dismissed as unsocial. Consequently, the exploration of any lesser known individuals from the past as sources of inspiration for fashion collection sets the premises for their iconisation in relation to the field of fashion. The parallel semiotic content developed around lesser known individuals from the past is likely to include the 'fashion icon' status for the simple fact of having inspired a fashion collection.

4.2 Towards the establishment of a fashion icon

Working with unknown figures from the past obliges the designer to formulate a discourse around the muses to justify their relevance to our times. A deeply individualistic style may be associated to loyalty to one's beliefs, an attitude which Bell (1978) qualified as a form of authenticity. In addition, the ability to affirm a style judged 'timeless' decades further in history can be presented under Hero profile (Morgan, 2010). However, biographical arguments used as the rationale behind the choice of a muse are assimilated by the audience both in the sense they've been formulated, but also through what Castoriadis (1975:366) called *imaginary significations*.

Such parallel semiotic content noted by Dyer (2003:163) in the transformation of Judy Garland as a gay icon¹².

As previously mentioned, the designers' celebrity status facilitates their brands acquisition of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986:16). However, as a practice in talent management, celebrities tend to be strategically modelled not on the celebrity's traits as an individual, but on their audience's projections (Cashmore, 2016). A similar development can be noted in how the public's interaction with a fashion brand create an *imaginarium* of values emerged around its ethos, aesthetics, target consumers or any other representative aspects (Lipovetsky, 2007: 38) Therefore, the muse is likely to either be selected or promoted in alignment to how the audience sees the brand.

The audience's perception also influences the celebrity's lifecycle (Lacey 1998:35; Nayar 2009:54; King, 2015). However, the research scope accounts muses whom the public has become acquainted to through fashion designers and their collections. Consequently, the processes studied imply that the muses are yet to reach a celebrity status. In such context, the audience's perception influences the muses' public visibility, which, in literature is associated to openness, exposure, scrutiny, as well as recognition (Redmond 2015: 80). A celebrity's public visibility can be increased through content, opinions, digital activity and being promoted as representative (Barron, 2014). Once institutionalised through press and columnists, even hearsay, gossip, or, in the case of historical figures, anecdotes became an engine for celebrity visibility (Gunter, 2014; King, 2018:77) However, such pipeline remains vulnerable to how media professionals assess various topics as being newsworthy (Gunter, 2014). Beyond the journalists' input, the acquisition of social capital relies on how media rituals which circulate myths also drive social cohesion (Nayar, 2009: 33) Social media accelerated such flow by support the dynamics identified by Turner (2015: 84) in his observation of how members of the public to attract their own public. Especially in their own digital activity, the audience manifest as active consumers who may also provide agency for the references they appreciate (Linden and Linden, 2017:55).

Literature on dead celebrities highlights manifestations which can be expected from the public's responsiveness to the muses. The concept of dead celebrities describes figures such as Marilyn Monroe or Kurt Cobain, whose fame prevailed beyond their deaths and who retained a level of cultural relevance similar to that enjoyed in their lifetime (Kearl, 2010; Ebert, 2010). As unknown or forgotten figures from the past, the public visibility attained by two muses exhibits a similar outcome. Tangential areas from the study of dead celebrities that can be applied to the muses include the connection created with fans through memorial social media content (Gil-Egui et al, 2017), which, as previously argued, maintains their public visibility and extends their lifecycle as prospective cultural references.

Beyond public visibility, the muses end up regarded as celebrities once recognised as symbols (Dyer, 1979; Turner, 2008). The star status implies being perceived as a sign for specific values and perpetuated as such in the public discourse (Dyer, 1979). Once associated with certain values, the muses may also inspire different levels of attachment. Dyer (1979:17) proposed Tudor's (1974:80) typology of audience/star relationship to understand the bond fans may develop for their favourite celebrities. According to Tudor's (1974) matrix the audience may nurture a high or low identification with celebrities. Attachment to celebrities may manifest specific or diffused consequences. Specific consequences emerge from one singular momentum, or aspect. Diffused consequences may expand towards all sorts of aspects from a fan's life. If emerged in the context of a low sense of identification, the specific context may give rise to emotional affinity. However, when emerged in a high level of identification, the specific context can lead to self-identification. A low level of identification within diffused consequences leads to imitation. A high level of identification within diffused consequences creates projections which can be found in the muses glorification.

The highest degree of attachment expressed by the public exhibits the patterns of "celebrity worship" a concept introduced by McCutcheon et al (2002), as cited by Lofton (Elliot, 2018:95). Celebrity worship evokes Rojek's (2001:58) thesis on fandom emerging on the same parasocial

¹² Judy Garland's persona has been strategically created to deliver the stereotype of an innocent girl which was underrepresented in the Hollywood star system, back then dominated by divas launched to embody female sensuality. As an individual, Judy Garland's lifetime struggle was coming to terms with the contrast between her and her peers. The gay community honours Judy Garland as a tragic heroine for how she perceived her inability to deliver a glamorous image as failing at her femininity. Such fate resonated before many of the community's members who were not given the chance to express their gender identity (Dyer, 2003:163).

interactions on which religion is spread. The rise of a high interest in places associated with the muses (eg: Venice for Luisa Casati) is defined by Brooker (2017:157) as symbolic pilgrimage.

5. Conclusions of the literature review

The cultural impact of fashion derives from its societal impact which encompasses both the renewal of styles, as well as the values it influences through the transmission of meaning (Kawamura, 2005, Kaiser, 2008, Godart, 2010). Fashion designers achieve their cultural impact through an interdependency with press representatives (Barthes, 1967) as agents of legitimation (Bourdieu, 1980:80). Innovation is fundamental for legitimacy. However, capitals afferent to the *Pret à porter* and Haute couture segments affect the expectations and creative liberties under which innovation is affirmed. Under Walter Benjamin's thesis of the Tiger's Leap, past references resurface in fashion to echo society's concerns (Lehmann, 2000: 286)

Bourdieu's (1993: 53) argument of the structured and structuring of the habitus allow tracing the communication flow activated through the design and promotion of a collection. While fragments of a muse's iconography represents a manifestation of structured effects, the muse's evolution in the public space can be assimilated to structuring effects activated by a collection. The connection established by designers with their muses as sources of inspiration is likely to be grounded on *imaginary significations* (Castoriadis, 1975:366) which may be further communicated through promotional tools accompanying the connection. The imaginary significations though stand as a source of 'symbolic power' which sets the premise for her transformation into an icon (Alexander et al, 2012:1). The muse's relevance within the public space is therefore initially supported through a transfer of legitimacy from the designers' symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986:16), as well as the *imaginarium* associated by their customer base to their brand (Lipovetsky, 2007: 38) Through the discourse formulated around her, the muse becomes an embodiment of the designer's ethos. The connection between the muse and the brands' ethos is likely to be reasserted by press representatives who tend to compose their reviews in alignment to a designer's past work, confirming what Bourdieu (2017:53) defines as the principle of coherence and consistency. However, the public may also develop a different appreciation of the muses and the values they were assigned by the designer to transmit (Davis, 1991)

In order to be perceived by the public as relevant to our days, lesser known figures extracted from the past are likely to be praised for their timelessness and authenticity, which signal the potential of a celebrity construct around the Hero profile (Morgan, 2010). Both the imaginary significance through which the designer connected to them, as well as the anecdotes researched on them shall support the mythology ensuring their visibility as celebrities (Herwitz, 2008, McDonald, 2013, Gunter, 2014; King, 2018:77)

Scholarly works published in the last two decades highlighted, Barthes' (1967), Blumer's (1969) and Bourdieu's and Delsaut's (1975) writings as the most frequent theoretical background for new areas of research. However, Bourdieu's and Delsaut's (1976) observation of dominant tastes determining the acceptance of newcomers becomes less applicable on a global market which accommodates news poles of luxury exhibiting heterogeneous and continuously diversifying consumer profiles.

As argued in the the critique of the reviewed literature, through its focus on both craftsmanship, as well as aesthetic value, the high fashion segment illustrates the *bourdieusian* understanding of cultural entrepreneurship, whereas its scale production and cost efficiency strategy qualifies mass market apparel under conventional entrepreneurship. Such demarcation is much more visible for labels owned by luxury conglomerates as reflected in their strategy of either reviving defunct *maisons* or acquiring underperforming brands. The last two decades indicate a strategy practiced by luxury conglomerates of injecting funds in their operations till they become profitable under the argument of safeguarding their symbolic capital. Reasserting the cultural dimension of their products allows high fashion brands to deviate from the *griffe*, under the condition of promoting new styles through a discourse related to the brand's ethos and the original artistic credo under which the house has been established. Therefore, the pressure of safeguarding the *griffe* attributed by Bourdieu and Delsaut (1976) to the established *maisons* reaches new connotations, shifting the perspective from artistry to ideology. Promoting a discourse which connects all sources of inspiration to the brand's ideology and the founders' initial vision allows coherently integrating any -perhaps unexpected- references, lesser known figures from the past included.

The brand ideology signals a further limitation to Bourdieu's and Delsaut's (1976) observations. The initial credo under which all historical maisons still in operation was that of contesting aesthetic norms. Praised by fashion as visionaries, Coco Chanel, Christian Dior, and other founders of historical *maisons* rose to prominence by overturning established aesthetic. The values under which they made their debut and the high mastery of the technical dimension of *couture* qualified them under Becker's (1982) definition of the maverick profile. Under Bourdieu's and Delsaut's (1976) observation, it is exactly the inclination towards innovation which the established *maisons* should safeguard. If limited to styles, as Bourdieu and Delsaut (1976) originally formulated their theory, the focus on conservation can be argued as more relevant to bespoke/*sartoria* tailoring, rather than the high fashion segment.

The muse's public visibility is vulnerable to the retail calendar, affecting her lifecycle as a prospective celebrity. A challenge to her evolution as an icon resides in the prospects to neutralise the effects of an ephemeral public visibility. The reviewed literature confirms the influence of press reviews as instances of consecration and diffusion. However, the practical limitation descending from the retail calendar signals a void in literature in regards to the timespan in which designers can claim the symbolic capital from the press reviews they attract for a seasonal collection. The existing literature suggests that 'discover' label can function as an argument for symbolic capital. However, available works do not offer any insights on whether a muse, thus a human subject, can be considered an element in a fashion brand's iconography just like other elements (eg: the camellia for Chanel, equestrian motifs for Hermès and Gucci).

III. Methodology

The research aim of the present thesis is to investigate the fashion system's influence to create celebrities out of its revived or posthumously discovered muses. Such dynamics recreate Bortolotti and Hutcheon's (2007) conclusions over the success indicators for references first popularised by the work of a cultural entrepreneur. Beyond quantitative data, such as the number of copies sold, success is also measured by the extent to which a project familiarises an audience with the respective source of inspiration. Bortolotti and Hutcheon (2007) also stress, however, that any measure of success should nevertheless consider the long term evolution of a source of inspiration. The diversity of works using that particular element as a reference should not be neglected either.

As highlighted by Godart (2014), the core products of the fashion field can be located in the collection and not the standalone garments, whereas catwalk shows are regarded as promotional tools with a key importance in public relations (Kawamura, 2005:84). The following research shall be conducted on seasonal collections, assimilating catwalk shows to promotional tools.

1. Statement of methodology

The research scope of the present thesis covers a series of processes activated, perpetuated, or influenced by distinctive parties. The catalyst of such succession comes from fashion designers interpreting the life, style, or other values associated to various human sources of inspiration as compatible to their own ideology, ethos, and interests. The designers' discernment of potential muses points out the necessity to approach the research from a Relativist ontological position. When integrating the respective human subjects within their collections, fashion designers promote their sources of inspiration by attaching them a certain meaning articulated within the spirit of their ideology, ethos, or interests. The same meaning shall be further transmitted by press representatives and assimilated by the designers' audience, who might also develop a parallel semiotic content around the muse. The creation of meaning, its circulation, and potential mutations around it indicate the imperative of a Subjectivist epistemology. The data shall therefore be collected through a holistic strategy capturing the discernment process of the designer, as well as the response of both the cultural intermediaries and the audience. The data analysis shall be correspondently follow an Interpretivistic approach.

Analysing the processes captured in the research aim demands identifying individuals who have been posthumously praised as fashion muses after having been introduced to a contemporary audience. Consequently, the case study method provides the most comprehensive foundation for developing a research design for the present thesis. The case study method is used in psychology, psychiatry, sociology, business studies and other social sciences. Common points beyond disciplines can be found in the interrelations elevating a particular context, as well as in the influences that go beyond that setting (Mills et al, 2010). Compared to an experiment, which is a researcher's own creation in which they have control over all the variables, the case study method is used in naturally occurring social situations (Byrne et al, 2009). Case studies are located, as Byrne et al (2009) point out, in *'instances of a particular situation or set of circumstances'*.

This means that each case study in this project has been conceived, developed and launched under the influence of different circumstances determined not only by the peculiarities of their field and the interests driving their creators, but also by macro factors. The dimensions of each case are best identified empirically through observation (Gerring, 2004). The present research is based on two distinctive case studies: Luisa Casati and Renée Perle. Both fashion muses have been discovered by the same designer, John Galliano. However, the position occupied by the brands which accommodated Galliano's collections differ. While Luisa Casati was honoured by John Galliano in his work for Christian Dior, his Renée Perle-inspired collection was presented under his namesake brand. Christian Dior's authority within the fashion field opens different opportunities for media exposure compared to the position occupied by John Galliano's brand. Furthermore, John Galliano launched his collection for Dior in the same year Luisa Casati's authorised biography was released. In contrast, Renée Perle's biography has been released 11 years after John Galliano presented his collection inspired by her and she was already recognised as a fashion muse.

The researcher's interest stands in tracing the processes that characterise a particular unit (Gerring, 2004). This approach is privileged by the case study method's ability to highlight causal relationships (Gomm and Hammersley, 2000). However, researchers are recommended to not

neglect the fact that processes may emerge both internally and as a result of external influences. For example, causal relationships can appear not only in a project's design and development, but in all stages of its lifecycle, and even before its estimated expiration date, as in the case of fashion collections, which are available for purchase for just one retail season.

One of the key benefits of case studies is that they do not impose any explicit methodology, due to their individual character (Yin, 2018). Consequently, they can use both quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as interpretative and explanatory approaches (Gomm and Hammersley, 2000).

Criticisms of the case study methodology converge on the question of its usefulness for highlighting uniqueness rather than generalisation (Gomm and Hammersley, 2000). However, by focusing on a single unit, the researcher attempts to elucidate the '*features of a larger class of similar phenomena*' (Gerring, 2004). For example, the contrast between the level of authority claimed by Christian Dior and John Galliano allows concluding over the mediation opportunities for historical houses and contemporary brands. Outside the work of John Galliano, areas of investigation for Luisa Casati shall include collections presented by Alberta Ferretti (2016) and Dries Van Noten (2016). Areas of investigation for Renée Perle include collections launched by MaxMara (2022) and Emilia Wickstead (2024). Each of the designers succeeding John Galliano claim different authority levels.

As previously mentioned, case studies allow setting up a distinctive research design which can integrate multiple methods. Resolving the research aim would require a holistic approach of the case studies developed around two key strategies. The first strategy implies the processes through which fashion designers present an individual extracted from the past as relevant to the contemporary public. The second strategy requires investigating the factors determining the public to recognise as standalone references the same muses whom they first became acquainted to through the work of a designer. Both research strategies shall be briefly presented in the following two subsections:

1.1 The critical and public response to collections inspired by Luisa Casati and Renée Perle

Investigating the processes through which fashion designers extract individuals from the past and popularise them as muses demands exploring the methods and processes they engage in across three fundamental activities. The first one refers to a designer's approach on research as a preparatory stage to sketching their collection. The second one demands exploring how human subjects are integrated as themes in their collections. A third stage indicates the necessity to detect the discourse through which the muse's biography is harmonised to the designer's ideology. Each of the three stages imposes distinctive research methods, as following:

1. A field analysis to identify the points of focus and analogies through which designers might connect a source of inspiration to their own ideology and interest following the research process they engage in when preparing for a collection.
2. A visual analysis is imposed for understanding the creative processes composing the collection's design. The starting point in the visual analysis is to detect the cited imagery to be further interpreted in the collection. As background data, the visual analysis shall be supported by critiques of the designers' overall artistry, as found in their biographies or fashion history books and encyclopaedias. Nevertheless, beyond the actual garments composing the collection, the visual analysis shall also be conducted on promotional tools such as the catwalk show, campaign ads, and videos (in the case of Alberta Ferretti's SS 2016 collection).
3. The content analysis allows identifying the elements used as arguments by various agents of legitimisation (eg: journalists, buyers, patrons) in their critique of the collection. Conventionally, press reviews combine a subjective interpretation of the collection with information delivered in the media kit, statements of the designers and other contributors (eg: milliners, make-up artists, as well as various impressions collected amongst the catwalk shows attendees. The content analysis therefore facilitates an outlook not only on how the collection has been perceived, but also on how the designers position themselves in regards to the muse. The discourse through which the muses are presented in the press reviews the collection has attracted shall further confirm how such ideological alignment between designers and sources is being further mediated to the public. Mentions of their source of inspiration in press reviews could also indicate whether the designers' authority in the fashion field activates any transfer of legitimacy towards their muses.

1.2 The fashion muses' transformation from sign to symbol

As highlighted in the literature review, when used as sources of inspiration for fashion collection, fashion muses are transformed into signs and signifiers for the designer's or brand's ideology. The significance relation created through the citation influences the public to associate them with the brand which first used them as sources of inspiration. The reviewed literature has not clarified whether a fashion muse -thus, an human subject- can be assimilated to a fashion brand's iconography, alike any signs used in its products or branding. Turner (2008) however, signals, that once recognised for their individuality, human subjects become symbols. For fashion muses, being perceived as symbols implies being recognised as standalone references outside the image association created with the brand which first used them as sources of inspiration. Therefore, the research strategy should also focus on the discourse under which the media, as cultural intermediaries, refers to the fashion muses. Nevertheless, the muses' acknowledgement as standalone references is also confirmed by the longitudinal evolution registered by the content published under the #luisacasati and #reeneperle hashtags.

2. The biographical and iconographical elements supporting the revival : Field analysis

Research on a specific source of inspiration is recognised as a standard activity through which designers prepare for a new collection. However, the efforts designers may dedicate to researching a human source of inspiration differ from the exhaustive study biographers are presumed to commit to. An outlook on fashion collections inspired by human subjects suggests that designers are likely to resume their source of inspiration to certain fragments of their life, rather than an extensive biography. When extracting various text or imagery elements to further use the as citations in garments, designers may not only consider their muses' lives, but also their time, affiliations, or whatever datum they may consider representative to their lives. Consequently, when recreating a designer's approach to research, Bourdieu's field theory stands out as a more appropriate method rather than historical biography.

Though his oeuvre highlights multiple approaches to the field analysis. Bourdieu (2017)'s sociological portrait of Manet offers a more exhaustive set of angles which designers may consider when selecting fragments of their muse's biography and iconography to cite in their collections. Such framework allows following how the biographical elements evoked by designers within their collection could influence the celebrity construct emerged around the muse. Since direct citations are rarely found in fashion, garments may also emerge as metaphorical representations of various textualities such as biographical facts or anecdotes. The explanations designers provide either in the marketing materials accompanying the collection or in interviews reassert the textualities they have been most inspired in when studying their source of inspiration.

Objective identification elements lead to physical and social environments in which the muses could be located, as well as categories in which they can be framed (eg: heiress in Luisa's case, *couture* model in Renée's). If exploring the muses through their areas of creative expression, the designers cannot disregard the doxa, as well as hierarchy of genres and format dominating the fields they were most active in. A muse's style and values represent manifestations of their *habitus* which fuses disposition, sources of influences, capital, evolution of the style, and transfers of iconography. Furthermore, understanding the muses' impact on their contemporaries leads to an outlook on their affiliations, while also assessing the axis of autonomy and influence affecting their work, or, in Luisa's case, their creative expression. Nevertheless, in order to portray the muses as mavericks, designers should also consider Luisa and Renée times, the general tastes affecting their epoch, and the patterns of demand and consumption to be noted in their society.

3. The approach of the fashion muse as a collection theme: Visual Analysis

The field analysis recreated the data collected by the designers from their muses lives and times within the research process they engage in prior to sketching the collection. The next phase of the research demands exploring how the extracted data is integrated by the designers within their sketches. A visual analysis shall allow tracing both the fragments from the muses style which have been selected as citations, as well as the processes through which they had been interpreted within the collection.

The data interpretation framework is based on the five principles recommended by Rose (2001:90-91) for a semiological analysis: identify the signs (1), determine the meaning they are originally intended to express (2), reflect on the possible connections they are assigned to create with other signs (3), explore connections and synergies created to elevate a '*wider systems of meaning, from codes to dominant codes, referent systems or mythologies*' (4), conclude over how the studied signs articulate an ideology and mythology.

Identifying the signs requires exploring how designers engage to a source of inspiration. Though dedicated to the fashion system's professionals and not to researchers studying their work, Gaimster's (2011) book provides an exhaustive perspective on both the areas in which a source of inspiration can be infiltrated in the materiality of a collection (concept, colour schemes, textiles, etc), but also in the routes partaken by designers to discover and expand their findings on the themes they've chosen.

The meaning which the citations have been originally intended to express can be found in the fashion muses' biographies (including press articles dedicated to them) or speculated from context (eg: differences in Renée Perle's outfits when vacationing on the Riviera, compared to her Parisian style).

Conventionally, designers explain their choice of a muse through commonalities between their own ethos and various biographical data of their source of inspiration, whether historical facts or the mythology created around her. Therefore, the basis for the visual analysis is to identify the intertextualities created between the muse's ideology and that of the designer's (Rose, 2001:137). The visual analysis highlights two discursive formations : the collection and the fashion show. The collection connects the muse not only to the designer's ethos, but also to the target consumers and to values dominating society on a wide scale. Therefore, the fashion muse is transformed from a connotative sign to a polysemic sign. Elements through which the collection is marketed stand out as metonymic signs, thus they shall provide the context for reading the citation (Rose, 2001:82). According to Banks and Zeitlyn (2015:10), fragments of imagery follow both universally, as well as specific context rules. Universal rules may be related to collective practices over how designers relate to a human subject as a source of inspiration. The routes and levels detected by Gaimster (2011) prove insightful in such area. Context specific rules connect to the designers' ethos and individual practices. Highly insightful complementary data is collected from statements given by the designers' to the press. The individual practices under which the fashion muse has been interpreted by the designers represent technological modalities (Rose, 2001:30).

The second discursive formation is highlighted by the catwalk show which is delivered as a promotion tool to present the fashion collection (the brand's actual product) to its audience. The work of collaborators such as milliners, stage designers, make-up artists, etc, is adjusted to the designer's vision. Therefore, when applied to their direct input (eg: make-up) the visual analysis connects not to the fashion muse directly, but to how she has been mediated by the brand. Press reviews and, in the case of Galliano and Van Noten, even official biographies and exhibition catalogues offer statements of collaborators regarding their communication with the designers and how they interpreted their requests or suggestions. Such statements shall be used for decoding the intertextualities developed through the catwalk show. Nevertheless, Alberta Ferretti chose to promote a fashion short film rather than a catwalk show. Through its narrative structure, the film depicts not Luisa Casati, but Ferretti's own vision of the collection, notably the eclectic and complex personality of the modern woman. Such intended meaning shall be used as context for the visual analysis of the film.

4. The impact of collection reviews on promoting the muses: Content analysis

Collection reviews can be regarded as channels through which the fashion journalists and editors reaffirm designers and brands as relevant for each retail season. Their critique of collections assigns them as cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1984: 335). As agents of consecration and diffusion (Bourdieu, 1993: 133), the discourse under which media representative describe the collection is pivotal to their influence on the legitimacy attained or reaffirmed by designers each season. When applied on the discourse affirmed in their reviews, the content analysis method allows studying the influence held by press representatives on the designers' legitimation. Bryman (2012:290) advises that content analysis should be based on objectivity and highlight a systematic deployment. Objectivity implies that the data collection should be precedent by clearly established rules. The present thesis follows the established theory and the embodied practices as sources of certainty (Krippendorff, 2004: 174). While established theories indicate structural correspondences between the analysed texts and the context, the embodied practices

highlight representational relationships between interferences. A systematic deployment implies conducting the data analysis according to the pre-established rules in order to suppress potential biases.

The content analysis strategy is designed according to the following components (Krippendorff, 2004:30):

1. The research questions;

The content analysis must foremost follow how representatives of the press mediate the signification relation developed between the muse as a sign and the designer's ethos. However, a key requirement for resolving the research aim stands in tracing the processes through which the fashion muse evolves from a sign in a designer's collection to a standalone symbol. Therefore, the coding scheme must follow both the words and expressions used by journalists and editors to refer to the collection and its creator, but also the discourse indirectly formed through each review around the muse. References to the designers' stylistic signature and observations over the extent to which the collection is aligned to it require a semantical content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004:45). Additionally, references to the fashion muse signal the necessity of a designation analysis. The process through which the collection ends up legitimised is highlighted in the frequency to which some terms (eg: innovative) are characterised in a certain way. Both the legitimisation, as well as the discourse developed around the muse call for an assertion analysis.

2. The context in which the text has been produced;

Press reviews demand a context sensitive analysis (Krippendorff, 2004:42) which can be connected to the season in which the collection has been launched, the segment to which it responds (eg: *haute couture* or *pret à porter*), the designer's ethos, various strategic issues challenging the house as an organisation, and other macro factors. However, reviews may come in distinctive formats which include not only the journalist's or the editor's critique of the collection, but also various statements collected by their author from the designer or various attendees. On such grounds, Bryman (2012:291) raises a distinction between content analysis and semantics which implies 'uncovering the process of meaning production'. Such demarcation shall be applied for separating the commentaries of media representatives (content analysis) from statements of the designers (semantics) inserted in the articles. Krippendorff (2004:16), however, signals the opportunity of applying discourse analysis on press materials (reviews, profiles, etc) and a rhetorical analysis on brand communication (eg: social media captions).

Resolving the research questions might influence the data analysis towards favouring either the journalists'/editors' or the reader's perspective, a risk pointed out by Krippendorff (2004:1). The issue of dispositions raised by Bryman (2012:298) in connection to a possible favourable position of journalists regarding a topic may be indicative on this matter. A system-broad perspective on the liaisons created between the person penning the review and the designer shall also be considered when assessing the journalist's disposition. Such aspect is essential to be taken in account as some of the studied designers such as Dries Van Noten authorised media representatives as their official biographers.

3. An analytical structure;

The first issue to address in regards to an analytical structure is related to the sampling strategy or the level to which the analysed content shall be read (Krippendorff, 2004: 83). The research aim is concerned to three levels of discourse press representatives might formulate as cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1984:335), notably in regards to the designer, the collection, and the muse. Consequently, the sampling strategy is established on a paragraph level.

The second step in the analytical structure is related to the unit distinctions. The two instances detected by Bourdieu (1993:133): consecration and diffusion set the argument behind unit distinctions. Consecration demands verifying the meaning under which collections are legitimised which leads to the necessity of separating thematic units. Diffusion requires analysing texts according to the audiences they may reach. Categorial distinctions (Krippendorff, 2004:105-106) stands out as relevant for separating press reviews written by fashion journalists for media outlets of general interests and those penned by fashion editors for fashion magazines. The recording units are therefore dictated by the authority attributed to the mediators in their field and the publics reached by the text. The impact of authority claimed by the media outlet or the journalist leads to Bryman's (2012:295:296) recommendations of extracting the significant actors. Beyond the authority attributed to the editor or analyst penning the article, significant actors include considering the interviewee's position (buyer, influencer, etc). Bryman (2012:296) connects the

necessity of identifying the significant actors to the complementary findings which can arise when mapping their influence for interpreting the text.

The third step of the analytical structure relates to the dimensions used for coding. Beyond clearly established units, dimensions used for coding are recommended to be entirely separate, mutually exclusive, exhaustive, and nevertheless, supported by instructions for interpretation (Bryman 2012:304). Articulating a designer's ethos and ideology, fashion collections fall within Krippendorff's (2004:182) outlook on representation demanding a discourse specific analysis.

The fourth step of the analytical structure refers to variables which are identified through signification schemes. Variables follow the symbolic capital attained by the brands from the terms and expressions used by media representatives in regards to the collection. A second level of findings emerged from variables refers to how the terms and expressions used by journalists and editors¹³ can influence the muses' transformation from sign to symbol. Weber (1990: 12) advises to not disregard similarity emerged between words not only in connection to their meanings, but also to their shared connotations.

Therefore, the coding strategy follows the following scheme:

Body of text: (Title of the review)

Publisher: (the media outlet)

Author: (the journalist)

Elements considered representative for the designer's style	Descriptions of the collection	Elements presented as highlights of the collection or the fashion show	Discourse constructed around the muse	References to designers who have previously approached the muse

4. Interfaces resolving the research questions;

The rationale behind the content analysis is to assess the impact of press reviews on the legitimisation of fashion collections. The terms and expressions identified in the analysed texts highlight the meaning through which the fashion collection is mediated to the consumer. Furthermore, the expressions used by journalists and editors also reassert the designers'/brands' authority in the fashion field. An additional objective reached through the data analysis is tracing the discourse formed around the muses which further influences their transformation from a sign to a symbol. Such effects can be highlighted through the use of recursive variables, which, according to Krippendorff (2004:163) indicate circular connections between values. As a data analysis strategy, cross-tabulation between the variables, categories, and the frequency in which terms and expressions are introduced can facilitate a perspective on both how the collection is mediated and perceived, but also in the values under which the fashion muses are assimilated (Krippendorff, 2004:195)

¹³ Eg: the adjectives 'singular' and 'exceptional' used in media headlines describing Luisa Casati highlight a similar meaning

5. Validating evidence;

Findings must be verified through data reliability and validity. Data reliability is signalled by its stability, reproducibility, and accuracy. According to Weber (1990:17), stability refers to extent in which results of content classification remain invariant over time. Patterns in the format and arguments used by representatives of the press in their reviews regardless of designers and collection support the classification chosen in the content analysis. The aggregation obtained when counting terms and word sense expressions within the same category is regarded, according to Weber (1990:39) as an additional indicator of reliability. Conventions used in the format of press reviews shall also provide the external criterion recommended by Weber (1990:19) to be used when assessing the data validity. Reproducibility is expected to be attained when the coding strategy aims following the creation of meaning. The data accuracy is favoured by the perpetuation of the approached signification schemes through the interdisciplinary literature on the application of semiotics in fashion.

The content analysis is applied on 7¹⁴ press reviews for Dior's SS 1998 Haute Couture collection, one¹⁵ for Galliano's AW 2005 collection for his namesake brand, 15¹⁶ for Dries Van Noten's SS 2016 collection, 11¹⁷ for Alberta Ferretti's SS 2016 collection, 8¹⁸ for MaxMara's SS 2023 collection, and 7¹⁹ for Emilia Wickstead's SS 2024 collection.

6. The collections' reception: Social media analysis

The previous stages within the research design addressed the processes through which fashion muses are integrated as signs within a designer's collection and promoted by the cultural intermediaries accordingly. However, the research aim cannot be fully resolved without exploring the values and association under which the muses end up being perceived by the audience. Therefore, the multi method research design benefits of insights extracted from social media analysis. The longitudinal evolution of the content published behind the #reneeperle and #luisacasati hashtag could allow verifying the processes and values through which the two muses have been recognised standalone historical figures, rather than signs within the studied designers' collections.

The perception and assimilation of signs and symbols on social media represents an issue of *digital habitus* which is described by Kozinets (2021:299) in relation not to the big data, but rather to the deep data. While big data delivers generalisation, deep data allows attaining meaning. However, as Kozinets (2021:299) warns, the digital *habitus* cannot be fully understood by disregarding the medium through which the meaning is delivered and the textuality such medium might open. As a medium, fashion collections maintain the audience's interest for a retail season. However, the preliminary research indicated for John Galliano's 1998 SS collection indicated how the public's interest may be reactivated through nostalgia.

As a research method, social media analysis raises a series of peculiarities which can also signal limitations to be considered when formulating general conclusions.

¹⁴ The Runway Archive (Europea), Vogue, Style.com, the International Herald Tribune, the New York Times, WWD (1998), and Vogue Arabia

¹⁵ Vogue appears to be the only media outlet to have covered the collection. Galliano's vision for his namesake brand appears overlooked compared to his work for Dior.

¹⁶ Business of Fashion, AnOther Mag, Dazed Digital, Harper's Bazaar, Paris Mode, Document Journal, Financial Times, NY Times, WWD, Fashion Week Daily, Antidote Magazine, SCMP, and 3 reviews by Vogue (including one exclusively focused on make-up)

¹⁷ Vogue (Italy and Brazil), Corriere della Sera, Elle, Fashion Network, La Spola, Amica, Fritha, WWD, 'Fabfashion Fix, and Chiara Ferragni's blog, The Blonde Salad.

¹⁸ Vogue, CR Fashion Book, Harper's Bazaar Australia, Grazia, Channel New Asia, Anne of Carversville, Fashionotography, and Fashion Gone Rogue.

¹⁹ Vogue, Harper's Bazaar UK, Elle UK, WWD, Grazia, The Guardian, and Fashionista.

The first such peculiarity comes from the research scope which leads to a demarcation between the general public and fandoms. Compared to a study of fandoms, an analysis of the general public brings the challenge of a dispersed population that may or may not present any common denominators. Users united by affinities on social media can rather qualify as consociations, remaining otherwise disconnected (Kozinets, 2015).

The research shall be conducted on Instagram, a platform which allows publishing ephemeral (eg: stories, live streaming) and archived content. The data collection shall be exclusively focused on the archived content. The research units on Instagram include the content circulated through the #luisacasati and #ren  eperle hashtag.

The social media analysis aims collecting data from quantitative metrics related to both user engagement, as well as the frequency to which certain imagery (eg: portraits) circulate through the two hashtags. The analysed imagery shall indicate the visual elements which the two muses are best recognised for and which could sustain the iconography encompassed in their celebrity construct. The data collection strategy shall be accomplished through lurking, a practice that implies the detached observation of the online activity around a given topic, without directly engaging with the studied users and communities (Kozinets, 2021:48)

6. Data analysis strategy

As stated within the argument towards a multi-method research design, the research aim traces distinctive processes, influences, and implications through which designer's source of inspiration gets to become recognised as a standalone cultural reference. Each of these dimensions demand distinctive research methods. Data obtained from every research method allows understanding either the contextual factor influencing an action or the implication its deployment carries on other related processes. Therefore, resolving the research aim demands an across-method triangulation of data obtained from analysing each on the processes, influences, and implications composing it.

A brief recap of the rationale behind every method employed in the research design would facilitate clarity over the data analysis strategy. However, any such argument could benefit of an overview of the sequence of activities encompassed within the research aim. Designers opt for various sources of inspiration - human or nonhuman- for their seasonal collection. Beyond garments and accessories, fashion collections englobe a strong marketing dimension to which the catwalk show presented during Fashion Weeks stand out as the main promotional tool. The source of inspiration shall also be integrated in the script and staging of the catwalk show. Additional communication tools in which the audience can become acquainted to the fashion muse include the collection campaign, catalogues, visual merchandising, and the designer's social media content. The development lifecycle of a fashion collection is ignited by a period of research in which designers explore various elements directly connected or intersecting their source of inspiration. Data extracted from research shall be further used in the collection's composition and marketing. The collection's presentation during Fashion Weeks attracts press reviews which may mention the source of inspiration, amongst other elements. The research scope of the thesis is formulated around sources of inspiration who have been extracted from the past and in regards to whom designers are praised as their 'discoverer'. In such circumstances the public's first acquaintance with the muse is through the designer's collection and how it has been mediated. Nevertheless, in order for the source of inspiration to be recognised by the public as a standalone cultural reference, she would have to be perceived as a historical figure. Such acknowledgement implies that her media visibility and the semiotic content to which the audience associates her with is not dominated by her discover.

The field analysis illustrates the connections and analogies designers become acquainted to and end up interpreting a source of inspiration through the research process they engage in, in contrast to the more extensive efforts of a biographer. Consequently, the field analysis allows detecting the biographical data which shall be communicated on the muse through the collection and the promotional strategy conducted by a designer. The biographical data supporting the collection and its marketing indicates the background information made available to fashion editors and journalists over the muse. Though the collection's marketing should be regarded as a part of the brand's public communication, it is essential to highlight the fashion editors and journalists position as key receptors, rather than the general audience. The rationale for emphasising the media's role as a key receptor can be related to its influence in synthesising the biographical data

made available by the designer on the muse and extracting the information which shall be reasserted within the public sphere.

The content analysis of the collection reviews provides two essential types of data. The first stands in the biographical information related to the muse. The second refers to the discourse under which the muse is presented by the designer as aligned to their ideology and *habitus*. Reflecting the designers' rationale for choosing the particular individual out of any alternative sources of inspiration, the discourse under which the muse is presented also signals her relevance before the brand's consumers.

As indicated in the reviewed literature, fashion collections are based on the interpretation of incomplete citation and not on the direct reproduction of imagery or of any semiotic content. Recreating the points of focus considered by designers in their research efforts, the field analysis provide the contextual data for understanding the concrete contribution of the fashion system in promoting a fashion muse. As suggested by Banks and Zeitlyn (2015:10) in the context rules they propose for visual analysis, findings of the field analysis will also allow identifying how the biographical data has been translated into imagery through the garments composing the collection. A designer's choice on focusing on the muse's times, entourage, or affiliations, rather than her life is eloquent on this matter.

The literature review (Barthes, 1990:64) signalled how as sources of inspiration, muses are initially used as signs within fashion collections. The research aim demands investigating the processes and influences facilitating their transformation into symbols. Such focus demands an additional content analysis conducted upon media headlines dedicated to the two muses. The data collection and analysis strategy is favoured by the Google offers the Custom Range option through which users can select two particular dates in order for the search engine to generate results of webpages created between the specific date. The Custom Range option allows the possibility of accessing digital content created within every time span included in the Google Trends analytics. Media articles accessed through the Custom Range option can be therefore grouped according to their date of publication allowing to trace the fashion muse's transformation from sign to symbol from one year to another. The fashion muses' transformation from signs to symbols demands transitioning from an open to focused coding (Emerson, 2011:173-191) extracting the meanings and values through which their individuality is assimilated across the longitudinal analysis.

The longitudinal analysis of the discourse through which the two fashion muses have been promoted in the public sphere should also include values under which they are assimilated by the public. As communication tools designed to ignite cross-referencing across digital content, hashtags can connect users interested in the same topics. Such dynamics indicate the #luisacasati and #reeneeperle the most effective strategy to follow the longitudinal evolution of the two fashion muses within the public sphere and verify the extent to which audiences become acquainted to them, as well as the values they associate them with. The content analysis of media headlines dedicated to the two muses shall ensure the in-depth understanding of a context which Kozinets (2021:199) signals as an imperative for the ethnography of the Internet.

When curating content which implies publishing content which was not produced by them and for which they cannot claim any rights, users become cultural intermediaries. Posts published on Instagram behind the #luisacasati and #reeneeperle hashtags provide an insight on user curated content in which the audience takes the role of cultural intermediaries. Therefore the #luisacasati and #reeneeperle may also provide an insight into how the fashion muses are promoted across the users' own publics. Captions accompanying the posts could also allow verifying the values which the audience associates to the muse.

As previously mentioned, data collected from each of the methods employed in the research design are triangulated. The research aim, however, demands verifying the fashion system's influence on the promotion of posthumously discovered or revived muses. Peer reviewed works on historical celebrity indicate field analysis was a dominant research design. In the field analysis of celebrity, factors that determined a specific social space, structures, synergies with fields of converging interests and the, public communication strategies employed, were key. If the same strategy was applied on the fashion system, a correspondence between the approached angles would lead to the general tastes dominating the season in which the collection has been launched, the discourse in which the fashion muse has been presented in the designer's marketing, and the extent to which press representatives have focused on her, in contrast to other elements featured in the reviews such as the artistry, choice of fabrics, colour palette, etc.

The research aim demands verifying whether a muse extracted from the past by a designer who shall further present her to a contemporary audience can influence her transformation into a standalone cultural reference. Therefore, the media visibility emerged a muse and the public's

eventual appreciation of her as a fashion icon illustrate what Bourdieu describes as the 'structuring effects' of the habitus. However, the muse's transformation within a standalone cultural reference crosses the field of fashion, entering that of celebrity creation. Bottero and Crossley (2011) point out that structuring effects between fields occur when the representative of a given field is exposed to the habitus of a creator from a field. The transmission of fashion content captures such dynamics. Both the press and the audience are receptors of the designer's habitus. A first stage implies that the audience perceives an individual from the past whom they first becomes acquainted through the work of designer as relevant to their values. Such perception is influenced by a transfer of legitimacy from the designer to the muse, generating a celebrity effect.

The influence of press representatives on the popularisation of a designer's source of inspiration recreates Lee's (2015) observations on social networks. According to Lee (2015), the structures and hierarchies within a field are sustained through connectivity and the quality of information circulating between participants. Connectivity depends on both the density (which describes the number of participants amassed in a network) and the number of connections each entity can develop. The quality of information refers to the limits of the knowledge exchanged within a network for problem solving and the extent to which it can be integrated in the creation of new works. Consequently, the number of the media outlets and the description dedicated the the fashion muses represent relevant indicators to their popularisation.

Bourdieu (1993: 134) suggests that there are three core steps in conducting a field analysis:

1. Placing the studied field in relation to the field of power;
2. Mapping agents within objective structures by highlighting their position relative to the legitimacy of their aim within the particular field;
3. Analysing the specific *habitus* of the agents.

From a *bourdieusian* approach, the framework for the field analysis should be developed around the following pillars:

1. The doxa

A demarcation between the *haute couture* and *pret à porter* segments shall be used to separate the audience, the media visibility a collection may reach within each of the two segments, and the market penetration opportunities they open.

2. The designers' ethos

The cultural impact attributed to each designer due to their individual practices signals the opportunity of a higher media exposure. As background data to understand the choice of a muse, the field analysis shall also include struggles and interests faced by the brand and its designer at the moment in which the collection has ben launched.

3. Instances of consecration

Bourdieu (1993: 122) argues that legitimacy can derive from multiple institutions which may not necessarily be connected to the field. Such heterogenous instances of consecration can be identified in the relation to the four capitals. The cultural capital highlights training and the affiliation to an artistic movement (eg: Deconstruction for Dries Van Noten). The social capital signals the designers' network which may descend from the creative collective of affiliation (eg: New Romantics for Galliano), gatekeepers to the field (eg: Isabella Blow purchasing Alexander McQueen entire graduation project at Central Saint Martins), influent patrons, and investors. The impact of the economic capital on consecration may be interpreted under the effect of a designers's business performance on their artistic authority. The symbolic capital highlights museums, awards, medals (the CBE and the Légion d'Honneur for Galliano), and prestigious patronages or image associations (eg: Dries Van Noten creating Queen Mathilde's dresses). As an additional remark, their first appointment as Creative Directors for a historical brand like the case of John Galliano for Christian Dior is noted for designers as a key circumstance of consecration.

4. Consumers' tastes

Outside the designer's interest in some element or trait that is representative to them²⁰, sources of inspiration may also be selected as a reflection of general tastes.

Field analysis should not disregard the inevitable epistemological and social breaks pointed out by Bourdieu (2017: 57). Epistemological breaks arise from the absence of social media when John Galliano presented his collection for Dior. Social breaks could be connected to the relationship each of the studied designers develops with their source of inspiration. Furthermore, as Steinmetz (2011) argues, the concepts of *habitus* and field are conditioned by a given time and place. The studied designers are members of distinctive professional bodies, presented their works

²⁰ John Galliano discovered Luisa Casati while researching high society portraiture at the turn of the century

in different fashion capitals and represent the collective practices of different movements (eg: New Romantics for Galiano, Deconstruction for Van Noten).

7. Ethics

The research will be carried out with publicly available documents. No human subjects will be involved. The first ethical issue is copyright. Media outlets allow limited reproduction of their articles under two core conditions: citing the source and not using the fragments extracted for a commercial purpose. The acknowledgement of ownership will be prioritised in the use of any materials. The data analysis will be complemented with citations to prevent any re-interpretation or alteration of the intended sense. The research shall not include elements of imagery (eg: captions) submitted to intellectual property legislation.

By applying the AoIR's ethical guidelines to social networking-related research, the datum extracted from the analysed Instagram accounts does not promote sensitive information. According to Instagram's Privacy statement, public posts offer visibility to third parties. Such visibility is extended to likes coming from users curating private accounts without providing access to their accounts. The content analysis of data collected through social media shall focus on meaning and frequency. Therefore, findings shall be formulated on the numeric data related to user engagement. No datum extracted from comments shall be connected to users. The research shall not include personal accounts, usernames, or location-related data. No risk of harm has been detected.

IV. The fashion system's influence over Luisa Casati's and Renée Perle's evolution as fashion icons

The research design imposed a distinctive data collection strategy for each of the employed methods. As indicated in the previous chapter, verifying the fashion system's influence in launching standalone cultural references out of sources of inspiration extracted from the past demanded to first identify fragments of the muses' biography and iconography which initially raised the designers' interest. Consequently, the first resources for data collection have been located in the statements provided by designers in regards to the connection they established with their muses across the research efforts they embarked in. However, fashion design operates through incomplete and indirect citations. The alterations produced across the creative process to the fragments of biography and iconography which initially attracted designers may also affect the public's perception and understanding if they only considered the garments as a medium to become acquainted to the semiotic content related to the muse. Consequently, the designers' own statement stands out as the most eloquent data to locate the semiotic content mediated by the fashion system. Verifying the system's influence in the establishment of standalone cultural references out of the designers' muses requires comparing and contrasting this semiotic content to that assimilated by the public. The texts and imagery communicated through media headlines dedicated to the two muses represent a key mediation layer in the semiotic content which ends up perceived and assimilated by the audience.

In addition to the designers' statements, verifying the fashion system's influence in transforming the two muses in standalone cultural references demanded identifying the sources of the citations integrated by designers in their collection. Vogue magazine's website offers a high resolution archive of all looks composing season collection which, from one individual case to another, may include photographs of details, usually focused on adornment techniques. The publicly available imagery related to the two muses could be located for Luisa Casati in Scott D. Ryersson's and Michael O. Yaccarino's album 'Portraits of a Muse' and, for Renée Perle, in the Foundation Lartigue's archives. The content analysis of the collection reviews allowed further identifying the biographical and iconographical elements emphasised within the mediation chain.

As mentioned in the research design chapter, studying the two muses' evolution as standalone cultural references imposes a content analysis of the media headlines dedicated to them. The sample selection focused on media outlets praised as having their authority in their field (eg: the BBC, NY Times). The content analysis focused on separating the semiotic content related to the two muses which has been transmitted across the fashion system and additional information integrated by journalists. The cultural significance attributed by the headlines' authors to the fashion designers celebrating the two muses are essential to assess the extent to which the contemporary fashion system's influence in popularising Luisa Casati and Renée Perle is recognised by the media.

Social media related data follows a longitudinal perspective on the evolution of the #LuisaCasati and #RenéePerle hashtags from the moment in which they have first been transmitted across Instagram. The data collection for Luisa Casati has been interrupted in September 2022, whereas for Renée Perle it has been continued till March 2024. The discrepancy between the two time spans is motivated by the decision to also integrate Emilia Wickstead's SS 2024 collection as a research unit. Analysing the effect of a third fashion collection on Renée Perle's establishment as a standalone cultural reference demanded extending the social media data collection beyond the Fashion Week in which Emilia Wickstead presented her work.

The results of the data collection have been compiled below around each of the two analysed case studies:

1. Luisa Casati

Luisa Casati's contemporary revival can be traced to two unrelated index projects: her use as a reference in John Galiano's 1998 Spring-Summer collection for the house of Dior and the release of her first ever biography, 'Infinite Variety' authored by Scott D Ryersson and Michael O Yaccarino. The book became the only biography to be authorised by Lady Moorea Black, Luisa Casati's granddaughter. Out of appreciation for their 20 years-long research effort, Lady Moorea Black bestowed the Casati estate to Scott D Ryersson and Michael O Yaccarino. The two authors can therefore control all intellectual property associated with Luisa Casati. Ryersson and Yaccarino

later embarked in an exhaustive research to unearth all of Luisa's commissions as a sitter, revealing over 200 known portraits. Their efforts led to the 'Portraits of a Muse' album published in 2009. 'Portraits of a Muse' was fundamental to the popularisation of Luisa Casati's legacy as a sitter. Since, except for 6 works, all of the 200 portraits she commissioned are part of private collections, through their own research, Ryersson and Yaccarino made it possible to build an iconography around Luisa Casati, providing visual resources to be explored by designers, photographers, art directors, and nevertheless, the audience.

Both 'Infinite Variety', as well as 'Portraits of a Muse' provide an outlook on all the posthumous projects inspired by Luisa Casati. 'Portraits of a Muse', however, accounts for more projects than 'Infinite Variety'. Though dedicated to imagery, the book also provides an exhaustive biography. However, in 'Portraits of a Muse', the biography is developed around Luisa's commissions and the stories behind them. Two authors provide equidistant commentaries of how Luisa Casati is currently credited as either an initiator or a early promoter of various aesthetics and lifestyles such as Goth, Futurism, etc. Compared to 'Infinite Variety', 'Portraits of a Muse' provide a more exhaustive description of what the two authors describe as Luisa Casati's aftermath or the contemporary projects inspired by her legacy.

The two works are also graced by forwards signed by Quentin Crisp (*Infinite Variety*) and Diane von Furstenberg (*Portraits of a Muse*).

'Infinite Variety' by Scott D Ryersson and Michael O Yaccarino remains the most exhaustive resource resource on Luisa Casati's life. Every piece of written content published in the past 23 years is based on the book, with no additional information. Further biographies published include Judith Mackrell's 'The Unfinished Palazzo' (2014), a monograph of the Palazzo Vernier di Leoni which covers not only Luisa Casati's time in Venice, but also the evolution of the estate under Doris Castlerosse's and Peggy Guggenheim's ownership. The exact findings revealed by Ryersson and Yaccarino can also be found supporting the illustration book Vanna Vinci launched in 2014.

Luisa Casati's late years have inspired works of fiction such as Paolo Puppa's 'Intrevista all Marchesa' (2011) and Marta Morazzoni's 'Il Rovescio del Abito' (2021).

British fashion designers Karen Craig and Georgina Chapman credit 'Infinite Variety' as the inspiration behind the name choice for their label Marchesa which they launched in 2007.

'Infinite Variety' has reached its third edition and it was translated in 5 languages (Italian, French, German, Russian, and Swedish). Released in 2020, the Swedish version is the most recent foreign edition.

Ryersson and Yaccarino also curate the the <https://www.marchesacasati.com> official website which stands out as a key resource for any aspiring designer or stylist interested in exploring Luisa Casati as a source of inspiration.

1.1 Luisa Casati as presented in profiles published by the traditional media

The data collection strategy is set upon the authority attributed to the media outlets which published the analysed articles. General media which published Luisa profiles include The New Yorker (2003), 20 minutos (2014), ABC (2014), The Guardian (2014), The Telegraph (2014), Il Giornale (2014), Corriere (2014, 2015), BBC (2017), Elle (2019), Il Gazzettino (2020), La Repubblica (2014, 2022). Nine of the 23 analysed articles have been published by fashion magazines, notably Vogue (3 articles), Harper's Bazaar (2007, 2016, 2022), and Another Mag (2016). Women's magazines interested in Luisa include Huffington Post (2010), Elle (2013), and WWD, 29.09.2015).

In her native Italy, Luisa Casati has been the subject of 8 articles published by Il Giornale (2014), Corriere (2014, 2015), Elle (2019), Il Gazzettino (2020), Harper's Bazaar (2022), La Repubblica (2014, 2022). The Italian media appears to have gained interest in Luisa Casati following the 'Divina Marchesa' exhibition hosted by the Palazzo Fortuny. Luisa Casati also attracted 3 coming from Spanish sources (20 minutos, 2014, ABC, 2014, Harper's Bazaar, 2016) and another 3 from British media (The Guardian, 2014, The Telegraph, 2014, BBC, 2017).

Out of the 23 articles, 13 are based on various anchors. The Divina Marchesa exhibition influenced 8 articles. Other 5 articles support book reviews for 'Infinite Variety', 'Portraits of a muse', Judith Mackrell's 'Unfinished Palazzo', Marketa Uhlirova's 'Birds of Paradise', and Marta Morozzoni's 'Il rovescio dell'abito'. Nevertheless, the profile published by Huffington Post on Luisa Casati in 2010 stands out as part of the Lets' Bring Back series introduced to revive forgotten fashion. The Guardian (2014), however, introduced a Luisa profile in a retrospective of notable

dance costumes signed by Judith Mackrell, who also authored a monograph of the Palazzo Vernier Leoni under Luisa's, Doris Castlerosse's, and Peggy Guggenheim's ownership.

Luisa Casati is described as *muse* (8 articles), *femme fatale* (4 articles), and *transgressive* (2 articles). Physical portrayals focus on her habit of using *belladonna drops to amplify her pupils* (11 articles), *kohl circled eyes* (8 articles), *velvet strips as eyeliner* (4 articles), *pale complexion* (9 articles), and *red hair* (6 articles). As pointed out by two articles, in Capri she dyed her hair green. Elements which could elevate an iconography associated to Luisa Casati include her *cheetahs* (14 articles) and *snakes* (9 articles). Explored by 21 out of 23 articles, her relationship with Gabriele D'Annunzio may place her style within the realm of decadence. Mentioned by 6 articles, her bankruptcy points out her superfluosity.

Anecdotes which could lead to emblematic looks or attitudes includes her nocturnal strolls with diamond studded cheetahs in Venice wearing nothing underneath a fur coat (16), matching a headwear of albino peacock feathers with the blood of freshly slaughtered chicken (4), dining with wax mannequins (5), and going through garbage bins to find ribbons to adorn her hat (3).

As context information to explain Luisa's style, 4 articles raise analogies with her fascination for the Princess di Belgiojoso, two also mention her admiration for the Countess of Castiglione and another 2 Sarah Bernhard.

All of the analysed articles, 19 cover Luisa's legacy as a sitter and her liaisons with artists, whereas only 13 mention her impact on contemporary designers. As pointed out in 20 out of the 23 analysed articles, Man Ray's blurred eyes portrait of Luisa appears to be regarded as her most representative imagery. Mentioned in 10 articles, John Galliano stands out as the contemporary designer most influential to Luisa Casati's revival, followed by Georgina Chapman and Karen Craig who are noted in 8 pieces to have named their label Marchesa after her. Furthermore, a profile on Luisa published in 2022 by Harper's Bazaar provides an extensive description of the Opera Garnier hosted catwalk show, emphasising the 'no budget' opportunity John Galliano enjoyed for staging the event. Though his Spring Summer 2007 Sarabande Collection is based not only on Luisa Casati but rather on multiple sources of inspiration, Alexander McQueen is mentioned in 7 articles. Outside the Carine Roitfeld shooting he directed for the New Yorker and a review published by Vogue for his 2009 Chanel collection, Karl Lagerfeld is associated with Luisa's revival as a fashion muse. Other fashion brands mentioned include Dries Van Noten (3 articles), Tom Ford (2), Armani, Yves Saint Laurent, and Valentino. None of the articles mention Alberta Ferretti, one of the designers below analysed within the corpus compiled for the Luisa Casati case study.

A longitudinal outlook across the analysed articles highlights no significant changes in Luisa Casati's portrayal. Thurman's profile of Luisa Casati in the New Yorker represents the most compelling profile on Luisa, followed by Macdonald's (2017) review of Judith Mackrell's '*Unfinished Palazzo*' for the Art History section of the BBC.

A noteworthy observation can be extracted through the fact that each of the three articles published by Vogue (2009, 2015, 2017) represent fashion collection reviews, out of which the last two have been promoted under titles focused on Luisa and not the contemporary designers honouring her.

1.2 Luisa Casati as presented by reviews of fashion collections

1.2.1 John Galliano for Christian Dior 1998 Spring/Summer

Accounting 38 looks, the collection was revealed on 19 January 1998, 4:30 PM at the Opera Garnier in Paris. Contributors to the collection include textile painters and dyers Chantal Mirabaud, Alexandre, and Krivoshekey, appliqué artist Vermont, metal artist Verolive, Lesage, Lanel, floral artists Bucol. The garments are complemented by Manolo Blahnik shoes, Leroux Fraboulet belts, and Goossens. Guilts honoured by the collection include Caen and Valenciennes lace. The House's original *habitus* is present in asymmetrical trains called by Christian Dior himself '*suivez-moi jeune home*'. The collection introduced the Lotus line, Galliano's own salute to the floral *silhouettes* supporting the New Look launched by Christian Dior in 1947.

The fashion show

Staged at the Opéra Garnier, the catwalk show aimed recreating the atmosphere of Luisa's soirées. Favoured by a 'no budget limit'²¹, the decors included antique furniture while the Opera's

²¹ Staging a fashion shows estimated at over £150,000. Galliano's shows are accounted double the amount.

marble columns were covered in lilac and rose garlands. Carpets were scented with orange perfume. However, as a public venue, the decorators' work had to also comply to health and safety regulations.

Critical reception

Vogue published its review of the collection on 26.01.1998. John Galiano is still referred to as a recent addition amongst the brand's key figures (*'not long after his arrival at Christian Dior'*). The review is introduced by a mention of the location. Luisa Casati is exclusively mentioned as a muse with no details of her life or persona. The garments are described in connection to the Art Nouveau aesthetics and the salon society. The review is not signed by any of the magazine's critics.

Esteemed fashion critic Tim Blanks referred to the collection as 'the best he has ever seen'. Returning to the collection for his Throwback Thursday series Tim Blanks reasserted his enthusiasm by saying *'When you look up "fashion show" in the dictionary, this is the show that should be there'*. Aired on the 5th of December 2013, the review mentions Luisa Casati as Galiano's muse alongside the Ballet Russes as his source of inspiration. Tim Blanks' review was more focused on the catwalk show than on the technical and artistic dimensions of the collection.²² However, Blanks points out that the collection and fashion show should be regarded as a 'spectacle' with no other purpose than to promote Dior. Blanks concludes by recalling the collection as *'the most vivid fashion experience he's ever had'*.

One of the most influential fashion critics of the 1990s, Suzy Menkes referred to the collection as 'Galiano's Orgy of Gorgeousness' in her review for the International Herald Tribune. Menkes (1998), however focused on the theatrics, rather than the collection. The tango at the beginning of the show is decoded by Menkes as a metaphor for the liaison between Galiano and the House of Dior. The industry's scrutiny appears to also transpire from Menkes' mention of the collection as being the third Galiano presented for Dior. The review further continues with Valentino and Nina Ricci.

Penned by Constance C. R. White, the NY Times appears to have published the most laudatory review honouring the collection. Under the title *'New Ways to Seduce'*, White (1998) doesn't hesitate to claim that the *'British lads'*, as she referred to Galiano and McQueen *'may be the saviors of French fashion'*. White goes as far as presenting the collection as a milestone in the relevance of haute couture as a set of practice. *In a single masterstroke collection, Mr. Galiano answered the perennial question about couture's raison d'être.* White argues her claim through an insight on how *Haute Couture* is safeguarded as an advertising tool for the *Maisons'* perfume division.

Theatrics also preoccupied WWD (1998). The unsigned review published by the magazine is more dedicated to staging rather than the garments. Focused on the entire season, rather than a single designer, the review itself is composed around the joy of reverie, allowing the audience to detach themselves from the figures and events occupying the media such as Saddam Hussein or the El Niño hurricane. In the collective review, the Dior collection is presented after that of Valentino, to be followed by Givenchy, then Ungaro, Mugler, then Nina Ricci. However, a mention of 'full prices' raises concerns whether the unidentified author has the appropriate knowledge over the difference between *Pret à Porter* and *Haute Couture* fashion.

To welcome the SS 2016 *Haute Couture* catwalk shows presented at PFW, Vogue Arabia curated a retrospective series of memorable collections under the #fashionhistory hashtag. Signed by Al Shabti (2016), the retrospective review starts with an insight into Galiano's habitus (*Known for his theatrical designs and dramatic showcases*) to further continue with a mention of the prestigious location in which the collection was presented (the Opera Garnier) and the models gracing the catwalk show. The collection is reviewed in regards to the House's habitus (*The poetic collection featured decadent hoop skirt gowns, mink fur trimmed coats, sculptured silhouettes, and cinched waist shapes reminiscent of Dior's "New Look."*). Practices affirmed by Galiano are further mentioned (*In true Galiano exuberance, the show ended with thousands of colorful paper confetti butterflies showering down on the guests*) Vogue Arabia's review is concluded through a mention of Galiano's leadership, indicating the years in which he was in charge of Dior's Creative Department after replacing Gianfranco Ferré.

²² "The way everything came together with the show, the staging, the settings, it's like every single drug experienced by everyone has ever had in their life concentrated in 10 minutes and then times 1000"

Two centre-piece dresses of the 38 looks "Maria-Luisa (dite Coré)" and 'Marquise de Botanique' are currently found in the permanent collection of the Metropolitan Museum in New York. The dresses are described in the museum's inventory through their medium, technique and cultural influences, with no references to Luisa Casati. With its catalogue name "Maria-Luisa (dite Coré)", the prologue dress have been received by the Met from the House of Dior in 1999. The 'Marquise de Botanique' has been purchased in 2023 with the support of the Friends of the Costume Institute. The Met Museum preserves 93 Galliano garments out of which only 23 have been created for Dior.

The influence of the 1998 SS collection in promoting Luisa Casati as a historical figure

John Galliano got acquainted to Luisa through Boldini while researching the Belle Epoque's society figures. Intrigued by how Boldini had depicted her, he became equally fascinated by her life and the legends that surrounded her persona (McDowel, 1997:115) Before interpreting her style, Galliano experimented with her imagery by guiding Stéphane Marais to replicate her makeup for the AW 95-96 collection he launched under his namesake brand.

According to Taylor (2017) references to Luisa Casati could also be identified in Galliano's Spring Summer 1997 Haute Couture collection for Dior and in the Spring Summer 1996 collection for his namesake brand. However, both collections accommodated rather isolated citations, resumed to structural or decorative elements and not the garments' integral construction. For example, in SS 1997 collection, Luisa's style is reflected in the mono-bosom cinched waists. Presented at the Jardin de Bagatelle in Paris on 8 July 1997 under the title 'The Edwardian Ray Princess chez Dior or Mata Hari' the collection could be considered an ode to an époque rather than a single woman. The Spring Summer 1998 season was the first in which Galliano dedicated a full collection to his 'old favourite and muse' (Taylor, 2017)

In an interview with Taylor (2017), stage designer Michael Howells provided an insight on how regulatory challenges determined him to revise his initial vision: *'The Marchesa would give a ball and once it was over - she would sell the house to pay for it. Once she had an entire driveway paved in gold and we thought it would be great to have gold-leaf flakes cascade from the ceiling- as though the old gilding was raining down on the guests. However, the fire officers didn't like the idea so instead we made confetti from stamped butterfly shapes which we released at the end of the show'*.

Guests of the catwalk show have been provided a program of 16 pages describing the collection, out of which one reserved to Luisa's bio (White, 1998). According to the press release provided by Dior, the catwalk show was conceived in six acts precedent by a prologue. The catwalk show is introduced by actors bringing legendary characters from opera and ballet to life.

Now on permanent display at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the prologue dress appears to evoke one of Luisa Casati's own style reference, the Countess of Castiglione. No known image of Luisa may suggest any garments to bear resemblance to the prologue dress. However, the Countess' most famous portraits show her in a black Worth dress which holds certain similarities to Galliano's.

Described by Taylor (2017), as *'immense'*, the research process suggests Galliano's interest going beyond Luisa Casati's life and persona, revealing an extended focus on her times, rather than her persona. Images of Galliano's own research book (Taylor, 2017) suggests a compilation of references such Ida Rubinstein or Rudolf Valentino who are not documented to have any connection to Luisa's life and legacy. Furthermore, the collection itself appears as a tribute to Luisa's times and entourage, rather than to her own vision. Mentioned in the title of some Acts IV and V, Paul Poiret and Leon Bakst, appear to dominate the collection as sources of inspiration.

References to her life are rather reflected, than explicitly indicated. Titled 'A Pastoral Story - Sèvres Porcelain Style', Act I showed an unexpected outlook on the Vesinet Palace purchased by Luisa Casati in 1923. The 8 looks composing the first act exploring tones of white evoking the idyllic bliss aimed by Marie Antoinette her refuge at the Trianon, the architectural inspiration behind the Vesinet Palace. Presented as 'the Sugary Marquises', the 8 looks combine 1930s inspired jackets paired with knee-length skirts with 18th century inspired court coats. Act III, The Story of a Voyage in First Class, is introduced as an ode to Luisa's travels, evoking famous Edwardian rail lines and cruise ships. Nevertheless Act II: An English Story in a Country Garden reminds of biographical information, rather than portraits. Following her bankruptcy, Luisa settled in the UK, where her daughter Cristina married Lord Hastings whom she met at Oxford. Inspired by Raoul Dufy, none of the six evening looks composing Act II bear any similarities to Luisa's style. Though

no reported portrait of Luisa painted by Raoul Dufy is known, he is, however, remembered for his textile painting gracing Paul Poiret's garments. Consequently, Luisa might have been wearing his works, rather than being immortalised in one. No direct references of Luisa can be found in the paragraphs dedicated to Act II in the presentation text.

According to Taylor (2017), the Martyr of Saint Sebastian costume worn by Luisa at her last ball represented the source of inspiration behind one of the 7 looks composing Act VI, 'A Story of a Fancy Dress Ball at the Palazzo dei Leoni'. Other references for Act VI included Joan of Arc.

The only imagery directly connected to Luisa is resumed to Kees van Dongen's interplays with contours depicting her in sheer fabrics and Alberto Martin's 1925 portrait as Cesare Borgia. However, the historical lens demanded for a possible visual analysis demands investigating the exact number of Luisa's portraits within public knowledge at the moment of the collection launch. Published in 2008 following a 20 years' research effort, Scott D Ryersson and Michel O Yaccarino's album 'Portraits of a Muse' tracked all known artworks depicting Luisa, whether safeguarded in museums or part of private collections. Therefore, it took another 10 years for the public the access a more exhaustive perspective into the 200 portraits composing Luisa's legacy as a sitter.

In the NY Times, White (1998) provides a vague portrait of Luisa who is described as '*an Italian art patron and muse who lived, apparently quite dramatically, at the beginning of the century; she was dressed by couturiers, painted by artists like Leon Bakst and given to wearing a snake as a necklace*'. Luisa Casati is mentioned mid-review after the author's analysis over the relevance of *Haute Couture* in the moment's fashion scene and a description of the *picturesque* show's unfolding.

For Suzy Menkes (1998), Galliano's collection '*took the audience to the Venice of the exotic Marchesa Casati*'. No details of Luisa have been provided.

As a source of inspiration, Luisa Casati is the first element mentioned in the WWD (1998) review which described the catwalk show as recreating a 'A Marchesa soiree'. Introduced to readers through her liaisons with Boldini, Nijinsky, or d'Annunzio she is presented under Galliano's arguably accurate profile of her when saying 'She would give a ball and then, to pay for it, sell her house'.

Interviewed as she was leaving the Opéra Garnier, Diana Ross praised the collection '*It's like Erté is come alive*' (Style.com,2013)

Retrospective review do not extend biographical notes on Luisa, even though they have published at moments in which she enjoyed a wider public visibility compared to that attributed to her in 1998. In Shabti's (2016) retrospective review for Vogue Arabia, as a source of inspiration, Marchesa Casati is only mentioned after staging details. Described as 'eccentric' and 'extravagant', her portrayal is resumed to her habit of '*wearing live snakes as jewellery*'.

In the review Tim Blanks prepared of the collection for his Throwback Thursday in 2013 a screen caption adds: '*The Marchesa Casati would parade around a pair of leashed cheetahs and wear live snakes for jewellery*'. However, no other references are added either in Blanks' commentaries.

In 2018, the collection has been included in the Runway Archive series curated by the Fashion Heritage project²³. In a balanced review, which equally focuses on the garments and the show, the collection is described as drawing 'from the eclectic figure and wardrobe of the Marchesa Casati'. As source of inspiration '*the eccentric Italian heiress and patroness of the arts, who became an icon of the first half of Twentieth century*'.

1.2.2 Dries Van Noten 2016 Spring/Summer

In his review, Tim Blanks claims that the outstanding success attained by John Galliano induced certain reserves to Dries Van Noten when contemplating whether he should set a collection on Luisa Casati. In the interview accompanying the review, when talking about how each

²³ Co-funded by the European Commission, the Fashion Heritage was launched in 2014 as a digital repository connecting the resources of Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums across the continent. Addressing both fashion scholars, as well as professionals, its efforts are channeled towards inspiring partnerships between brands and such structures, while also connecting the industry to new audiences. Gaining the support of 50 private and public institutions from 15 European countries, the project amassed over one million high-quality fashion digital objects. The project has been integrated as the fashion aggregator in synergy with Europea, the digital platform for cultural heritage funded by the European Commission.

designer translates various issues through their own practices Van Noten reasserts the importance of individuality, stating that everyone has *'their own system'* and *'their own way of presenting a collection'*.

Dries Van Noten confesses to have been initially attracted towards Luisa, intrigued by her ambition of transforming herself into a living artwork. As confessed to Menkes (2016), her credo provided the starting point for the creative process behind the collection. The theme of the 'starting point' is extended in his interview with McCarthy (2016), connecting such stage to the selection of dominant colours and experiments with fabrics, a task Van Noten describes as 'the most fun part'. However, focusing entirely on Luisa would have been *'too limiting'*, in contrast to the opportunity of exploring *'the tension of excess and majestic madness between the two'*. Integrating d'Annunzio as a source of inspiration also allowed him to articulate a lifelong fascination for club wear (Blanks and Frenkel, 2017:388).

Luisa Casati's affair with Gabriele d'Annunzio aligns to the theme of duos selected by Van Noten for the impact they had on one another's expressions. Other such sources of inspiration include Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. On multiple occasions (Tindle, 2016, McCarthy, 2016), Van Noten described Luisa and D'Annunzio's lives as *'lustrous'*.

On the profile feature published by Harper's Bazaar, Dries Van Noten reflected on how a source of inspiration had been translated into a selection of fabrics: *'I sought a clash of styles, an impassioned embracing of aesthetics, and a purely idiosyncratic exuberance. This led me to a fusing of genders, the extravagance of materials, as well as the changing in context of materials: men's suiting for women, faux fur with silk jacquard, pearls strung as gilets'*.

As the designer explained to Tim Blanks, the fusion articulates Van Noten's attraction towards the impact Luisa and D'Annunzio had on one another and how their creative visions communicated.²⁴ As for the two lovers taken as individuality, Van Noten was inspired by D'Annunzio's quest for attaining beauty in decadence, whereas Luisa fascinated him through her ability to always reinvent herself.

Symbolism is central for the analogies created by Dries Van Noten between Luisa and the structural and adorning elements of his designs. Described by the designer as a metaphor of Luisa's wealth, a statement pearly string gilet creates a bridge between the collection's contrarities and the complementarities²⁵. Luisa's iconography is, however, resumed to animal print, evoking both her menageries, as well as her days of penury, when it remained her only extravaganza into a wardrobe dominated by black. To Van Noten, Luisa's bond with her cheetahs and her affinity for animal prints represent one of the reasons behind her public visibility in her days²⁶.

As mentioned in a video interview for Vogue, the symbiosis between the two can be noted on both the total look level in which the upper half is inspired by him and the bottom evokes her, but also on the models' appearance. While their make up recreates Luisa's looks, their sleek hair reminds of D'Annunzio. In a Paris Mode interview, the designer expands the fusion within the balance between an elongated silhouette and bulky, oversized elements to suggest the masculine/feminine dichotomy.

Simultaneously evoking the heritage of campus wear in the 1920es, items such as Panama suits, uniform jackets, and cricket sweaters connect to Van Noten's beginnings through menswear. Standing out as a core element of the collection, the luscious robes and 'pajamas' remind of d'Annunzio and the house and lounge wear he had been frequently documented in. Pearls dispersed on jacquard were intended to recreate the anecdotes of Luisa's broken necklaces (Blanks and Frankel, 2017:388) Luisa's love for pearls inspired Van Noten to transform shoes into jewellery by attaching a bracelet on the heel. Nevertheless, Luisa's strolls with her cheetahs in diamond studded leashes inspired the loose animal-print trousers.

The Luisa mythology perpetuated throughout reviews of Van Noten's collection is linked to her signature make-up, her experiments with nudity, and nevertheless, to the bond she nurtured

²⁴ *It's not only the love story, but also the stimulation, like two people pushing each other.*

²⁵ "it is inspired by the lustrous lives of the Marchesa Casati and Gabriele d'Annunzio, two renowned Italian eccentrics who shared a passionate love affair" - Dries Van Noten (Tindle, AnOther Mag, 2016)

²⁶ *"She was very famous because when she moved to the house, she covered the floors with animal skins, and had cheetahs and leopards as pets. The most famous story of her that she was walking naked at a party, with a living boa constrictor around her neck. When you start with something like that as a starting point you have to keep going."* Dries Van Noten

with her cheetahs and snakes²⁷. The symbiosis created between the collection and the make up is explained by Van Noten (Lau, 2016, Dazed) through the theme of passion which governed Luisa's life as an artist of existence, while also weighting as an overwhelming burden leading to her downfall²⁸. For Paris Mode, the designer mentions the passion element as essential to characterise the Dries Van Noten woman.

The fashion show

The catwalk was staged on 02.03.2016 3PM in an abandoned train depot located on 1 Rue Saint Petersburg, Paris with a minimal focus on decor and props. As the ceiling was very low, a key challenge was working with lighting designer Ignace d'Haese to transform the location into a space which could do justice to the collection.

Peter Philips, the catwalk show's make-up artists translated her looks through the challenge of creating '*watercolour effect, a brushstroke*', aiming for '*a little decadence*'.

The catwalk show was presented on a referential work of Luisa's and d'Annunzio's contemporaries: Igor Stravinsky's Rite of Spring mixed with recordings of La Pioggia nel Pineto read by Roberto Herlitzka from personal anthology of Vittorio Gassman. The soundtrack was adapted by Heartbeats.

Additional promotional tools

Presented during Paris Fashion Week, the collection was announced by 1200 personalised invitations hand painted by British illustrator Gill Button whose work he discovered on Instagram. A Kingston University graduate, Gill Button built her portfolio around commercial projects. To promote the collection, Van Noten commissioned Button for a series of Luisa-inspired ink paintings which he displayed in his Antwerp, Paris, and Milano showrooms. After the collection was replaced within the following retail season, Gill Button gathered her works under a series she named The Divine Marchesa. She further displayed her works in Paris at the Less Is More Projects gallery.

To Menkes, the smokey eyes on the invitations were the first indicative element that she was about to experience a collection based on Luisa, confirming Dyer's (2003) thesis on how celebrities end up recognised as symbols.²⁹ In her review for Dazed, Lau (2016) provides mentions related to how the invitation should be regarded as sufficiently indicative for attendees to predict the collection's source of inspiration³⁰.

Dries Van Noten and Gill Button extended their collaboration towards the release of two books documenting the inspiration, the development, and the presentation of the womenswear and menswear collections revealed for the AW 2016 season. Released in a limited edition, the two books were exclusively available in selected Dries Van Noten stores. However, their partnership was extended to a series of hand painted ceramic plates dedicated for an exclusive lunch held at Singapore's Club21 to celebrate the book. In addition to catwalk snapshots, the 35 designs adorning the plates continued to explore Luisa's iconography (Marfil, 2016)³¹.

²⁷ "I love the whole story of the Marchesa – the snakes on her body – it is all very inspiring, she was on a quest for extravagance,"

²⁸ "For me, it's about having a happy life because if you search for something so hard, like Casati did, you don't have a happy life...I think for me it was really important to create a passion to really push it, and the outfits, the hair and the makeup. It was a darkness of decadence but also with a positive side, because I think that when you go for that, it really has to be really beautiful." (Lau, Dazed Digital, 2016)

²⁹ What else would you expect but those brooding, coal black lashes to evoke the narcissistic perfectionist, the addict of grandeur who was the Marchesa Luisa Casati?

³⁰ The hand painted haunting eyes on the Dries van Noten invitation should have clued us in. They were of course the eyes of Marchesa Luisa Casati

³¹ "This was continuation of the theme of Dries fall collection, to echo the feel of the book... "[There were] looks from the show, as well as some more directly inspired by the Marchesa herself"

Post-show commercial reception

Tim Blanks concludes his review by pointing out the market reaction³² which is further developed across his video column, Tim's Take for Business of Fashion where he also interviewed both the designer, but also Tomoko Ogura Fashion Director, Barneys New York. Van Noten confirms the commercial response as an essential part of his creative process, admitting that he started to present the collection and to sell it four weeks before the catwalk show. However, across his negotiations, he encountered certain reserves as buyers demanded they see the fashion show before committing. Such response produced a certain blockage for the designer who confesses not being able to work on a new collection if he doesn't have the reactions for his most latest work. Perceiving its aesthetics as a blend between Berlin in the 1930 and the English school girl uniform, Ken Downing of Nieman Marcus praises the collection by saying there is '*no single piece I wouldn't want in my stores*'.

Critical reception of the AW16 collection

While Vogue, Dazed, WWD, Document Journal, AnOther Mag, and Business of Fashion dedicated integral reviews to the collection, the Financial Times balanced Van Noten's proposal to that of Christophe Lemaire, whereas the NY Times published a critique of the entire season, by also mentioning Courrèges, Hermès, Margiela, and Yang Li.

Luisa Casati's influence on contemporary designers is noted by Menkes for Vogue, Foley for WWD, Reddiger for Fashion Week Daily, Lau for Dazed, and Michault for Antidote Magazine. John Galiano and Alexander McQueen are the most common two names mentioned of the contemporary designers who took inspiration from her.

When assessing the challenges a designer would face when exploring a source of inspiration that has already been approached, Blanks goes to Van Noten's belief of how collections should tell a story, by praising his take on Luisa as '*a masterclass in fashion narrative*'. To Blanks, Van Noten's collection translated 'decadence with discipline' in an 'ideal, irresistible and commercial approach. A similar perspective can be noticed at Foley (2016) who praised the designer for '*never letting his arty decadence run amok*'.

Beyond designs and approaches of materials, an additional remark which can be attributed to the value of an argument suggesting Van Noten as an innovator comes from Suzy Menkes observation over how Luisa has never been approached through the angle of gender fluidity and notably, through menswear-influences. However, for Blanks, such fusion was somehow predictable³³, considering Van Noten's signature explorations of duality.

Equally honouring Luisa and d'Annunzio, the collection highlights a fashion between their two styles into a result described as '*gender fluid*' by Friedman³⁴ (2016) for the NY Times, Suzy Menkes for Vogue³⁵, and Foley for WWD³⁶. Nevertheless, Suzy Menkes (2016) is the only journalist to mention Luisa's interest towards the occult which she connected to Van Noten's gender fluidity as a marker of the day's values or, how she put it, '*l'air du temps*'.

Dazed³⁷ and Financial Times promoted Luisa as a 'female dandy' or dandyess, arguably as a response to the Van Noten's gender-fluid approach of her legacy. Such label stands out as a novelty, compared to the media's reception to other Luisa-inspired collections. Though not directly connected to Luisa, a reference to dandyism can also be found in Borrelli-Persson's review for Vogue. Habitually, Luisa is referred to through the categories and social fields in association she's usually described (Italian aristocrat, heiress, muse, patroness). Another syntagm dominating

³² So was the toxic beauty of his collection brave? It didn't really feel that way when retailers began their post-show raves. Not brave. Just necessary.

³³ How could Van Noten *not* orchestrate an artful union of their wardrobes?

³⁴ As a source of inspiration, Luisa and d'Annunzio's affair is extended towards 'questions of gender identity, decadence and the definition of luxury'

³⁵ Greeted with cheers and smothered with admirers, I could not ask Dries what I wanted to know: was there an exploration of the man/woman thing in this collection?

³⁶ Gender fluidity — hardly a new topic, and one that has long fascinated the creative psyche.

³⁷ the early 20th century dandyess; When the myths of Casati emerged in the collection, that's when you could really feel the presence of her dandyess existence (Lau, 2016)

reviews is that of 'femme fatale', as noted in Vogue (2016), SCMP (Chen, 2016) and Document Journal (Gutierrez, 2016).

The focus on the pearl gilet may be associated to the acknowledgement of innovation. The pearl strings gilet dominating the collection has been either dedicated an extended description or praises by Friedman (2016) in the NY Times, Tindle (2016) for Another Mag, and nevertheless in the unsigned review of the Financial Times. However, Borrelli-Persson of Vogue is the only journalist who develops the theme of the pearls to the incident which led to Luisa's encounter to Giovanni Boldini. Anecdotes of her greeting her guests in nothing else than strings of pearls are found in Blanks' review.

References to Luisa's mythology as a key to decode Van Noten's use of animal prints are found in the unsigned review published by the Financial Times³⁸ Tim Blanks' take for Business of Fashion and Foley³⁹'s work for WWD.

Decadence represents a central theme in the reviews published by Vogue⁴⁰, WWD⁴¹, and the Financial Times⁴². Such association could assumably be explained through D'Annunzio's credo in art and life, since posterity remembers him as 'The Prince of Decadence'. According to Valerie Steele (2017), decadence transpires also from the colour palette chosen for the collection. Nevertheless, in her review for Dazed, Lau (2016) raises an analogy between 'decadence', as an artistic credo shared by Luisa and D'Annunzio and deterioration which can be regarded as the prerequisite for Deconstructionism, the movement under which Van Noten made his debut.

Vogue published an additional review authored by Piercy (2016) on the catwalk show's impact on elevating Luisa's signature kohl-circled eyes as a reference in make-up. The review reasserts the Luisa iconography on the invitations under the dynamics observed by Dyer (2003) when noting how celebrities end up recognised as symbols.⁴³ Luisa is described as '*the early-20th-century Italian heiress, muse, and legendary partygoer*'. Piercy (2016) introduces two additional anecdotes not mentioned before in any previous headlines on Luisa. According to Piercy (2016), Luisa was rumoured to amplify her eyeliner contour by applying strips of velvet on her lids, while also creating a dramatic effect by simultaneously wearing multiple rows of false lashes.

According to Menkes, the show's line up confirmed the approach through a line-up explained on the invitation as: "*Fluid gender, Helmut Newton – decadence as a life style.*". Tim Blanks is the only other journalist to mention Helmut Newton as a potential secondary source of inspiration.

1.2.3 Alberta Ferretti 2016 Spring/Summer

Alberta Ferretti dedicated the 17 looks collection to her Limited Edition Demi-couture range which she positions on a higher price range than her namesake brand. As the collection's core concept, Luisa is mentioned to have inspired Alberta Ferretti through her '*symbolic mystery*'. For Alberta Ferretti, Luisa Casati represents an allegory of the modern woman⁴⁴. The complexity and unpredictability Casati's eccentricity is regarded as a reflection of the many personalities of today's woman (Amica, 2016).

The designer appears to not have replicated any portrait of Luisa Casati but rather developed her collection as a metaphor of the Marchesa's impact of her contemporaries. Ferretti's

³⁸ 'Casati seduced her artist admirers with a wild menagerie which included a pet serpent and two leashed panthers, and these leopard-printed lounge suits and tiger-stripe skirts were similarly brazen and unapologetic'

³⁹ It started with leopard, a favorite of the Marchesa, whose lifespan exceeded her assets. (She was buried in a spotted reminder of her former glory.).

⁴⁰ inspiration in the Marchesa and her decadent life in Venice (Menkes, 2016)

⁴¹ inspired by the high-style decadence of the Marchesa Casati and her lover (one of them, anyway), the writer Gabriele d'Annunzio (Foley, 2016).

⁴² ode to decadence

⁴³ The invitation said everything

⁴⁴ 'What I love about La Marchesa is her untameable free spirit and her modern allure' -Alberta Ferretti (Cardini, 2016)

approach of Luisa Casati's imagery was built upon a quote from Filippo Tommaso Marinetti who described the Marquise's "*slow jaguar eyes digesting the devoured steel cage in the sun*" (My Valium, 2016). As a source of inspiration, Luisa Casati's iconography is resumed to her menagerie, as visible in the animal print garments and in the snake-shaped adornments found in jewellery, accessories, embroidery and footwear. The only other direct references can be connected to the Theodora fancy dress, the Marchesa's coat of arms decorating corsets, and the appliqué ribbons evoking the Medusa. The collection combines emblematic styles of the 1920es such as *chambre des robes* as outerwear 5/6 sleeves, sac bags, and flapper fringe dresses. Casati's opulent eccentricity is reflected in iridescence, rich embroidery, brocade, and tyrian red (Fabfashion Fix, 2016) According to the designer, the interplay of transparencies through black sheer lace is based on anecdotes in which she covered her face, though no known imagery of her depicts her in such manner (My Valium, 2016).

The collection video

Starring the Polish model-actress Malgosia Bela, the film is shot in Venice by photographers Luigi & Iango in Luisa Cast's former residence, the Palazzo Vernier de Leoni in Venice. Alongside Malgosia Bela, the duo of photographers stand out as the contributors behind the collection's lookbook. The film also integrates interior of Alberta Ferretti's interiors, the Palazzo Donizetti (Turra, 2016).

Alberta Ferretti argues her choice of promoting the collection through a short film as a response to the growing influence of social media within our society⁴⁵. As an alternative medium to a catwalk show, the film is Alberta Ferretti's first digital project. The unique visibility earned as an effect of social media virality is confirmed by Alberta Ferretti as a strategic marketing goal.

The collection's video participated at the Milano Fashion Film Festival. In the Festival's presentation page, Luisa is described as '*an early 20th century icon of unsurpassed yet complex femininity*'.

Though the short film is described by both the designer, as well as by editors as the main promotional tool for the collection, Alberta Ferretti also opted for three catwalk shows: one during the Milan Fashion Week, one in Paris on the 03.07.2016, and a third one in Moscow at the Petrovski Passage, following an invitation from the Bosco Family.

Critical reception

Alberta Ferretti's Limited Edition AW 2016 collection earned reviews from Italian and Brazilian Vogue, Corriere della Sera, Amica, WWD, and Elle. Outside the esteemed Italian blogger Chiara Ferragni, digital media reviewing the collection include MyValium, Fashion Network, and Fashion Fab Fix.

Working with a source of inspiration recognised for an enigmatic and darker look led to an observation from WWD on how the collection '*was a departure from Ferretti's signature romance*.'(Turra, 2016)

⁴⁵ "I thought of this collection as a means of truly expressing my stylistic language which is closely tied to a feminine personality. I am increasingly convinced that being the protagonist of a personal attitude is the most authentic means of expression for women these days. For this reason, I wanted to present this collection with a video. Today, more than ever, fashion must send messages that are fast, clear, and rapidly accessible to a wider audience, and through the internet, and social networks fashion participates in this global movement that defines taste these days" says Alberta Ferretti.

The collection's impact on Luisa Casati's public visibility

The most frequent attributes used in reviews to describe Luisa Casati are: icon/iconic⁴⁶, mysterious⁴⁷, transgressive⁴⁸, femme fatale⁴⁹, dark⁵⁰ decadent⁵¹ and eccentric⁵². For WWD, Luisa Casati was '*the ante litteram celebrity*' (Turra, 2016), whereas Vogue describes her '*loved and hated in equal measure*' (Cardini, 2016)

Luisa Casati's credo of transforming herself into a living work of art is touched upon by three ⁵³ media outlets. For My Valium (2016), Luisa Casati achieved her credo through her charisma.

When referring to her signature make up, PFG Style (2016) focused on her pale complexion and her 'artfully double-layered eyes'. Luisa's look is also mentioned by Chiara Ferragni who describes her as never changing her hairstyle, wearing black almost every day, including on a make-up level.

In regards to Casati's historical commissions, Giovanni Boldini is the artist most referred to within the editors' reviews⁵⁴, followed by Giacomo Balla⁵⁵. Chiara Ferragni appears to be the only author to have also mention Cocteau, Marinetti, and Man Ray. Beyond her legacy as a sitter, Luisa's intellectual pursuits are only pointed out by PFG and WWD⁵⁶.

Her affair to Gabriele D'Annunzio, as well as her impact on him as muse⁵⁷ is mentioned by 3 out of 10 reviews. However, Chiara Ferragni introduces a historical inaccuracy when describing Luisa's affair with D'Annunzio as '*lasting till his death*'.

Luisa Casati's impact on contemporary designers is mentioned by Vogue's Tiziana Cardini (2016) who describes her as '*one of the most enduring inspirations in fashion*'. Chiara Ferragni also points out that Luisa Casati has been previously celebrated by other designers as well.

However Fritha (2016), appears to be the only review author emphasising Luisa Casati's transhistorical cultural impact, focusing on both the commissions she sat for in her lifetime, as well as her posthumous influence⁵⁸.

One of the pillars of Luisa's iconography as perpetuated across every collection she inspired amongst contemporary designers, the panther and snakes are mentioned '*in true Casati fashion*' (Cardini, 2016). My Valium (2016) is the only outlet to provide an extensive description of her menagerie.

⁴⁶ 'icon of sophisticated femininity of the early twentieth century' (Amica), 'history's most iconic heroines, Marchesa Luisa Casati' (Elle), 'icona di femminilità ed eleganza degli inizi del Novecento' (Fashion Network), 'legendary style icon Marchesa Casati' - Chiara Ferragni

⁴⁷ 'the symptomatic mystery of the Marchesa Luisa Casati' (Amica), 'mysterious and magnetic femininity' (Fritha, 2016), 'enigmatic eccentric elegance' (Fab Fashion Fix)

⁴⁸ *Il suo carisma unico contribuì a tramutarla in un' "opera d'arte vivente" indimenticata, primadonna assoluta di un' esistenza vissuta all' insegna della trasgressione.*

⁴⁹ Vogue, Fritha (2016)

⁵⁰ 'iconic dark lady of the Belle Epoque' (My Valium, 2016) 'dark femme fatale beauty' (Vogue, 2016).

⁵¹ PFG Style (2016)

⁵² Vogue, Fritha (2016)

⁵³ MyValium, Chiara Ferragni, PFG Style (2016)

⁵⁴ Amica, PFG Style (2016), La Spola (2017), Brazilian Vogue, Fashion Network, Chiara Ferragni

⁵⁵ Amica, Brazilian Vogue, Fashion Network, Chiara Ferragni

⁵⁶ 'Stood out for her unconventional look, as well as her intellectual curiosity'

⁵⁷ 'Affascinante, eccentrica, incantatrice musa di D'Annunzio' (MyValium), 'Gabriele D'Annunzio dedicated his best intentions to her: "The rose bushes of the Vittoriale are waiting for you to bloom"' PFG Style (2016), Chiara Ferragni

⁵⁸ 'concentrated generations of artists around her, becoming both patron and muse', 'Her influence continues to span the decades and she reaches this catwalk of which, once again, she becomes the muse'

Nevertheless, the designer describes Venice as having complemented Luisa's charm, a perspective perpetuated by Vogue's Cardini and Fashion Network⁵⁹.

1.3 Luisa Casati as reflected in the Instagram users' interest

In September 2022, there were 3300 posts published behind the #luisacasati hashtag. Tables below follow the evolution of the public posts from one year to another, highlighting their type of content (eg: portraits, fan art) and number. Except for emerging designers and contemporary artists promoting their works, all posts accounted in the table below have been published by regular Instagram users with no affiliation to the organisations which have acted as Luisa Casati's cultural intermediaries (eg: fashion magazines, publishing houses, etc).

The #luisacasati hashtag appears to have emerged on Instagram in 2012 through an image of Man Ray's eye effect portrait posted by a fan.

Fashion represents the second most significant medium for Luisa Casati's cultural impact outside her legacy as a sitter. Her impact as a fashion muse is visible in the established brands honouring her, as well as in the emerging designers inspired by her.

The emergence and consolidation of a Luisa Casati iconography demanded identifying both her most circulated portraits, as well as the looks which Instagram users tend to associate with her most. Luisa Casati appears to be recognised from Giovanni Boldini's portrait with greyhounds, Augustus John's portrait, and Man Ray's blurred eyes portrait. Paul Poiret's fountain dress and the 1922 Worth Queen of the Night dress stand out as Luisa Casati's most representative looks.

	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Total	226	235	216	247	242	304	190	164	119	20
Luisa as Sitter	56	83	72	85	123	91	70	33	23	9
Most circulated portrait	Boldini Silk dress	Augustus John (20)	Greyhound (11), Man Ray (11)	Boldini Silk dress	Greyhound (38)	Man Ray (11)	Paul Poiret fountain dress	Queen of the Night	Augustus John (5)	Man Ray (3)
Most circulated outfit	Paul Poiret Fountain	Paul Poiret fountain (3)	Paul Poiret fountain (6)	1913 ball - Helene and Boldini (5)	Queen of the Night (7)	Queen of the Night (11)	Paul Poiret fountain dress (12)	Queen of the Night (7)	Queen of the Night (3)	Paul Poiret Fountain (1), 1913 ball (1)
Established designers	15	4	1	5	5	12	60	1	-	
Most circulated established designer	Dior (13)	Dior (3)	Norman Norell (1)	Fratelli Mocchiola	Dior (2)	10 Holland Street (7)	10 Holland Street (16)	10 Holland Street	-	
Emerging designers	65	14	6	5	2	18	-	-	1	
Celebrities citing Luisa	3	9	15	3	6	14	5	4	4	1
Most circulated celebrity	Tilda (2)	Marisa (4) Tilda (3)	Marisa (7)	Marisa (3)	Tilda (4)	Tilda (8)	Tilda (2)	Marisa (2)	Tilda (4)	Tilda (1)
Books about Luisa	10	27	21	15	20	17	5	10	1	2

⁵⁹ 'She lived in Venice whose atmosphere suited her mysterious charm' (Cardini, 2016)

Most circulated book	Judith Mackrell (4)	Judith Mackrell (11)	Judith Mackrell (8)	Judith Mackrell (8)	Judith Mackrell (12)	Judith Mackrell (5)	Vanna Vinci (2)	Vanna Vinci (3)		Portrait of a Muse (1), Vanna
Contemporary Art	5	9	3	3	4	2	1	5	Portrait of a Muse (1)	
Events	3	4	5	11	11	-	2	86	81	
Shootings	1	3	4	2	3	4	1	-		
Affiliates	2	10	13	8	9	12	2			
Most circulated affiliate		Villa San Michele (6)	Palazzo Fortuny (5)	Villa San Michele (3)	Palazzo de Leoni (5)	Fortuny (5), Palazzo di Leoni	Boldini D'Annunzio			
Unexpected projects	2	1	-	2	-	-	2	-		1
Self-representation	10	8	9	10	15	8	9	6	1	4
Fan Art	13	26	21	9	18	17+57	10	3	2	1
Grave visits	4	1	1	-	3	2	2	1		-
Birthday post	2	6	5	3	2	5	3	1		-
Unrelated	3	6	14	11	4	6	4	-		-
Misattributed	1	4	2	-	4	4	1	5	2	-

Outside of labels such as 10 Holland Street and Sebastian Gunawan catwalk presenting their collection with the respective season, Galliano's collection for Dior provides the most circulated fashion content across the year. All posts related to both Dior, as well as Dries Van Noten and Alberta Ferretti have been published by regular Instagram users and not the brands' affiliates.

Luisa's impact as a fashion muse is nevertheless reflected in the self-representation content in which users attempt to recreate her looks, in some cases through professional photo shootings commissioned by them. As a key observation, such content emerges from regular Instagram users whose following doesn't signal an influencer status. The Man Ray blurred eyes effect represents the most common theme explored through self-representation.

As highlighted in the above table self-representation content is more common than professional shootings conducted for a photographer's or a stylist's portfolio.

A longitudinal outlook on the fluctuations within the content published behind the #luisacasati hashtag reflects developments both in the audience's familiarity with her, as well as potential anchors which can accommodate their interests in her. The emergence and evolution of a hashtag are sensitive to both the relevance attributed to it by social media users, as descending from the content to which it can be attached. Content published in 2016 and 2021 may be interpreted as representative of an organic performance of the hashtag (235 posts), reflecting the exact level of familiarity Instagram users have with Luisa Casati under the impact of cultural intermediaries from the previous years. The first driver of growth for the #luisacasati hashtag is found in the Divina Marchesa exhibition at the Palazzo Fortuny (81 posts out of 119 in 2014 and 86 out of 164 in 2015). Illustrator's Antoine Kruk series in which his drawing of Luisa are placed in photos across Venice counted 57 out of the 304 posts published in 2018. As one of the anchor's of

the High Society exhibition hosted by the Rijksmuseum, Boldini's Portrait of Luisa with greyhounds influenced 29 of the 242 posts published in 2018.

In 2019, Luisa Casati has been promoted as one of the characters of the 'What the Femmes' performance which had been played within the 19th arrondissement of Paris. Exclusively promoted by local cultural charities (associations), the performance, rehearsal, backstage footage, and audience generated content amassed 65 posts of the 247 published in 2019.

Scheduled to have its opening on the 13.03.2022, the *Ritratto* opera provides a key milestone, as the first opera to be launched on YouTube where it gathered 75000 attendees. The performance was promoted by soprano Verity Wingate playing Luisa, as well as by costume designer Jan Taminiau through 26 out of the 216 posts published in 2020.

Jasmin Santanen's participation at the Venice Fashion Week and the social media campaign under which she promoted her collection generated covers 65 out of the 226 posts published in 2022.

Despite their dynamic social media strategy, neither Antoine Kruk (9498 followers) nor Jasmin Santanen (877 followers) can be regarded as claiming the expected authority as cultural intermediaries to influence the audience's familiarity with Luisa Casati.

1.4 Field analysis of Luisa Casati's evolution from sign to symbol

Luisa Casati's posthumous revival represents the product of three major cultural intermediaries: her biographers (1), the fashion system (2), and the general media(3). Resolving the research aim of the present thesis demands identifying the cultural intermediary holding the highest influence in Luisa Casati's revival (1), the iconography and ideology they perpetuate (2), as well as impact they have on the audience (3).

Available in Appendix 1, an overview of all referential projects inspired by Luisa Casati since the 1998 momentum amass fashion collections and shootings with celebrity appearances, exhibitions, art history lectures, and opera performances. The influence which could be claimed by the fashion system in Luisa Casati's revival should be contrasted to the impact of other cultural intermediaries credited or confirmed to have increased her public visibility.

Her 'reappearance' in the contemporary public sphere can be traced to two milestone projects: John Galliano's 1998 Spring Summer collection for the House of Dior and her only official biography, authored by Scott D. Ryersson and Michael O Yaccarino and published in the same year.

An initial aspect to resolve can be connected to the extend to which John Galliano can be indeed regarded as Luisa Casati's 'discoverer', since his collection for Dior has been presented in the same year as Ryersson and Yaccarino published her only official biography, 'Infinite Variety'.

From a chronological perspective, developing a fashion collection requires a preliminary research on the particular source of inspiration. The retail calendar used in the fashion industry indicates a conventional timeframe of around 8 months to one year in which a collection is sketched and manufactured, before being presented during Fashion Weeks. Consequently, Galliano is likely to have conducted his research before Ryersson and Yaccarino released Luisa Casati's biography. Furthermore, a liaison between the couturier and the two authors prior to the 1998 momentum has not been confirmed. However, John Galliano had previously explored Luisa Casati in his '*The Edwardian Ray Princess chez Dior or Mata Hari*' collection.

As his biographer McDowell (1997:115) mentions, Galliano appears to have discovered Luisa Casati when researching the turn of the century portraiture, especially the works of John Sargent Singer and Giovanni Boldini. Galliano's 1998 Spring Summer collection evokes Luisa Casati's times and broad events of her life (her trip to Capri or the acquisition of the Palais Rose), rather than styles which can be traced to her portraits. Galliano's approach suggests a parallel study from other sources than Ryersson's and Yaccarino's book. Furthermore, no references to Luisa Casati's biography transpires from the collection reviews. Fashion editors' appear to build their impression on information provided in the collection's booklet. Inadequacies such as Luisa Casati selling a house after hosting a ball can also be noted.

Though the Marchesa has been advertised as the muse behind John Galliano's 1998 Spring Summer collection for Christian Dior, only one of the looks appears to evoke Luisa Casati's portraits, notably, Alberto Martini's depiction of her as Cesare Borgia. When John Galliano presented his collection, only 6 of the reportedly over 200 portraits of Luisa Casati were on public display. None of the 6 works can be traced as having influenced the collection which is rather based on the works of two of her closest collaborators: Paul Poiret and Leon Bankst, whose art was, at the time, more accessible to public knowledge. Galliano's tribute stands out as a broad

sketch of Luisa Casati's life, honouring her mythology, rather than highlighting a prospective iconography as source for his inspiration.

A further issue to address is the extent to which Ryersson's and Yaccarino's research efforts have impacted any further project developed within the fashion system after Galliano presented his collection for Dior. When asked about the inspiration behind the brand Marchesa she co-founded in 2004 alongside Georgina Chapman, British designer Keren Craig mentions having discovered Luisa Casati through Ryersson and Yaccarino's book. However, the two authors' influence can be identified in further projects.

Beyond recreating her life, Scott D Ryersson and Michael O Yaccarino also hold the merit to have located and publish the 200 portraits composing Luisa Casati's legacy as a sitter. Outside her biographical details, imagery of Luisa Casati unearthed by Ryersson and Yaccarino, can be noticed in the work of fashion designers who succeeded Galliano in honouring her as a muse. Furthermore, anecdotes perpetuated in collection reviews by the fashion media in various attempts to connect certain designs with a Luisa Casati have first been presented in Ryersson and Yaccarino's work. Nevertheless, portraits of Luisa Casati revealed through Ryersson and Michael O Yaccarino's efforts support all media headlines published on her, such as they inspire fan-based projects.

Their extensive research has been compiled in the *'Portraits of a Muse'* album published in 2008. In appreciation for a 20 years' effort, Lady Moreea Black bestowed the Casati Estate to Ryersson and Yaccarino after the release of *'Infinite Variety'* in 1998. The evolution of the Casati Estate the following years succeeding Galliano's collection raises an essential aspect to consider when estimating the fashion system's influence in Marchesa's revival. In their *'Portraits of a Muse'* album, Ryersson and Yaccarino praise the Marchesa as the third most depicted woman in history after Virgin Mary and Cleopatra. Complementing a profile on the Marchesa published in the printed edition of The New Yorker magazine on the 22nd of September 2003 and penned by Judith's Thurman, Carine Roitfeld's portrayal of her can be regarded as the second project developed within the fashion system to honour Luisa Casati. Directed by Karl Lagerfeld, Carine Roitfeld's shooting stands out as a modern reinterpretation of Luisa's 1912 portrait by Baron Adolph de Meyer. Integrated within the imagery supporting Thurman's article, Meyer's portrait has been published in The New Yorker in acknowledgement of copyrights to the Casati Estate. The article provides no additional information outside facts and anecdotes extracted from Ryerson's and Yaccarino's book, described by Thurman as Casati's *'only biography ... out of print, but it deserves to be revived'*.

John Galliano stands out as the most frequently mentioned designer in association to whom both the general media, as well as Instagram users concludes over Luisa Casati's impact on contemporary fashion. The Marchesa label comes second, followed by Alexander McQueen and Karl Lagerfeld. Though mentioned in his collection notes, Alexander McQueen blended Luisa's legacy with other sources in his Spring Summer 2007 Sarabande Collection. Leading to an indefinable fusion, McQueen's approach doesn't allow distinguishing elements of Luisa's iconography which could have been integrated within the collection.

As reflected in reviews of Dries Van Noten's collection, John Galliano's work appears referential for the fashion system, upraising a level of artistry presumed by critics to transform Luisa Casati into a potentially intimidating subject for other designers. Alongside Alexander McQueen, Galliano stands out in reviews received by both Dries Van Noten, as well as Alberta Ferretti as the most frequently mentioned designer to have previously honoured Luisa Casati as a source of inspiration.

The five principles recommended by Rose (2001:90-91) for visual analysis suggest that the fragments of imagery which have been extracted from Luisa's legacy to be further integrated in fashion collections had been selected to complement the brands' or -in Galliano's case- the Creative Designer's artistry and values. While Luisa's Belle Époque garments allowed Galliano to reassert his outstanding mastery of the V-cut, her relationship with D'Annunzio provided a fertile ground for Dries Van Noten to return to his previously-explored themes of Dries gender fusion and fluidity. None of the three studied designers used direct citations in their work, but rather recontextualisations. Dries Van Noten's use of pearls and animal print reflect the transformational intermediality model proposed by Schröter (2011) when studying creative approaches in which standalone objects are blended into new works to elevate certain meanings.

Beyond the studied designers' work, a complementary contribution within the fashion system to Luisa Casati's revival can also be noted to the authority attributed to the critics penning reviews of the collections inspired by her. Claiming what Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) describe as *'fashion capital'*, Suzy Menkes and Tim Blanks are recognised as some of most esteemed

critics within the industry. Their overall attitude towards finding Luisa Casati as a source of inspiration represents an additional factor to influence her media visibility, beyond the profile they presented of her which introduces more biographical elements compared to other reviews.

Hosted in 2014 by the Palazzo Fortuny in Venice, the Divina Marchesa exhibition stands out as the most impactful singular event to influence the circulation of the #luisacasati hashtag on Instagram. Furthermore, the exhibition attracted the majority of headlines published on Luisa Casati by both the fashion media, as well as the general outlets. Celebrating the legacy of a complex artist with a unique contribution to couture and textile manipulation, the Palazzo Fortuny's scope and activities are tangential to the fashion system. Outside of the Palazzo's general operations, the Divina Marchesa exhibition was graced by sketches by Karl Lagerfeld and promoted on Chanel's official media channels. The Palazzo stands out as an indisputable agent of consecration consolidating Luisa Casati's importance within the fashion system and promoting her to a general audience.

1.4.1 The formation of Luisa Casati's celebrity construct

Literature on the manufactured charisma focuses on the visuals and mythology composing the celebrity construct. Celebrity Visuals includes imagery from one's professional activity, self-representation, and signs through which individuals get to be recognised. Celebrity Mythology revolves around gossip and hearsay.

The general media's portrayal of Luisa Casati fulfils Weber's (1990:17) definition of stability as the state in which content published on a given subject remain invariant over time. Both fashion journalists and the general media associate Luisa Casati with Decadence both for her affair with Gabriele D'Annunzio, as well as for her affinity for the occult. Luisa's menagerie (especially her snakes) and nocturnal strolls stand out as the most frequently mentioned biographical details upon which her celebrity construct is being established under the influence of both the fashion system and the general media. Nevertheless, as reflected in reviews received by Alberta Ferretti, inaccuracies on Luisa's life still circulated in 2016.

The most dominant elements of imagery amassed by the fashion system and general media merge into the contemporary iconography built around Luisa Casati. Overlapping elements of imagery perpetuated by these three major entities include the wild Medusa-like red curls she kept in a bob hairstyle, her wide kohl-based eye make-up, snakes as jewellery or accessories, animal prints, pearl necklaces, and black outfits frequently associated to the Goth aesthetics. Both Instagram posts, as well as the imagery supporting media headlines indicate Man Ray's blurred eyes portrait as the most circulate portrait of Luisa. As confirmed by reactions to invitations to Dries Van Noten catwalk shows, the smokey eyes stand out as Luisa most's recognisable feature, illustrating Dyer's (2003) thesis on how a celebrity's persona can be concentrated within a symbols. Moreover, since little information was known of her life, Luisa Casati's earliest approach within the contemporary fashion system can be observed in hair and make-up artistry in catwalk shows.

Literature in celebrity study may explain Luisa Casati's revival through what Rojek (2010) describes as 'achieved fame'. Rojek's (2010) argument of fame deriving from various association - in Luisa Casati's case, designers that have honoured her legacy from John Galiano onwards- may also explain her recognition as a contemporary fashion muse. Though introduced as an Italian aristocrat, none of her contemporary references mentions her lineage, reducing the relevance of her ascribed fame. Furthermore, none of her birth nor marital names receive media visibility. As a source of inspiration for contemporary designers, Luisa Casati falls within the Hero profile (Monaco, 1987, cited by Morgan, 2010). Connected to the authenticity and originality she is praised for, the Hero profile also transpires from both her portrayal in the media, as well as from the perception she inspires amongst the audience. Though associated by some authors to financial irresponsibility, her excesses are described either through benevolence, or even through a laudatory nuance. Therefore, her transgressions appear to not be regarded through the lens of notoriety as a form of negative reputation (Litli, 2017). Furthermore, when integrated in the broad portrayal through which Luisa Casati has been promoted across both the fashion system, as well as the media, her financial irresponsibility points out to the romantic definition of authenticity (Varriale, 2012), as regarded in association to the sacrifice drawn by loyalty to one's belief.

1.4.2 The audience's reception of Luisa Casati

The #luisacasati hashtag accommodates more content on her legacy as a sitter, rather than her contemporary approach of her style. However, Luisa Casati's legacy as a sitter can be regarded as inseparable to her influence in fashion. Though few looks discovered in her portraits had been replicated in garments, her credo of transforming herself into a work of art appears to have been more impactful on designers.

Luisa Casati's impact on public consciousness (Rojek, 2010) goes beyond her influence as a fashion muse reaching social representation (McDonald 2013, Round, Thomas, 2014, Marshall and Redmond, 2016). Such unfolding is confirmed both by the values through which she had been promoted and recognised across the fashion system and the media, as well as the parallel semiotic discourse developed around her by the audience.

Luisa Casati's influence on emerging designers, as well as on self-representation experiments suggest, however, that her cultural impact is rather connected to her style. The self-representation creative works published on Instagram indicate Man Ray's blurred eyes portrait of Luisa as her most emblematic look.

The highest degree of attachment expressed by Luisa's following exhibits the patterns of "celebrity worship" a concept introduced by McCutcheon et al (2002), as cited by Lofton (Elliot, 2018:95). Visits to Luisa's grave qualify as what Brooker (2017:157) calls symbolic pilgrimage. The Luisa memorabilia exhibited at the Palazzo Fortuny, as well as the portraits gracing public display may qualify as 'reliquaries' of her celebrity status (Barron, 2014: 41)

Outside the discourse through which she has been promoted within the fashion system and the general media, Luisa Casati's revival also illustrates the emergence of a parallel semiotic content first identified by Dyer (2003:163) when studying Judy Garland's transformation into a gay icon. The intense self-exploration and rumours of either asexuality or bisexuality influenced the audience to see Luisa as an icon of queerness.

Both the media, as well as her biographers described Luisa Casati as an early representative of the Goth aesthetics. Such association would have limited her to what Sweetman (cited by Entwistle 2001:58) calls a 'taste community', transforming her into a niche cultural product. The fashion system's celebration of Luisa Casati extended her revival to the general audience, rather than subcultures.

According to Ryersson and Yaccarino, only two statements of Luisa survived posterity. Both had been brought to the public knowledge through Luisa's biography. Regarded as her credo, the first one⁶⁰ has been a central reference for both Dries Van Noten, as well as Alberta Ferretti, being further promoted in the reviews the two designers received for their works. Mentioned in no media headline, the second one⁶¹ has been circulated through social media, particularly on Tumblr. However, such content doesn't indicate whether the media exposure generated upon Luisa Casati by the fashion system led Internet users towards her biography or their interest is unrelated to the studied designers' works.

⁶⁰ *'I want to become a living work of art' (Ryersson and Yaccarino, 2017:xi)*

⁶¹ *"To be beautiful one must be unhurried. Personality is needed. There is too much sameness. The world seems to have only a desire for more of this sameness. To be different is to be alone. I do not like what is average. So I am alone."* (Ryersson and Yaccarino, 2017:179)

2. Renée Perle

Renée Perle's name was been promoted by galleries, auction houses, and art networks interested in Jacques-Henri Lartigue's work. The French photographer preserved every snapshot he has ever taken by noting the subject and date. Dominating his private archive from the early 1930es, the name Renée emerged as equally significant to his life as his three wives, Bibi (married in 1919 separated 1930), Coco (married from 1934 to 1942) and Florette (together since 1943 till the maestro's death in 1986). Images of Renée are rather connected to the South of France, where their relationship has been consumed from 1930 to 1932. Years after, he said 'I've worked with many gorgeous women. All of them seemed peasants next to her'. In 2000, her descendants discreetly release 341 photographs of hers.

John Galliano based his 2005/2006 collection on Renée after discovering her from Lartigue's work. Profiles compiled by both the art work, as well as bloggers started mentioning her influence of John Galliano.

Outside Lartigue's photography, the only known biographical details of his muse were her nationality, her work as a model for Doeuillet, and the fact that she retired from public life after their affair came to an end. She appears to have passed away in the 1970es in the South of France. For years, Jacques Henri Lartigue's diary was the only source used to trace Renée's life. Dated the 7th of March 1930, first encounter is described by the maestro as becoming instantly infatuated with her as she saw her pass down the street. Her nationality became of public knowledge from Lartigue's diaries, as the maestro recollects their first encounter when he initially thought she was Mexican. Née in Iasi into a Romanian Jewish family in 1904, Renée Perle was identified in 2016 by local journalist Iulia Chivu as Renadi Pârlea. She appears to have immigrated with her family in England in 1920. No evidence of her early work as a fashion model has been unearthed. Her profile as a historical figure has been promoted by every television and written media outlet in Romania.

In 2018, the former Editor-in-Chief of Playboy Romania, Dan Silviu Boerescu authored Renée's only biography. Insights attained by Romanian journalists and her biographer appear to have not been integrated in further profiles published by international media outlets and bloggers. Consequently, Renée Perle's revival as a fashion muse appears to be limited to her imagery descending from Lartigue's oeuvre.

2.1 Renée Perle as presented in profiles published by the traditional media

The name Renée Perle has been included in catalogue descriptions of Jacques-Henri Lartigue's in galleries, auction houses, and the Artnet portal. After John Galliano based his AW 2005/2006 collection on her Renée's style started being explored by vintage bloggers.

However, the most substantial profiles on her as a historical figure can be found in the Romanian media published after 2016, when a local journalist (Chivu, 2016) identified her as Renadi Pârlea.

Outside articles published by the Romanian media, Renée Perle is mentioned by amateur historian Messy Nussy, The Stylestorian (2016), and Mower's (2018) review of Roland Mouret's Resort 2019 collection for Vogue. Messy Nussy dedicated her article to promote an exhibition on Lartigue's work held in Nice.

The Romanian media offers a hyperbolic portrayal of Renée, describing her as having '*inspired tens of photographer and designers across history*', '*left millions of men smitten and revolutionised the world of fashion*' (Bouleanu, 2016), '*helping Lartigue to achieve the most 'chic' imagery*' (Antena 1, 2016), '*conquered Paris*' (Chihu 2016), and '*history's first professional photo-model*' (Bouleanu, 2016, Chivu 2016, Sarpe 2016, Business Magazine 2016, Nicolae 2016, Stoica 2017)

Lartigue's nostalgic contemplation in which he described other women as looking like peasants compared to Renée is introduced even within the articles' titles by Antena 1, Business Magazine (2016), and Sarpe (2016). His words are also mentioned by Nicolae N (2016), and Stoica M (2017).

All articles published by the Romanian media include her biographical information such as her years and place of birth and death, her work for Georges Doeuillet, and her affair with Lartigue. Her immigration and arrival to either England or Paris represents the only issue of dispute between authors. Romanian fashion designer Silvia Serban had a brief profile of Renée on her blog

introducing a series on '*reinterpreted feminine archetypes*'. The profile is accompanied by a shooting of Silvia personifying Renée.

Extracts from Lartigue's notes which describes their first encounter and his impression of her have been inserted in the articles of The French Sampler (2011), Chihu (2016), Messy Messy (2016). Bouleanu (2016) and Messy Messy (2016) also integrate Lartigue's notes which described her as fiery and passionate. Her disappearance from public life is noted by Bouleanu, (2016), Messy Nessy (2016) and The Stylestorian (2016) who mention on not much being known about her after they parted ways.

Renée's style legacy can also emerge in association to Lartigue's feeling of '*eternal holiday*' mentioned by both Bouleanu (2016) and Messy Nessy (2016). Describing Renée as Lartigue's Mona Lisa, Messy Nessy (2016) is the only author to mention her passion towards self-portraiture. Galliano's praises are alluded to by Bouleanu (2016), Antena 1 (2016), Sarpe (2016), Nicolae (2016), The Stylestorian (2016), and Stoica (2017).

The 4.375 \$ attained by 'Renée Perle in a white coat' on the 6th of May 1999 through a Sotheby's auction is mentioned by Bouleanu (2016), Sarpe (2016), Nicolae (2016), and Stoica (2017) Her descendants' decision of releasing her personal archive is referred to by Bouleanu (2016), Antena (2016), Business Magazine (2016), Nicolae (2016), Messy Nessy (2016), and Stoica M (2017).

2.2 Renée Perle as presented by reviews of fashion collections

2.2.1 John Galliano 2005/2006 Autumn/Winter

Composed of 48 looks, the collection is dominated by pyjama suits, integrating long fluid dresses as an aesthetic complement. Lartigue's portraits of Renée are blended with Galliano's emblematic gazette prints he first introduced in his work for Christian Dior. Taylor (2020: 285), describes the "Warhol-esque prints of the eye" as "reminiscent of Westwood's 1992 "Always on Camera"?".

The fashion show

The collection was presented at the Studios de France in Saint-Denis, Paris on the 5th March 2005 (Fairer, 2017). The designer opted for Renée's penciled annotations on a film script as Invitation. The staging implied transforming the studios into a film set. The chromatics traced the development of photography from black and white, to sepia, and finally, colour. The show recreated a silent film, whereas guests could read 'Galliano Studios' on various elements of the staging. A director's chair marked 'Galliano Studios' was placed next to a dressing table whereas the mirror captured a reminder 'Meet John at Hemingway's Bar at 7' with a lipstick (Foy, 2015)

Critical reception

The collection was reviewed by the esteemed fashion critic Hamish Bowles for Vogue and featured in three distinctive books on Galliano's influence as a designer. Launched under Galliano's namesake brand, the collection attracted lesser media exposure compared to his work for Dior or Givenchy. To Bowles, the collection is in alignment with Martin Scorsese's *The Aviator*, which he describes as the main fashion reference of the season. The aesthetics noted in the collection are interpreted by Bowles in association either to a hip-hop approach on Marlene Dietrich's masculine looks, Galliano's signature bias cut, Warhol motifs, Wiener Werkstätte graphics, and the Dior dress wore for the 1997 Academy Awards. For Bowles', the collection stands out as Galliano's personal greatest-hits compilation, reasserting Galliano's past Old Hollywood influences. Bowles (2005) praised the show's theatrics, also focusing on notable guests such as Dita Von Teese.

The collection's impact on Renée's public visibility

Galliano's AW 2005/2006 collection was promoted under the name of Renée. According to Taylor (2020: 284), Galliano had previously used Renée as a muse for his AW 1988/89 collection, 'Hairclips' revealed at the British Fashion Council Marquee in Olympia, London. When arguing his

choice for Renée, Galliano called a '*Parisian kittenish coquette*', also describing her as a '*perfect avant-garde-iste*'. The only review available which was published at the time in which the collection has presented, Bowles' (2005) writing for Vogue doesn't mention Renée, connecting the models' looks to Clara Bow and Marlene Dietrich.

2.2.2 Max Mara 2023 Spring/Summer

Ian Griffiths's SS 2023 collection for MaxMara honours Renée Perle as a personification of fashion and Eileen Gray of architecture. As both his references frequented the same region within the same time span, the designer contemplates whether the two met, aiming such hypothetical momentum through his creation⁶² In his choice of a theme for his collection', Ian Griffiths was motivated ⁶³ aiming for a fusion between femininity and modernity. Nevertheless, Griffiths confessed to British Vogue being interested exploring gender identity, as expressed in the 1930es. The collection is dominated by beige hues contrasted with black and navy, the palette evokes sepia photography. A secondary palette noticed on some garments includes mint green, lemon yellow, and sky grey. Evoking sketches, floral patterns attempt to recreate Renée's 'art vernaculaire' style. According to Ian Griffiths, knitwear, the hip-hugging skirts and the wide 'sailor' trousers are direct references to Renée's style, which may also be recognised in wide hats and tank tops (O'Neill, 2022). References to the 1930es Riviera Style include vintage swimwear lines, and bandanas.

The fashion show

The collection was presented during the Milan Fashion Week. Staged at the Piazza Affari in Milano, the catwalk show carried the title of "The Blue Horizon". The standing recreated a shoreline embraced by the cerulean blue found on the French Riviera skies. The show notes provide an introduction in the 1930es Riviera chic which is defined as an aesthetics where '*masterpieces were conceived, manifestos thrashed out and a timeless look was forged*' (British Vogue)

The campaign

Shot by Ethan James Green and styled by Tonne Goodman the collection's campaign combines a simplistic grey background representative for photography studios to sharp visuals inducing a futuristic touch. The campaign features models Adut Akech, Annemary Aderibigbe and Dara Allen. No references to Renée are noticed in the campaign other than her work as a model.

Critical reception

MaxMara's SS 2023 collection was reviewed by Vogue, British Vogue, Elle Mexico, The Guardian, CR Fashion Book, Harper's Bazaar, Grazia, and Channel New Asia. The Guardian and NY Post published a collective review of the Milan Fashion Week. The Guardian focused on Gucci, Dolce & Gabbana, Bottega Veneta, Fendi, and MaxMara. Associated Press (2022) includes MaxMara alongside Moschino and Prada. Vogue's Leitch sees Ian Griffiths as '*becoming the patron saint of overlooked and underestimated historical "muses."*', after previously having celebrated Natália Correia. The collection is regarded by Vogue as an attempt to

⁶² '*Did she (Renée Perle) and Eileen Gray ever meet? Max Mara imagines that they did; two women with a shared vision of modernity stepping out onto the E1027 terrace. Blinking in the morning light, we see them raise their smiling faces to meet the glittering blue horizon.*' - the MaxMara show notes

⁶³ "I wanted to look back in history to a moment where I could push together these two concepts of femininity and modernity", Ian Griffiths (Fashion Photography), British Vogue

rehabilitate the two muses as artists of their own⁶⁴. Vogue and Associated Press (2022) also recognise secondary David Bowie elements within the collection⁶⁵

British Vogue's Madsen (2022) describes Ian Griffiths as '*a studious designer*'. Such label is confirmed by Griffiths himself who reflects on his work as '*being paid to learn*'.

Describing the collection as grounded on 'a personification of the French Riviera', CR Fashion Book's Ljung points out that Griffiths explores the role of muses as cultural catalysts.

For Channel New Asia, the designs challenge contemplation by combining functionality to an intellectual dimension. CR Fashion Book and Channel New Asia focus more on designs and chromatics, rather than the source of inspiration. Madsen (2022) notes the 'lino greggio' palette as emblematic for MaxMara.

However, Vogue raises the question of an additional source of inspiration when identifying the apparent navy hue as the *bleu de travail* - the classic French workwear associated to masculine aesthetics.

The reviews' impact on Renée Perle's public visibility

Reviews describe Renée as Jacques Henri Lartigue's lover and muse. The only two media outlets providing more substantial profiles are Grazia and Harper's Bazaar. Grazia focuses on Renée's love story with Lartigue, mentioning their first encounter⁶⁶, the pet name "parasol" he gave her, and their definite separation in 1932. O'Neill of Harper's Bazaar mentions Renée's nationality and the relationship Griffith developed with her as a muse. As context, Harper's Bazaar also offers an introduction in Lartigue's legacy.

For British Vogue, Renée emulates today's aesthetic ideal, while also exhibiting an example of female empowerment⁶⁷.

Vogue, Harper's Bazaar and Grazia also mention how Renée appears either undocumented, overlooked or forgotten by history.

The most extensive portrait of Renée comes from Ian Griffiths both through the show notes, as well as through the statements offered to the media. Equally fascinated by both Renée's work as a model, as well as her self-portraits⁶⁸ Griffith's stance suggests a historical injustice, describing her as '*voiceless and unrecorded, apart from the photographs*' (Grazia, 2022)

For Griffiths, no one exhibited the Riviera style better than Renée Perle, whom, in his opinion, history should have remembered even for her look⁶⁹. Nevertheless, Griffiths also credits Renée for how relevant her look is for our times⁷⁰. For British Vogue's Madsen, Renée inspired the '*wide-legged trousers, softly-tailored blazers and dramatic overcoats*', whereas Eileen the '*clean, almost bodily organic shapes that made for a decidedly statuesque silhouette, at once formidable and soft*'.

⁶⁴ As Griffiths suggested, both women were cast as muses—objects of masculine inspiration—rather than artists who were themselves inspired.

⁶⁵ Another key muse on the mood board was David Bowie, who was most directly referenced in the high-waist, fall-front, double-button pants with a swooping boot cut.

⁶⁶ Legend has it when the iconic French photographer Jacques-Henri Lartigue spotted the tall and extremely chic model, Perle, on the streets of Paris in 1930, he instantly fell in love with her.

⁶⁷ '*didn't just represent the handsome femininity we associate with the decade today, but also embodied the female independence of the era as an artist in her own right*' Madsen (2022)

⁶⁸ '*She painted hundreds of naïf self portraits. They were dismissed as daubs by the art historians but arguably they point to a remarkable creative talent; her oeuvre was her image*' (MaxMara show notes)

⁶⁹ '*She deserves a bigger credit; the kohl-rimmed eyes, the perfectly painted Cupid's bow, the finger waved hair are so intrinsically her*' (MaxMara show notes)

⁷⁰ '*The way that she dressed created an image that was modern then and is still modern now.*' (O'Neill, 2022)

2.2.3 Emilia Wickstead 2023 Spring/Summer

On the designer's official website, Renée is introduced through Lartigue's most famous portrayal of hers: *'Around her I see a halo of magic'*.

As indicated on the designer's official website, for Emilia Wickstead, Renée Perle is representative to *'free-thinking women and sartorial liberation of the 1930's South of France'*. According to Emilia Wickstead, the rationale behind the collection was to attend to the contemporary woman's need for practicality⁷¹.

Timelessness⁷² is another argument which motivated the collection's theme.

Though evocative of the 1930es loungewear and evening wear, the collection doesn't appear to draw upon any recognisable imagery of Renée. Lartigue's documentation of Juan Les Pins, Cannes, and Monaco and the leisure ambiance transpiring from his photography are more present in Emilia Wickstead's collection rather than Renée herself⁷³

Wickstead confessed to Vogue having prioritised a colour palette rather than a source of inspiration for her SS 2024 collection.

The collection integrates masculine elements explained by Wickstead⁷⁴ through a tendency noted amongst notable figures of artistic circles to wear their partners' clothes. However, such practice cannot be traced to any known image of Renée.

The fashion show

The collection was presented at the Royal Academy of Arts, London on 18 September 2023. Mentioned in Cohn's review for Elle, the soundtrack featured : Shigeru Umebayashi's work for the movie '2046', directed by Wong Kar-wai.

Commercial reception

By January 2024, all garments composing the collection were sold out on Emilia Wickstead's official website.

Critical reception

Emilia Wickstead's collection was graced with reviews from Vogue, WWD, Grazia, Harper's Bazaar, The Guardian, and Elle. The reviews' authors stand out as preoccupied more of colour and technique, rather than sources of inspiration. Vogue's Hess (2023)⁷⁵ and WWD's Conti (2023)⁷⁶ compared and contrasted the collection with Emilia Wickstead's previous work, noting deviations from her signature aesthetics.

The source of inspiration is analysed in connection to Wickstead's own relationship with the studied epoch. Since some of the references mentioned within reviews, such as the case of Françoise Gilot and Lee Miller reached artistic recognition in association with their lovers', Cohn (2023) refers to the SS 2024 as Wickstead's own contemplation of why is it that only women are referred to as muses.

⁷¹ "Women are leading busier lives than ever and are craving simplicity and ease," (De Klerk 2023); "I'm a creative woman, and although I want to create a dream, I also create a modern wardrobe for a working woman as much as I do for a free thinker." - Hess (2023)

⁷² *'fluid tailoring and languid bias cut dress, which still feel timeless and relevant today'* Emilia Wickstead (De Klerk, 2023)

⁷³ *A charged, atmospheric playground of artists, photographers and writers on an eternal vacation* (Emilia Wickstead's official website)

⁷⁴ *'These women were free thinkers and free dressers, stealing clothes from their lovers' closets. They didn't have to wear restrictive undergarments and they could finally move around in their clothing,'* Emilia Wickstead.

⁷⁵ lavished with a more painterly riff on Wickstead's signature chintzy florals

⁷⁶ 'coquettish and comfortable with a masculine edge, a radical departure for Emilia Wickstead who built her business on formal, tailored clothing

Grazia's Bailey (2023) is the only author to connect the collection's theme to other designers, pointing out that Erdem Moralioglu as also exploring the 1930s French Riviera as a source of inspiration.

Vogue⁷⁷, WWD⁷⁸, Grazia⁷⁹, and Elle (2024)⁸⁰ connect the epoch to the introduction of masculine styles and aesthetics into leisurewear.

The collection's impact on Renée Perle's public visibility

Through Latigue's epigraph which also opened the catwalk show, Renée is only mentioned by Elle and Harper's Bazaar. The rest of reviews received focused Françoise Gilot, Lee Miller, Eileen Gray, and Marie Therese-Walter when referring on the 1930es South of France. Furthermore, Emilia Wickstead herself mentions Françoise Gilot and Lydia Corbett when speaking to Harper Bazaar's De Klerk.

Penned by Cohn, Elle published the only review drawing a portrait of Renée, describing her as not only Latigue's model, but as '*herself a painter*' (Cohn, 2024).

Though not mentioning Renée, in its collective review dedicated to multiple designers presenting their works during London Fashion Week, The Guardian (2023) touches upon Jacques Henri Lartigue, alluding to how Emilia published photos of 1930es South of France on her Instagram account as a preview of her collection.

2.3 Renée Perle as reflected in the Instagram users' interest

	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Total	36	67	106	158	157	209	147	98	73	75	27	17
Lartigue archives	35	55	80	120	128	199	126	81	66	63	26	17
Established designers			5				1			1	1	
Most circulated established designer												
Emerging designers		1		3		1	1		1			
Jewellery				1	4	1	1					
Book cover				6	1				1	1		
Contemporary Art								2		1		
Shootings					2		5	10				
Street art		1				2	2					
Interiors			13	3	3							

⁷⁷ began to borrow from the boys.

⁷⁸ 'Masculine edge' (Conti, 2023)

⁷⁹ The rise of the '*boyfriend clothes*' aesthetics ((Bailey, 2023)

⁸⁰ low-key glamour and burgeoning garçon sensibility of French Riviera style in the 1930s' - Cohn(2024)

Exhibition					3							
Fragrance	1											
Doll				1			1			1		
Self-representation			1	1	2	1	1			1		
Fan Art		10	5	16	12	4	8	4		4	6	
Lartigue himself				1	1		1	1				
Misattributed			2	1	2	1					2	

On Instagram, Renée Perle is profoundly associated to Lartigue's work. Contemporary, fan, and street art indicate an early recognition as a historical figure. Except for backstage photos of Galliano's collection which have been published by a regular Instagram user, all of the photos of established designers have been promoted by their authorised distributors (retailers). Furthermore, both the Vogue Italia shooting featuring Shalom Harlow, as well as the 2009 Peter Lindberg one featured in Marie Claire have been posted by unaffiliated Instagram users.

Outside her influence on established brands and on fashion magazines Renée's impact as a fashion muse is noted in aspiring talents honouring her, in self representation, but most common, on text captions accompanying Lartigue archive photos in which fans who publish such images praise her style. The white tank top and loose trousers styling stands out as her most circulated outfit.

2.4 Field analysis of Renée Perle's evolution from sign to symbol

Renée Perle gained public visibility as Jacques-Henri Lartigue's lover and muse. Therefore, the first cultural intermediaries to be credited for her revival are galleries and auction houses promoting Lartigue's art. However, Lartigue's own work for Vogue places him within of the fashion system. Dated in 1988, within his latest years when his seniority brought him praises as one of the most acclaimed glamour photographers of the 20th century, his shootings for Vogue signal Lartigue as an '*agent of legitimation*' for the fashion system (Bourdieu, 1993:121).

Prior to the 2006 no references of Renée's identity can be noted in catalogues and websites published within the art community after. However, Galliano's collection signals a milestone for the discourse under which galleries and auction houses promote her portraits, describing her as 'muse for contemporary designers'. For the art world, Galliano's approach of Renée becomes a source of symbolic capital, indicating her relevance for potential buyers, given the proximity between fashion and glamour photography.

The impact Renée had on John Galliano stands out as the core argument upon which she is described in the general media, as well as the art work as a contemporary fashion muse. Furthermore, two of the profiles published in the general media on Renée integrate Galliano's portrayal of hers as 'a Parisian kittenish coquette' or 'the perfect avant-garde-iste'. As a noteworthy observation, associations between John Galliano and Renée Perle in the general media can be traced to at least a 4 years' timespan between his collection and the date at which the particular headlines had been published. At the time at which he presented the '*Renée*' collection, John Galliano received less reviews for his namesake brand compared to his work for Dior, confirming the manifestation of the *bourdieusian* capitals upon a designer's position in the fashion field. Even though she gave her name to the collection and the invitation to the catwalk show featured a simulation of her annotations, none of the reviews received by John Galliano's collection mentions Renée. Dita Von Teese's presence in the front row of his catwalk show attracted more attention than the collection's source of inspiration.

Though reviews received by all designers mention a 'thorough research', no additional biographical elements other than those already published in the media have been highlighted within their collection. Consequently, a designer's research strategy is rather oriented towards imagery and contextual elements. Such approach provides an opportunity for the dynamics noted

by Alexander and Bowler (2021) in their analysis on the legitimisation of the Outsider art, where they observe how old and new ideas transpiring from the discourse in which artists are presented end up coexisting. Under such outcomes, the fashion system facilitate both an exhaustive look on how geographical regions connected to Renée biography influences her iconography. While John Galliano focused on Renée's Parisian style and the creative explorations she engaged in through self-portraiture, both MaxMara and Emilia Wickstead favoured her times on the French Riviera as Jacques Henri Lartigue's muse and lover. Furthermore, the angles in which designers interpret her life expand the states and attributes to which she may end up recognised as a standalone historical figure, rather than a sign in a fashion collection's semiotics.

Establishing Renée as a painter rather than a model, the discourse under which both Ian Griffiths, as well as Emilia Wickstead promoted their collection indicate an incipient transformation into a symbol of either a voiceless artist whose work is overlooked by her beauty and style or a free thinking woman (Turner, 2008). However, no elements under which Renée is presented in the two designers' collections can be traced to her actual biography, indicating they both curated an imaginary vision of hers. The fictionalised biographical details through which Renée is presented in the promotional materials of their collections illustrates the transfer of semiotic content observed by Bortolotti and Hutcheon (2007).

Beyond the discourse under which Renée has been promoted in the designers' collection, the fashion system's influence on her revival also includes the interest shown by journalists and the extent to which they mention her in their reviews. As previously mentioned, Renée has been overlooked in the reviews received by John Galliano. However, by the time Ian Griffiths and Emilia Wickstead launched their collections, she seems to have reached a certain public visibility. Moreover, an analysis of social media content published on Instagram behind the #reneeperle hashtag signal self-representation creative experiments amongst users since 2014 and fan art since 2015, the same year in which she was first honoured by an aspiring designers. Even though both Ian Griffiths and Emilia Wickstead promoted her as their main source of inspiration, critics attempt to identify additional references. Such tendency can be explained in the challenge of identifying trends.

Renée's media exposure highlights Weber (1990:17)'s definition of stability as consistency noticed within the content classification over time. Furthermore, though the Romanian media unearthed key information of her identity and background, neither the fashion system, nor the general media transmitted more biographical details of Renée, outside of her nationality, affair with Lartigue, and brief modelling career.

The common points under which both the fashion system, as well the audience explain their interest in Renée converges towards praises of her style as 'atemporal' and her ability to introduce creative artifices such as bracelet ensembles which are judged as unique for her epoch but relevant to ours.

3. Findings

In order for the research aim to be verified, Luisa Casati and Renée Perle should be recognised as icons beyond the fashion field, where they have posthumously reemerged as signs in John Galliano's collection. Such mutation would fulfil a condition noted by Alexander et al (2012:158) when arguing that a *consensus* made by various actors within a field who '*who form a collective sense of an object's value*' provides a prerequisite to its acknowledgement as an icon. However, the icon status is only confirmed when recognised as such outside the field in which such consensus has been reached. Consequently, Luisa Casati and Renée Perle must be first be regarded as valuable within the fashion field and further recognised beyond it.

When working with imagery related to a certain source of inspiration, the fashion system operates on all three dimensions -iconography, visual style, and structure- identified by Dyer (1998:62) in his observations on the transmission on celebrity visuals. The iconography refers to the actual fragments of imagery extracted from the muses' style and cited in the designers' works. Described as elements of pose, the visual style can be rather identified in catwalk shows or any other promotional materials, rather than the garments themselves. The structure can be identified in the meanings attached to the fragments of imagery when perpetuated through their works. For example, though evoking Luisa Casati's first encounter with Giovanni Boldini, the pearls dominating Dries Van Noten collection have also been integrated by the designer to represent a metaphor of her financial ruin. Though Ian Griffiths' work appears to evoke Renée's portraits, none of the studied designers used direct citations but rather recontextualisations. Transformational

intermediality (Schröter, 2011) represents another pattern through which the muse's imagery is integrated in the designers' words, as confirmed through prints of Renée's portraits in Galliano's collection, or the animal print trousers meant in Dries Van Noten's work as an abstract representation of Luisa Casati's nocturnal strolls with leashed cheetahs.

Detecting the celebrity visuals behind the two muses demands locating the imagery Luisa Casati and Renée Perle are most known for. While her wide hats, Palazzo trousers, and tank tops appear to be Renée's most circulated looks, the Man Ray blurred eyes portrait stands out as the most representative imagery Luisa is recognised for. The fashion system's influences in the emergence of the muses' celebrity visuals can be identified through a juxtaposition between the iconography designers were initially inspired by and the imagery which is regarded as most representative for Luisa and Renée. However, such an attempt raises a very important limitation. Designers used no direct citations, but either abstract references to their biographies integrated through recontextualisation or transformational intermediality. Therefore, confessions designers' might provide in interviews might be the only angle to identify the imagery or mythology they were first drawn to.

The fashion system's influence in creating standalone cultural references from individuals from the past is not only limited to the designers' works, but also includes how the collections are described in press reviews. Barthes (1990:80) points out that fashion should not be referred only to *'what women wear'*, but also what they *'look at and read about'*. Consequently, the discourse under which the two muses are described within the reviews received by designers for their collections are vital.

An outlook on the timeline of projects through which both muses have been honoured indicates a significant time distance between John Galliano's collections and those of other designers. As John Galliano has been praised as their 'discoverer', such reserves designers exhibited in approaching Luisa Casati and Renée Perle in their collection lead to a series of observations. The literature review highlights the risks designers face if judged unoriginal. As long as muses are associated with their discoverer, they are considered signs within their collections. Therefore, designers to approach signs within their peers' collections are likely to be exposed presumptions of unoriginality. The timespan till new further designers approached Luisa Casati and Renée Perle as sources of inspiration may indicate that the two muses are recognised as standalone symbols.

Praised as one of the most outstanding collection to grace the history of fashion, John Galliano's work for Christian Dior is noted to create a powerful precedent likely to intimidate other designers from exploring Luisa Casati as a source of inspiration. However, such expectations are not raised in regards to his Renée Perle-inspired collection. The main argument raised by critics is connected to the artistic value of the collection. The position Galliano's namesake label and the House of Dior hold in the fashion field raise further distinction between the level of artistry demanded by each brand's signature style and the interest the two collections attracted from the media. The difference between the pressure faced by designers exploring Luisa Casati and those approaching Renée Perle is not related to legitimacy risks connected to the source of inspiration but to the high artistic standards imposed through Galliano's collection for Dior.

The critics receptivity towards discovering Luisa Casati and Renée Perle as the sources of inspiration behind other designers after John Galliano confirms the fashion system agreeing to the concept of originality promoted by both social sciences, as well as by humanities (Guetzkow et al, 2004; Godart et al, 2020). While technique fulfils method, the biographical content and iconography fragments favoured by each designer confirms originality through approach. However, for journalists, the two appear to overlap.

The content analysis of press reviews indicates editors and journalists prioritise technique to any other element which could be judged as representative to the designers. As observed by press representatives, to designers, the muses provide a tool or a framework on which they can reaffirm their practices. Artistry is, however, analysed in regards to the extent to the individual practices the designers have exhibited across their career. The same outlook is extended towards their muses, as any sources of inspiration -whether human or figurative subjects - are analysed with a focus on detecting potential patterns in regards to themes or profiles of individuals designers are most concerned with. However, the content analysis of collection reviews signals a significant barrier in establishing the fashion system's influence in affirming or contributing to the creation of the celebrity construct behind the two muses. Though advertised in booklets, the muses may be overlooked by critics who tend to decode the designers' sources of inspiration through patterns noted across that particular season's trends. For example, imagery associated with Renée Perle is rather understood as influenced by Martin Scorsese's movie *'The Aviator'* or by the French Riviera.

The content analysis signals fashion journalists and editors assessing a designer's muse by how compatible she might be to other sources of inspiration exposed within previous collections, confirming (2017:53) Bourdieu's principle of coherence and consistency. Statements such as Ian Griffith being '*the patron saint of overlooked and underestimated historical muses*' or references to 'The Galliano Woman' indicate the selection of sources of inspiration as an element of *habitus*. Muses are amassed in a conglomerate identified in common traits prevailing from one season to another regardless of the individualised source of inspiration. Such common traits represent a reflection the designer's ideology as an artist. Outside the elements of technique and artistry identifiable in the garments, the patterns under which designers select their muses reflect the aesthetics they commit to as artists. The perception of this muse selection pattern suggests that journalists and editors acknowledge the designers' ability to launch what Bourdieu (1984:9) defined as symbolic production. Such argument also leads to an observation raised by Alexander et al (2012:1) over how attributing a 'symbolic power' to any sign leads to its transformation into an icon.

A key issue to address to resolving the research aim is to assess whether celebrity studies offered the appropriate theoretical framework for analysing the two muses' establishment as fashion icons. In their current media visibility, can Luisa Casati and Renée Perle be regarded as celebrities? As sources of inspiration, they can be regarded as signs for the designer's ideology (Barthes, 1990:215). However, celebrity status implies a recognition of signs to values circulating within society (Dyer, 1979).

The literature review defined modern celebrity through an individual's impact on public consciousness (Rojek, 2010) which itself descended on the discursive effect (Turner: 2013: 8, Sandvoss, 2007:30) through which they are recognised in the public sphere and their ability to deliver social representation (McDonald 2013, Round, Thomas, 2014, Marshall and Redmond, 2016). For an individual extracted from the past to become praised as a fashion icon, the impact on public consciousness can be foremost located in how relevant their style can be considered by a contemporary audience. When presenting these individuals as sources of inspiration, the designers become cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1984:335) pointing out their relevance to our times. However, designers don't use direct citations and the inspiration they might find in their source transcends their style, reaching their mythology, values, and overall ideology (as reflected in the impact of Luisa's credo on Dries Van Noten). Consequently, whether in interviews or marketing materials, when arguing their choice for a particular source, the designers consolidate the discursive effect around the muses. As their 'discoverer', John Galliano provided the catalyst for the discursive effect highlighting their relevance to our times.

Developing a fashion collection around unknown human subjects extracted from the past demands promoting them as relevant to the public. John Galliano honoured Luisa Casati's individuality, performative style, and predilection towards excess. An outlook on the year 1998 indicates a period of economic growth and prosperity which was brought to an end by the 2000 dot com crash. The Logomania aesthetics and the IT-bag phenomenon indicates a predilection towards consumption. Regardless of the promoted ideological discourse, the music industry influenced a certain sense of conformity through its strong impact on trends. Identities were less diversified than nowadays, whereas intersectionality, though first theorised 9 years before (Crenshaw, 1989), was less acknowledged and voiced than today. When referring to Renée Perle, Galliano described her as 'the quintessential Parisian kittenish coquette'. Contrary to his choice for Luisa Casati, his perception of Renée Perle cannot be regarded as a reflection of the year in which the collection has been launched. Though only partially confirmed within Galliano's collections, the Tiger's Leap thesis (Lehmann, 2000: 3; Evans, 2000: 106) transpires from the works of other designers that honour Luisa Casati and Renée Perl. Dries Van Noten's approach on gender fluidity, Alberta Ferretti's celebration of female versatility, Ian Griffiths tribute to Renée as a voiceless artist, and Emilia Wickstead's ode to the liberated women of the 1930es respond to issues of debate in their years of launch.

In order to understand the impact muses produce on the public consciousness through their discursive effect, an essential issue to clarify would be to define relevance from a celebrity studies standpoint. The discursive effect propelled by designers relates to the muses ability to exhibit a style which transcends the values of their epoch. Timelessness stands out as one of the most frequently used terms within the common adjectives through which the studied muses are described in the content analysis of press reviews and media headlines, as well as in social media. Celebrity studies would frame timelessness in the extraordinary achievements in connection to which it defines glory (Inglis, 2015:23) A discursive effect around the muses' values and ideology may, however, lead to the Hero profile (Morgan, 2010, Van Krieken, 2018:10) which opens up two

noteworthy dynamics. The challenges the muses have faced during their times to exhibit a style which transgressed the approved aesthetics of their epoch leads to the definition of the Folk Hero (Varriale, 2012). However, the impact they produce on the contemporary public, the following they gather, and the members of the contemporary audience who find their own values reflected in them define the two muses through the Romantic Hero profiles (Morgan, 2010, Van Krieken, 2018:10).

Relevance is also found in the anchors used by both designers, as well as journalists - especially in media headlines- to highlight the muses historical or cultural significance. The muses' romantic interests (Gabriele d'Annunzio in Luisa Casati's case and Jacques-Henri Lartigue for Renée Perle) or closest collaborators (Paul Poiret and Erté for Luisa Casati) are the most common mentioned anchors. Outside the muses' own contemporaries, profiles dedicated to them within the general media also stress the impact they have on today's designers, illustrating the definition proposed by Rojek (2010) for celebrity descending from various associations. Consequently, the muses' impact on contemporary designers confers on them a fashion icon and a celebrity status, rather than that of historical figures.

The social media analysis signals different levels of attachment the audience has developed to Luisa Casati and Renée Perle, outside the conventional user engagement behaviours (like, share, comment). As a noteworthy observation, the publicly available content found through the #LuisaCasati and the #RenéePerle hashtags descends not from organisations, but from regular Instagram users. Users confirm various levels of proactivity from publishing imagery related to the muses on their accounts to commissioning professional photo-shootings in which one attempts to recreate their styles. The highest level of fan attachment is found in imagery suggesting (either as a photo shooting or through a Point-Of-View perspective) visits to Luisa's grave. Exhibiting patterns of "celebrity worship" (McCutcheon et al, 2002, Elliot, 2018:95), such visits qualify as what Brooker (2017:157) calls symbolic pilgrimage.

Their impact on the audience suggests that both Luisa Casati, as well as Renée Perle are recognised as standalone cultural references. User-curated Instagram content honours their contribution as sitter (Luisa) and model (Renée). However, such legacy is inseparable from self-representation and style. Furthermore, their influence on emerging designers, as well as creative experiments such as fan art or user-commissioned shootings indicate fashion as the field to which they are most associated with.

Luisa Casati's and Renée Perle's establishment as icons is owed to a convergence between multiple institutions (Bourdieu, 1993: 122). The content analysis of media headlines highlights mentions of designers for relevance before a contemporary audience. Consequently, outside the fashion field, designers stand out as '*agents of legitimation*' (Bourdieu, 1993:121). The semiotic content behind each of the designers' citations fulfils an evolution noted by Alexander and Bowler (2021) on how new discourses don't affect the meaning created through the previous ones, as '*old and new ideas can coexist*'. Furthermore, all media headlines composed around the two muses are privileged with stability (Weber, 1990:17), the mythology component supporting their celebrity construct becomes reasserted before the audience.

The two muses' evolution within the public sphere signal a noteworthy observation which descends from the impact of their biographies on the audience's interest in their lives. Luisa Casati's revival has been ignited by two milestone projects: John Galliano's collection for Christian Dior and her biography authored by Scott D. Ryersson and Michael O. Yaccarino. John Galliano's collection was accompanied by only a brief profile of Luisa, whereas none of the acts composing the catwalk show led to any specific details of her life, rather than her ownership of the Palais Rose, her frequent travels, and her liaisons with Paul Poiret and Erté. Press reviews resume to describe her as an 'Italian aristocrat'. As all media headlines published on Luisa have no other source than her biography, Ryersson and Yaccarino can be rightfully regarded as the most influential cultural intermediaries in providing the foundation for the mythology behind her celebrity construct. In contrast, Renée Perle's real identity has been revealed a decade after her 'discovery' by John Galliano. Though a biography of hers has been made available, no designer or author of media headlines has referenced it in their work. The apparent lack of interest towards Renée Perle beyond her style can be regarded as a barrier to her celebrity construct.

Renée's case highlight a further observation. Though she has evolved as a standalone reference, the limited interest in her identity hinders her transformation into a symbol. Such argument can be supported by the fact that, as a standalone cultural reference, Renée inspired no parallel semiotic content, which, according to the literature review, would qualify her as a celebrity. Renée Perle's case, thus, leads to a distinctive mutation. Though she ceased to be regarded as John Galliano's muse and she might be recognised as fashion icon, she is yet to evolve in a

symbol. As a standalone cultural reference, she became a sign of a particular aesthetics notably the French Riviera style. Such claim may be backed by how further designers to honour her such as Ian Griffiths and Emilia Wickstead argued their choice through a strong association to the 1930es French Riviera. Moreover, both designers celebrate her alongside other historical figures such as Eileen Gray in Griffiths' case and Gertrude Stein or Lee Miller for Wickstead. However, a pertinent question arises in regards to the prospect of Renée delivering social representation (McDonald 2013, Round, Thomas, 2014, Marshall and Redmond, 2016). As previously mentioned, no parallel semiotic emerged around Renée. Furthermore, the social media analysis signals no values to which Renée might be associated with, rather than her flair of developing a style which, 90 years after, is judged 'timeless'. Renée's reception leads to a question over the exact content under which the concept of 'social representation' should be understood and whether it is limited to a demographic or a psychographic perspective. If resumed to such dimensions, the rather abstract description of being able to exhibit a timeless style would be the only character trait on which social representation could be set on. Therefore, a question arises in regards to whether social representation can be perceived from a geographical or historiographical perspective or should it exclusively be understood as the illustration of human traits. Should it accommodate a geographical dimension, social representation is achieved only by Renée becoming an embodiment of the French Riviera. If social representation cannot be extended beyond human traits, the two case studies indicate that the difference between how the two muses are perceived signals that the celebrity status is not a prerequisite for the posthumous transformation of a designer's source of inspiration into a fashion icon.

V. Conclusions

The present thesis explored the influence and processes through which fashion system revived or created fashion muses from individuals extracted from the past. The reviewed literature signalled the imperative to not approach the work of fashion designers as an isolated activity, but within a system sustained through synergies created with professional bodies, the media, representatives of other fields, and nevertheless, the consumers. A perspective on the fashion industry as a system extends the processes encompassed in the designers' works to a communication flow entangling at least one level of mediation. Bourdieu's (1993:133) instances of consecration and diffusion capture such chains of transmission according to the authority enjoyed by the mediating entity in its field and the public it has access to. A key observation stands within the opportunity found in the tendency and influence held by average members of the audience to further promote content descending from the fashion system to their own following.

The research scope of the present thesis is framed around lesser known individuals extracted from the past. Such demarcation highlights the situation in which the fashion system holds the merit to the audience's acquaintance to human subjects who are not recognised as historical figures. In such circumstances, designers who first approached such individuals are credited as their discoverers. Practice indicates that sources of inspiration are reflected in garments and various promotional tools employed by fashion brands (eg: the catwalk show, campaigns, catalogues, visual merchandising). The processes through which sources of inspiration are integrated in seasonal collections and further communicated to instances of consecration and diffusion imposed the necessity of exploring the fashion system's cultural influence. The research aim highlighted two core directions through which the fashion system's cultural influence should be studied. The first one refers to its societal impact in transmitting values which would also include its sources of inspiration. The second one demanded an outlook in the processes through which designs are transformed in a medium for its sources of inspiration. The aforementioned instances of consecration and diffusion (Bourdieu, 1993:133) are pivotal to reasserting the designers' authority and their cultural influence with a direct impact on the extent to which they can deliver public visibility to the lesser known figures from the past.

Resolving the research aim, however, required covering not only the processes through which the fashion system facilitates the public visibility of these individuals, but also the mutations through which they evolve as standalone cultural references. Consequently, the outcome to be analysed through the research includes the processes through which such sources of inspiration are less associated with their discoverer and recognised through elements of their biography and iconography. Such goal demanded an outlook on the references through which such individuals are presented to the public outside the work of their discoverer, as well on the values which they are associated with by the audience.

By challenging researchers to explore in depth all potential ramifications and stakeholders contributing to or affected by an event (such as a fashion collection launch), Bourdieu's field analysis stands out as the most bountiful framework upon which the case study method can be addressed. However, the research aim demanded studying the evolution of a semiotic element (such as the source of inspiration behind a fashion collection). Barthes semiotic analysis facilitated an outlook on how the discourse around the muse might experience mutations across the communication chain established around entities detected through the field analysis.

Though an exhaustive framework, Bourdieu's field analysis exposes researchers to the risk of a standardised approach limited, in a scope like the fashion system, to the entities composing the communication chain upon which semiotic content is transmitted. Outside the key components such as the designers and media outlets, the field analysis reaches the entirety of its virtues when integrating a multidimensional profile of each actor or stakeholder which can affect the exposure and possible alteration of the transmitted content. For example, as a promoter of Deconstruction, Dries Van Noten's work is likely to reach a distinctive audience compared to Galliano who is associated to the New Romantics. Furthermore, platforms such as the Met Museum or the Milano Film Festival make Galliano's or Ferretti's work visible to an audience who may not necessarily be as receptive to their work as their customer base and fans.

The visual analysis has been supported by the exhaustive imagery through which Vogue magazine publishes each reviewed designer's collection. Vogue's platform accommodates imagery of both the full look, as well as various details (eg: embroidery) available in a zoomable high resolution. However, the visual analysis has not been limited to imagery of garments, being extended following Dyer's approach to style, structure, and iconography, to make-up, stage design,

visual merchandise, and catalogues. The content published by Vogue highlighted the make-up, whereas videos of the catwalk show allowed capturing the stage design.

In order to prevent the risk of a speculative or biased interpretation of the designer's intention, the data collection has exclusively been limited to their public statements, either through interviews and press releases.

1. Summary of the key findings

Resolving the research aim required verifying the extent to which Luisa Casati and Renée Perle could be regarded as standalone cultural references while also assessing the extent to which such recognition can be attributed to the fashion system. Recognition as a fashion muse falls within the spectrum of celebrity. However, the celebrity status is defined through a discursive effect (Turner: 2013: 8, Sandvoss, 2007:30) and the ability to deliver social representation (McDonald 2013, Round, Thomas, 2014, Marshall and Redmond, 2016).

When integrated as references behind a fashion collection, the two muses are endowed with a discursive effect transpiring from the designers' arguments for using them as sources of inspiration under what Bourdieu (1984:9) calls symbolic production. Common denominators within the rationale for which the studied designers have honoured Luisa and Renée include timelessness and transgression. Evolving as a celebrity, Luisa has also attracted a parallel semiotic content, as an icon of the LGBTQ community for her alleged asexuality or the rumours of an affair with Romaine Brooks (Dyer, 2003:163). Associations with the goth aesthetics, as well as with the LGBTQ community allow Luisa to deliver social representation (McDonald 2013, Round, Thomas, 2014, Marshall and Redmond, 2016). However, as to be further developed, such mutation occurred in Luisa's case when the audience, as well as other cultural intermediaries (including fashion designers) have interacted with her official biography, authored by Scott D Ryerson and Michael O. Yaccarino. Under the effect of Lartigue's oeuvre, Renée has been transformed by the fashion system in an allegory of the Riviera style, providing social representation as its embodiment.

Analysing the prospective influence held by the fashion system in the emergence of standalone cultural references from the designers' sources of inspiration must take in account a series of peculiarities. The semiotic content integrated within fashion collections is not limited to imagery, as it may also include biographical facts. The use of documented facts or anecdotes can be distinctively interpreted by each designer. Garments are unlikely to accommodate direct citations of iconography which is rather noted in catwalk theatrics, including the models' make up or poise. Dyer (1998:62) classifies such adaptation under the definition of style and structure.

The work of fashion designers cannot be analysed isolated from the influence of press reviews. As instances of diffusion, media outlets are instrumental in popularising the designers' sources of inspiration. To press representatives, the choice of a muse represents an element of the designer's artistry. Assessed in comparison to the sources of inspiration behind the brands' previous collection, muses are amassed within an abstract aggregate regarded as an embodiment of the designer's ideology (eg: The Galliano Woman). However, press reviews prioritise technique, as sources of inspiration end up speculated by critics from outside the references provided by designers in their brand communication materials.

The impact of the media in promoting the designer's work is related to each outlet's editorial format which, authority, and geographic distribution. While the editorial format can be connected to the psychographic segmentation of its audience (eg: Vogue is likely to attract a different audience than Dazed), the media outlet's authority and geographic distribution affects the volume of potential readers it could reach. The public's perception of the muses is influenced by the discourse within which media outlet's mention them, their focus on querying the motivations leading the designer expressing interest in them, and the detail level in which they are portrayed.

The research confirmed Luisa Casati's and Renée Perle's contemporary acknowledgement as standalone references. Their cultural significance is associated with the fashion field and the realm of visual arts. However, as a key observation, the impact they have made on contemporary fashion cannot be separated from their legacy in visual arts. Galliano can be attributed the merit of having promoted the two muses as relevant to a contemporary public. The limited lifecycle of a fashion collection was likely to affect the audience's interest in the two muses. As reflected in reviews received by Galliano for both his namesake label, as well as his work for Dior, the authority enjoyed by a designer in the fashion field influences the muses' visibility, while also preventing others to approach the same reference. However, Galliano was succeeded by others peers in

paying tribute to them. Such evolution was supported by the general perspective perpetuated within the fashion system under which originality may be perceived in regards to both methods, as well as approach (Guetzkow et al, 2004; Godart et al, 2020).

The tendency noted in the last years of heritage Maisons (eg: Chanel, Dior) of adhering to the logo-mania phenomenon raises concerns over how relevant Bourdieu's arguments on the historical brand's interest in preserving their griffe. The logo mania capitalises upon the aspirational dimension of brand, as descending from the social status associated with the excessively displayed labels. However, an argument to explore emerges in regards to the creative elements in which the griffe should be located. Such perspective allows assessing the extent to which efforts to preserve the griffe can still be noted regardless of mutations exhibited within a brand's evolution, whether connected to a Creative Director's artistry or the influence of macro trends. The griffe integrates not only a technical dimension (as Roberto Cavalli's textile painting or Bottega Veneta's weaved leather can be regarded), but also a semiotic component which can be conventionally located in how some designers, such as Vivienne Westwood's use of garments as canvas for her militancy. As highlighted in the thesis, though integrated as a sign within the designers' collections, the muse becomes a signifier for their ethos. Consequently, the criteria under which designers select their muses can be regarded as a constant manifestation of the griffe, regardless of creative elements integrated in their collection.

In contrast to focusing on living or contemporary high profile figures, extracting unknown or forgotten individuals from the past and promoting them as muses can facilitate the acquisition of both cultural and symbolic capitals. The cultural capital descends from the brand's contribution to heritage preservation, as well as their active role in restoring the historical significance of individuals overlooked by their times. The symbolic capital can be connected to the prospect of the designer to be recognised through the diligence given to research within his professional ethics, as well as to the intention of immersing in their subjects of interest.

Limitations raised by the indirect citations with which the fashion system operates allow explaining the impact of other cultural intermediaries on the two muses' revival. Through John Galiano's collections, the fashion system can be regarded as one of the two leading forces which determined their contemporary revival. Such concurring influence signals two observations, one descending from Luisa Casati's evolution in the public sphere and the other one to the posthumous interest noted in Renée Perle. Under the fashion calendar, the public visibility attracted upon Luisa Casati through his collection exhibits a 6 months lifespan. Furthermore, press reviews attracted by his collection provide limited information of her. Released a couple of months after John Galiano presented his collection, *'Infinite Variety'*, Luisa Casati's official biography signed Scott D. Ryersson and Michael O Yaccarino stands out as the source behind every media headline dedicated to her. Furthermore, none of the cultural intermediaries supporting her revival contributed with any additional content to her memory outside the biographical facts and imagery unearthed and compiled by Ryersson and Yaccarino. Featured in auction catalogues with no other identification elements other her first name, Renée Perle's public visibility appears to have been ignited by the field of art dealership.

As common traits praised by all designers to have honoured the two muses, the fashion system's contribution to Luisa Casati's celebrity construct stands in a celebration of decadence and transgression. However, the complexity delivered by their book indicates Ryersson and Yaccarino as having provided the core content to her celebrity construct. Her effect on the fashion system suggests Renée's celebrity construct as built around timelessness. Under limitations raised by the collections' lifecycle and the indirect citations located in fashion collections, the perception of timelessness is reasserted Renée's case through the Fondation Lartigue and the field of art dealership.

Mentioned in the designers' arguments for their use as sources of inspiration and acknowledged in press reviews, associations between the two muses and transgressions highlight the potential for individuals extracted from the past to become allegories for various issues of subversion. Both the content analysis of headlines dedicated to Luisa cast, as well as social media content confirmed frequent associations to the Goth culture. Drawing upon her fascination for the occult, such references are also mentioned in Ryersson and Yaccarino's book. However, the vast and heterogeneous audience reached by the fashion system extends the potential for a semiotic content assumed to reach various groups to become more accessible and relatable to the general public.

Ian Griffiths and Emilia Wickstead signalled speculation as a creative terrain, by portraying Renée Perle as a 'voiceless artists' or attributing her intellectual pursuits not confirmed by history. Such approach appears to recreate the patterns of dramatisation used in biopics when

documented facts are accompanied by fictionalised dialogues. However, should such practice touch attitudes or values which are not aligned to the semiotic content around which the muses have been promoted, the newly emerged mutations can determine an alienation of their initial fan base and the audience who felt represented by them.

2. Significance of the research

The research scope highlights new knowledge in the terrain of ahistorical references, as well as around the concepts of dead and historical celebrity. As pointed out by Lehmann (2000: 285)), ahistorical references reach out to an unaccepted and an undocumented past which provides a perspective on tabus, rather than mores and conventions. Though Modernity and the formation of the *zeitgeist* has preoccupied fashion scholars such as Vincent (2004), the interest towards ahistorical references is yet to be explored.

The research brings a complement to the concept of dead celebrities, which, in literature is used to describe figures such as Marilyn Monroe or Kurt Cobain, whose fame prevailed beyond their passing and who retained a level of cultural, social, economic and symbolic relevance similar to that enjoyed in their lifetime (Kearl, 2010; Ebert, 2010). Revivals of lesser known figures from the past exhibit the celebrity effect simultaneously manifested with historical recognition. Such evolution only partially intersects literature on historical celebrity which is rather focused on the emergence of the public sphere and the processes that support it. Developed from the study of prominent figures such as Sarah Bernhardt, works on historical celebrities analyses their cultural impact exclusively in connection to their own times.

In a retrospective outlook, the two muses' memory replicates the patterns of celebrity through various associations (Rojek, 2010), as the only records documenting their life descend from their more historically significant liaisons. Remembered through their connection to the art world as sitter (Luisa Casati) and model (Renée Perle), their revival elevates them towards a fashion icon status. Though explaining the prospect in which an individual who has acquired public visibility in one field attains fame in another (Marshall, 2014), the available literature doesn't address the peculiarities exhibited by such transition when occurring posthumously.

Approached within the reviewed literature, the concept of adaptation explains how cited references facilitate 'multiple textual exchanges' (Whelehan and Cartmell, 2007: 28) or are absorbed within the composition of the newly created artwork (Schröter, 2011). The transformation of references into standalone products has been studied by Bortolotti and Hutcheon (2007). However, such circulation of references has not been extended towards the iconisation of human subjects.

Exploring the creative opportunities of transmedia recontextualisation, the research allows an interdisciplinary applications within the area of branding. Potential areas for research include the construction of brand iconography and the capitalisation of brand associations. Practical application of the present thesis in branding and marketing can be connected to an audit of opportunities touched by introducing this product development strategy, while also providing a framework for the storytelling component under which brands can present and argue their choice of a muse.

A key practical application of posthumous rivals can be found in the real of intellectual property through the creation of name and memory estates. The four privileges connected by Kurzman et al (2007) to the celebrity status may highlight distinctive applications in the case of revivals. Legal and economic privileges associated with intellectual property and royalties shall remain constant. Interactional privilege is replaced with the opportunity to get in the proximity of artefacts or memorabilia related to the revived individual. Inspired by an individual's personal ideology, the normative privilege can be further capitalised to maintain the revived figure's relevance, leading to a synergy of legal, economic, and interaction gains.

3. Limitations

The multi-method research design facilitated an exhaustive data which, prior to interpretation, should be assessed in regards to different variables impacting both its sources, as well as their deployment. However, limitations may emerge under the impact of what Bourdieu (2017: 57)) called epistemological and social breaks.

As reflected in Bourdieu's (1993:134) recommendations for field analysis, findings must be interpreted in full knowledge of the multiple peculiarities raised by the industry segments in which

the designers have presented their works. Since *Haute Couture* is safeguarded exclusively as a promotional tool, none of the garments composing collections presented within this segment reach production. A designer's retail network accommodates strictly garments created under the *Pret à Porter* or *Demi-couture* segments. Any of the three segments can be presented during Fashion Weeks. *Haute couture* collections allow designers to ensure their cultural and symbolic capitals within the fashion field. However, it is through the *Pret à Porter* or *Demi-couture* collections that designers reach their social and economic capital. While the artistry employed in *Haute Couture* work may be more impactful, *Pret à Porter* or *Demi-couture* segments guarantee a prolonged exposure to a collection's semiotic component.

The data analysis indicated how designer's authority attracts a different number of reviews, as well as the professional prestige of critics signing them. Since it employs different levels of artistry, *Haute Couture* can also affect these variables. Consequently, the two case studies and the research units composing them were inevitably privileged by an unequal number of press reviews.

An additional observation to be considered when formulating conclusions is that a fashion collection's actual lifecycle is defined by the retail calendar. Outside the timespan in which garments are available for purchase (whether in brick-and-mortar outlets or through authorised e-tail), a collection's actual visibility begins when revealed during Fashion Week. Conventionally, catwalk shows are scheduled at least 3 months before collections are introduced in stores. An outlook on Dries Van Noten's Instagram account suggests that from one individual case to another, designers may promote the concept of their next collection in a considerable period of time before revealing it during Fashion Week. Dries Van Noten's first Instagram post in which he presents Luisa Casati as the source of inspiration behind his collection is dated November 2015. The collection was presented in March 2016. On the designer's official Instagram account, the collection was replaced with the next on the 17th of November 2016. Once collections reach their lifecycle, any indicators of their cultural significance can only be found in fashion history books and brand monographs.

Further limitations arise in connection to the data reliability and validity. Though the content analysis of collection reviews is supported by direct quotes, the distinctive interest exhibited for each of the studied designers can challenge data reliability. Furthermore, each designer's position within the system attracted reviews from journalists and editors or distinctive fashion capital with a direct impact on either their existing knowledge of the muse or the inclination towards research as part of their professional diligence. Therefore, data reliability is challenged under the audience reached by the media outlet's position within both the fashion, as well as the mass media systems, as well as the legitimacy which can be claimed by the review's author.

As previously mentioned, the social media analysis has been conducted upon publicly available content. However, challenges to data reliability can emerge from various dimensions further developed. Datum extracted from the social media analysis is also sensible to distinctive variables such as the network's development level, the audience it attracts, and the behaviours (eg: content sharing, their use of specific hashtags which can map digital content) it accommodates. Moreover, the designer's own social presence, the frequency to which they promote their collection, and the extent to which the content they publish emphasises the muse. Dries Van Noten stands out as the only designer to publish photos of Luisa Casati accompanied by text captions which touches upon her biography, as well as the inspiration found by the designer in her legacy. Furthermore, Dries Van Noten is also the only designer to systematically introduce the #LuisaCasati hashtag in the content he published on the collection. Though, the other designers mention their muses, they don't continuously promote them with the content published on the collection. Such tendency, as well as their overall social media strategy inevitably challenges the extent to which the designers' impact as cultural intermediary can be verified. Nevertheless, Galliano's collection for Dior has been released at a momentum in which social networks did not exist. However, an unexpected finding descends from the Galliano for Dior content published by Instagram users nostalgically.

The visual analysis highlights an additional limitation descending from each designer's approach of specific promotional tools to be integrated in their marketing strategy. While Dries Van Noten opted for visual merchandising and Gill Button's watercolours, Alberta Ferretti capitalised upon the virality potential of a short film, and Emilia Wickstead limited visual promotion to a catwalk show. No data over John Galliano's use of visual; merchandising or catalogue promotion have been available. Since *Haute Couture* collections do not reach the brands' retail network, such promotional tools have been excluded from Galliano's work for Dior.

4. Recommendation for further research

As the first designer to honour Luisa Casati and Renée Perle through fashion collections, John Galliano is often praised as their 'discoverer'. Image associations between designers and muses have only been touched by Barron (2021) in his study of historical career long collaborations between *couturiers* and prominent public figures including actresses and socialites. However, credits attributed to Galliano for discovering Luisa Casati and Renée Perle highlights a potential areas for research within an outlook on the extent and limitations for a human subjects to become part of a designer's iconography. In practice, such prospect is touched within mentions of muses as abstract aggregates such as 'The Galliano Woman'. The emergence of such iconographical formations and their impact on both the designers' *griffe*, as well as their cultural impact open further areas for research.

The distance in time noted between Galliano's collections and those of other designers to dedicate their collections to the two muses indicates additional opportunities for scholarly work. With significant implications in fashion branding and marketing, the debate on the perception of innovation and originality indicate a potential research topic within the opportunities and challenges faced when developing and promoting collections based on fashion muses associated with other designers.

Practice shows the 'discover' label as affirmed by either fashion critics and historians or journalists. Descending from instances of consecration and diffusion the 'discover' label stands out as as an indicator of symbolic capital. An additional area of research can be noted within the time limit to which a designer can claim symbolic capital from this label, given a collection's lifecycle and the arguable ephemerality of press reviews.

The aforementioned areas for further research are rather connected to the transmission of semiotics content related to human sources of inspiration. The reception indicates further avenues for research. Luisa Casati's and Renée Perle's evolution from the sources of inspiration behind a singular collection to standalone fashion muses indicates additional research opportunities may emerge around the stakes, interests, and tactics for maintaining the audience's interests into a reference yet to be recognised as relevant within a particular field.

Nevertheless, the thesis points of areas for further research within observations descending from the data analysis which not yet been addressed across the reviewed literature. Such avenues have not been directly touched through the research aim. Given the different capitals reached through a designer's *Haute Couture* and *Pret à Porter* collections, a prospective area for research emerges within an analysis over which of the two segments is more influential in the fashion system's cultural impact.

Given the strong emphasis of relevance in alignment to contemporary tastes, a further area for research includes the dichotomy between the past and the futuristic component of a historical source of inspiration praised as ahead of their times. As background, such study can be supported by previous research on expectations developed around vintage fashion, which may be approached either from nostalgia or from the belief that the approached styles or garments could have anticipated present-day trends.

5. Concluding remarks

Contributions delivered through the present thesis to knowledge lead towards the disciplinary areas intersecting celebrity studies. Operating through both imagery, as well as through biographical elements, the fashion system delivers a semiotic content which can fulfil the visual and the mythology components of the celebrity construct. Processes and synergies encompassed within the research scope highlight how the promotion strategy formulated around the collection exhibits similarities to the manufactured charisma, employing the same tactics. However, the intentions behind the promotional campaign of a fashion collections are to consolidate the media visibility of the brand, whereas the source of inspiration are advertised to reassert the designers' artistry and values. The celebrity effect developed around the source of inspiration emerges as an indirect occurrence. Consequently, the practical implications of the research reflect the opportunities of transforming fields from outside the celebrity industry (eg: talent management) into a medium for launching new cultural references. Providing the foundation of the research design, the case study method illustrates the spontaneous formation of interests beyond clearly defined fields. Asserting the versatility of the field analysis, the thesis invites towards further research over the extent to which findings can be transferred on the influence of other industries to launch cultural references out of lesser known individuals extracted from the past.

As a last observation, the interest exhibited by amateur historians on her legacy, when raising claims over how Lady Gaga has reinterpreted looks from her 1923 film 'Salome' indicate Alla Nazimova as a muse whose memory could be revived by the fashion system. Another potential bygone muse to be considered by the fashion system include Luisa Cast's own personal inspiration, Virginia Olden, the Countess of Castiglione, dubbed 'The Selfie Queen' following a 2017 profile published on her by VICE magazine. However, due to the dramatic change of fashion throughout the decades that separate their legacy, Nazimova's avant-gardiste style exhibits a higher potential to be promoted as relevant to a contemporary audience.

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Appendix 1
The list of all projects inspired by Luisa Casati

- 1960 Norman Norell posed for Milton Green along his models behind Kees Van Dongen's 'The Quai' canvas after having designed a collection inspired by her
- 1971 Marisa Berenson dressed like her for the Rothschild family's ball
- 1976 Ingrid Bergman portrays Contessa Sanziani, a character inspired by Luisa Casati in 'A matter of time'
- 1998 John Galiano uses Luisa as the concept behind his Spring Summer 1998 collection for Christian Dior
- 1999 First edition of Scott D Ryersson's and Michael Yaccarino's biography 'Infinite Variety'
- 2004 Carine Roitfeld by Karl Lagerfeld
- 2007 Alexander McQueen uses Luisa as the concept behind his
- 2009 Karl Lagerfeld uses Luisa Casati as the inspiration behind his latest Chanel collection which he presented at her former Venetian residence
- 2009 Napoleon Perdis launches a make-up line inspired by Luisa Casati
- 2009 Georgina Chapman poses as Luisa Casati in a Peter Lindbergh shooting for Harper's Bazaar
- 2009 Scott D Ryersson and Michael Yaccarino publish 'Portraits of a Muse' - a compilation of all known portraits of Luisa
- 2009 Lady Gaga cites Luisa Casati in her 'Bad Romance video'
- 2010 Tilda Swinton's collaboration with ACNE and Paolo Roversi
- 2010 Tom Ford recreating Norman Norell's 1960 shot with Steven Meisel
- 2011 Paolo Pappa writes 'Intervista a la Marchesa' a play after a fictive interview with her
- 2014 The tribute exhibition hosted by the Palazzo Fortuny
- 2014 Carolina Herrera: the Casati bag
- 2016: Alberta Ferreti collection
- 2016: Dries Van Noten collection
- 2017: Debate on her influence hosted by the Courtauld Institute
- 2019: Katy Perry cites Luisa Casati at the Met Gala
- 2020: *Ritratto* - an opera written about her first shown at the Dutch National Opera
- 2020: Lady Gaga recreates Marisa Berenson's impersonation of Luisa Casati in a Steven Meisel shooting for British Vogue

Appendix 2
The list of all projects inspired by Renée Perle

- **2005:** John Galiano based his Autumn/Winter collection
- **2012:** Duro Olowu paid tribute to Renée on Spring/Summer collection
- **2018:** Inez & Vinoodh's shooting for Vogue Italia featuring Shalom Harlow.
- **2019:** Roland Mouret based his Resort collection on Renée
- **2022:** Ian Griffiths used Renée as source of inspiration for his Spring/Summer collection Max Mara
- **2024:** Emilia Wickstead had Renée as her muse for her Spring/Summer collection.

Appendix 3

Press reviews for collections inspired by Luisa Casati

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Press reviews for collections inspired by Renée Perle

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Appendix 5

Media headlines dedicated to Luisa Casati

Year: 1.01.2003 -31.12.2003

The Divine Marquise (The New Yorker, 22.09.2003)

Year 01.01.2007 -31.12.2007

Why fashion needs eccentrics (Harper's Bazaar, 01.07.2007)

Year 01.01.2009 -31.12.2009

Chanel Cruises with Casati (Vogue, 11.06.2009)

Peaches Geldof called 'the modern day Luisa Casati' (The Guardian, 23.02.2009)

Year 01.01.2010 -31.12.2010

ICONS OF STYLE SERIES: The Marchesa Casati, High Priestess Of Eccentricity & Designer Muse (Huffington Post, 28.10.2010)

Year 01.01.2013 -31.12.2013

It Girls through the ages (Elle, 20.08.2013)

Year 01.01.2014 -31.12.2014

Costume drama – decades before Lady Gaga (The Guardian, 10.12.2014)

The divine marchesa: the riotous world of Marchesa Luisa Casati (The Telegraph, 23.11.2014)

Marquesa Luisa Casati, la musa misteriosa y tétrica que inspira a la moda (El Pais, 03.12.2014)

Luisa Casati - la primera femme fatale (20 minutos, 09.10.2014)

Luisa Casati - la primera Lady Gaga (ABC, 31.03.2014)

La Divina Marchesa. Arte e vita di Luisa Casati dalla Belle Époque agli anni folli, in mostra a Venezia (Il Giornale, 10.12.2014)

La divina marchesa Casati musa trasgressiva di artisti e stilisti (Corriere, 24.10.2014)

Casati, la divina marchesa che fece di se stessa un'opera d'arte (La Repubblica, 03.10.2014)

Year 01.01.2015 -31.12.2015

The Marchesa Casati's Extravagant Ideas (WWD, 29.09.2015)

Why Fashion Is Still Obsessed with Luisa Casati's Otherworldly Style (Vogue, 23.01.2015)

La Femme Fatale: i sogni e le follie di Luisa Casati (Corriere, 27.01.2015)

Year 01.01.2016 -31.12.2016

An Ode to the Singular Marchesa Luisa Casati (Another Mag, 20.04.2016)

Marquesa Casati: la enigmática aristócrata que fascina a la moda (Harper's Bazaar, 30.05.2016)

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Celebrating the Strange Beauty of Marchesa Luisa Casati (Vogue, 23.01.2017)

The extraordinary life of the 1920s Lady Gaga (BBC, 20.09.2017)

Year 01.01.2018 -31.12.2018

When the Old Masters Were the P.R. Agents of the Rich and Powerful (NY Times, 14.03.2018)

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Donne mecenate: la storia della marchesa Luisa Casati collezionista d'arte (Elle, 19.02.2019)

Year 01.01.2020 -31.12.2020

Luisa, la divina marchesa e femme fatale amata da D'Annunzio: per le sue feste riservava Piazza San Marco (Il Gazzettino, 17.02.2020)

Year 2022

Luisa Casati Stampa, la Divina marchesa che ispirò D'Annunzio (e Achille Lauro) (La Repubblica, 25.02.2022)

Marchesa Casati: vita e biografia di una donna eccentrica (Harper's Bazaar, 01.06.2022)

Appendix 6

Media headlines dedicated to Renée Perle

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