THE CORSET AND THE HIJAB:
THE DISCURSIVISATION OF IDENTITY
BETWEEN THE WEST AND THE ORIENT

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THE CORSET AND THE HIJAB:
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ABSTRACT

The present thesis contains the commentary reviewing nine publications produced and submitted between 2016 and 2020. The portfolio debates the intersection of Communication and Semiotics theories, utilised in the study of Fashion and the Body as media displaying multifarious relations of communication which, through their iterations in culture, generate the interactions between human subjects, which are the foundation of the social milieu. Throughout the sections, the matter is explored in the proposition of a method to the study of rhythmic changes and their alternation, which is employed in a series of analyses addressing Western dress and the hijab, to then unfold into the works' core contribution: the postulation of the West and the Orient in parallel, rather than viewed as opposed cultural practices. Utilising mainly the Semiotic and Socio-semiotic Theories developed by Greimas (1970, 1983, 1984, 1986, 1987, 2000; Greimas & Courtés, 1993) and Landowski (1992, 1997, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2014, 2017) as a foundation to the construction of our methodology (Jardim, 2021c), the work merges Post-colonial Theory (Ahmed, 2006; Bhabha, 1994; Buruma & Margalit, 2004; Lévi-Strauss, 1952; Said, 2003; Spivak, 1999), and works about the corset (Jardim, 2014; Kunzle, 2004; Steele, 1997, 2001) and the hijab (Ahmed, 2011; El Guindi, 1999; Shirazi, 2003) to promote an examination of the objects as communication praxes constructing and disseminating ideas linked to the role of women, as well as discourses about Culture, Identity, and Religion. The investigation results in questioning multiple relations of power articulated through various media of communication—the verbal use of language and the discourses it creates but, equally, the visual dimension of the body, dress, and the imagery constructed around them—rejecting the dogmatic binaries which form our current worldview to, instead, observe the semio-narrative structures of discourses and practises which reveal the entanglement of Western and Oriental dress practices.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DECLARATION

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

Commentary

Introduction

William Gibson's 2003 novel *Pattern Recognition*—a semiotic adventure through London, Tokyo and Moscow in search of a mysterious underground video series' creator—presents the reader with an enthralling image: the idea of England as the "mirror world," or the place where everything is, although familiar, the opposite to America. That notion of the double—or a reflex that is alike but backwards—is central to the investigation we aim at introducing in this section. For Cayce Pollard, the novel's protagonist, England is the Other against which American culture is defined: a place where the customs are reversed, and yet relatable, recognisable as the flip side of what is familiar. That conception corresponds to problems that will be reviewed in the following sections, which focus on substantiating the ideas of the West and the Orient as a binary and the manners in which this binary can be deconstructed through the analysis of dress as communication praxis. Through those examinations, the presented conceptualisation of a binary can be summed in the idea of a mirror: an operation that reverses two interacting terms that, if placed side by side, could be perceived as the same.

It could be argued that some of the analyses presented in the portfolio fulfil the opposite objective: in their effort to deconstruct and dissolve a binary, the characterisations of the West and the Orient and their associated practices may result in strengthening and solidifying their opposition. On the one hand, we believe this step to be an important one, from a social point of view: historically, systems collapse as a tipping point of their development, the achievement of a peak. However, methodologically, we argue that there cannot be a deconstruction of what is not constructed: a convincing analysis, thus, must begin with constructing the object before presenting its critique.

The portfolio of work comprising this thesis presents papers published between 2016 and 2021 and one preprint with expected publication in 2021, developing from a research project started in late 2014 in response to the analyses appearing in my MPhil thesis *O Corset na Moda Ocidental* [*The Corset in Western Fashion*] (Jardim, 2014),

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parts of which are revisited in sections 1 and 2 of the portfolio of publications: an address of 350 years of Fashion in the West, exploring the relationship established between the body and its dress, particularly the practice of constraining the waist which is recurrent in the history of feminine dress and the modified silhouettes that are the product of this operation. The investigation taking place in a Communication and Semiotics scope intersected the Standard Semiotic works of Algirdas-Julien Greimas (Greimas, 1970, 1983, 1986, 1987; Greimas & Courtés, 1993), the Socio-semiotics of Eric Landowski (Landowski, 1992, 1997, 2004, 2005, 2009), and the Visual Semiotics developed by Jean-Marie Floch (1985) and Ana Claudia de Oliveira (2004), practised through the analysis of a corpus of objects utilised to constrain the waist and the outer dress usually paired with it, with the aim of understanding how different silhouettes, which are a result of intricate relations between body and dress, both constructed and resulted in communication relations between different actors.

The three works (Jardim, 2014, 2021c, preprint) contributed to the advancement of a Semiotics of the Body and Dress in which the apparatus of Standard Semiotics, often used in the analysis of verbal texts, is reoperated to promote analyses of non-verbal texts, in an effort similar to other investigations in the field (Floch, 1985, 1995; Hammad, 1986; Marsciani, 2012; Oliveira, 2004) in which the standard theory is used in the examination of space, visual, and material objects. Those works, two of which are presented as part of this thesis, appear as a "zero degree", laying the foundations of the analyses appearing in the publications forming this body of work: the analysis of the plastic dimension of sartorial objects, as well as the understanding of the roles invested in body and dress as actantial roles (Greimas, 1970:255-257,1983:52-53; Greimas & Courtés, 1993:319), and the relation and interaction between body and dress, and clothed-bodies and others as simultaneously producing and resulting in communicational processes, namely utterances and acts of enunciation (Greimas & Courtés, 1993:123-128).

By departing from that conceptual foundation, the present thesis expands from examining the techniques of femininity belonging to one cultural tradition—the Western Fashion system, from the 18th century onwards—to a manifestation of dress that is, today, portrayed as being distant, or even contrary to the West: the Islamic veil. Growing from the foundation of studies about the corset, the body of work contained in this document showcases an investigation about feminine dress unfolding in three

parts: the review of the research, method and result, developed from the study of the corset; an initial investigation about the veil in London; and the possibility of uniting, rather than contrasting, those two manifestations of dress and techniques of femininity, through a deep examination of the fundamental values inscribed in the corset and the veil, as well as the manners in which those fundamental values simultaneously stem from and construct the social and cultural contexts in which those practices of dress emerged.

1. Literature Review

Historically, the relationship of the West with veils is one invested with ambivalences, always coated with layers of difference and Otherness: the Islamic veil defines Western femininity by what it is not, culturally constructed as the necessary nemesis of Western feminine sartorial practices and gender techniques. Always conceived as a necessary complementary figure to the generation of one's identity, the image of the Other is essential to the construction of the identity of a dominant group—the alterity of the Other, almost by definition, must be negatively outlined (Landowski, 1997:45, 47). That need doesn't only respond to the construction of a relation of mutual presupposition in which the Orient must be created as a distorted reflection of the West (Said, 2003), thus realising the complementarity that reciprocally shapes the subjects, but also to an idea of "civilisation" that is bonded to the "treatment of women" (Žižek, 2011). It is almost as if Western gender techniques *must* mean liberation, and Islamic gender techniques oppression and barbarism, so that the balance of power in which the West as a society can be perceived as superior and more "advanced" can be sustained, reproducing a radical opposition to their Oriental counterparts—closer to the raw practices of nature, away from the realm of culture (Lévi-Strauss, 1952) in which the sovereign West must reign undisturbed. As Landowski points out: if, from a philosophical perspective, the "self and their Other" exist as two unities in a relation of perfect symmetry, the transposition of those relations to the plane of social practices introduces an imbalance, result of the overlapping of individual subjectivities and social actors, invested with roles and positions (Landowski, 1997:46).

The veil, while undoubtedly a central part in this investment of roles and positions, is not exclusive to Islam and to the Orient: it possesses a cultural past in the

West—which is, as much as is the case in the Middle-East, both "sacred" and "fashionable"—substantiating the possibility of a symbolic reading of the object (Ronberg & Martin, 2010:530-1). Similarly to the Qur'an, where the word *hijab* accumulates dozens of meanings (Ahmed, 2011; El Guindi, 1999; Shirazi, 2003), the Old Testament vastly utilises "veil" in multiple situations and significances, as analysed by Volli: the veil is a "semiotic apparatus" *par excellence*, whose function is to promote an optical disjunction marking the separation of sacred and profane, interdicting the vision of what must not be seen (Volli, 2016). In the same volume dedicated to the System of the Veil, Riedmatten analyses the fashionable presence of the veil in Venice and Padua, examining the different degrees of veiling practised by women of higher ranks in the Cinquecento: the damsel, the wife, and the widow, all practised some form of veiling whilst out in the public space, often wearing a long cape of silk that varied from the complete opacity for the virgin young woman, to almost complete transparency for the widower (Riedmatten, 2016). Similar to Volli's argument about Moses' veil, the veil of the *donzella venetiana* [*venetian damsel*] appears as a "...refusal of reciprocated regards…" (Riedmatten, 2016:166), or a reclaiming of the right to see without being seen. The case which both authors present—for fashion or for religion—are in correspondence with the statement made by Sartre: that "To get dressed is to mask one's objectivity, is to claim the right to see without being seen, meaning [the right] to be a pure subject" (Sartre, 1943:328, our translation). To be *seen* is to be objectified: to be constructed as an object to the eyes of the other; hence, to interrupt the scopic relations is both pertinent to the *divine*, as analysed in Volli; or to the ladies of high rank in the 16th-century Venice Riedmatten examines: both cases appear as situations in which the disruption of scopic relations emerge as markers of oppositions—of social class, as well as the abyss between earthly beings and God—which separate different statuses of the one gazing and the one being gazed at, indicating the enlarged subjectivity of the veiled subject who cannot be *made an object* of another's gaze.

As the *Islamic* veil, long before the boom of imagery of beautiful, fashionable young Muslims parading high street looks in the West, the hijab and niqab already appear in Western advertising of the 1980s and 1990s, constructing multifarious signifiers or displaying a "semantic versatility" (Shirazi, 2001:7). Hence, it is important to question "In what interest are differences defined?" (Spivak, 1999:357) In *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Spivak (1999) constantly returns to the problem of "having a

voice": transposing her examination of the woman of colour as *subaltern* to our Greimasian framework, the problem of "having a voice" is framed in the dynamics of another binary—the Enunciator and Enunciatee (Greimas & Courtés, 1997)—which exist, in the perfect symmetry of a theory, as interchangeable roles. However, the transit from one role to another, or the (necessary) alternation of "speaker" and "receiver", is not always symmetric, but unfolding into intransitivity, or relations in which one leads, and the other follows; and transitivity, which can be reversible or not, but can only take place through a knowing who the other is and being able to exchange positions (Oliveira, 2013, p. 243-4). In Oliveira's analysis, such positions are connected to the problem of "coded meaning", which answers to fixed structures and codes, versus the "experience of meaning". In such light, the matter of asymmetric investments of value seems intrinsically connected to the interruption in the transit from one role to another, confining one side—the Oriental Woman—to the eternal role of Enunciatee: able to receive, but never able to emit, or to occupy the role of the one who speaks in the communication situation, while also confined to the realm of coded meaning: Western misconstructions of cultural and religious practices that are unilaterally generated and communicated in our media discourses.

In *Occidentalism: A short History of Anti-Westernism*, Buruma and Margalit suggest that the veil performs a set of social and cultural functions, such as the instalment of social class markers while signifying particular "conditions" or "statuses" of women in a given cultural milieu (2004:131): a function, we must add, not dissimilar to the one invested in corsets during the Victorian Era. Their account of the phenomenon of "Occidentalism" exploits a vision in which the West is imagined as the Other, fulfilling Said's prophecy of the Orient as a reversed mirror of the West (Said, 2003), as well as Landowski's idea of the negatively defined Other who serves the purpose of confirming the idealised image of one's own existence among the dominant groups (Landowski, 1997). When regarded in correspondence, Buruma & Margalit and Said give life to what Sara Ahmed conceptualises in *Queer Phenomenology*, building from Husserl and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological theory: that the division of "West" and "Orient" as fixed is artificially constructed and invested with values that are not "inherent" to the places. When Ahmed states that everyone has an Orient—in the sense of the Orient as what we look at in the search for orienting ourselves (Ahmed, 2006:116)—it is possible to see the complementary character of Buruma & Margalit

and Said, in the sense that their works mirror one another, showing that, contrary to Said's belief of "fixed" investments of roles of "I" and "Other" in the "West" and "Orient" dynamic, the Orient can reverse this relation and construct a binary in which it occupies the place of "I"—which is essentially the foundation of "Anti-Westernism" (Buruma & Margalit, 2004). Not differently, the situations analysed through the sections of the present thesis are concerned with practices of life or situations of communication in which subjects (and their bodies) somehow force the recovery of symmetry the social plane artificially interrupts, which, in its turn, denounces the fragility of the binary constructed between I and Other or West and Orient.

An ideology grounded in the distinction of "I" and "Others" is not only the foundation of the dilemma the present work aims at deconstructing but one that unites the multiple theoretical traditions this investigation aimed at conciliating. The problem of self and world, as well as "I" and "You" or "I" and "He" intertwines the roots of Phenomenology and Structuralist Semiotics—a problem explored in Marsciani's (2013, 2014) work that inspired and informed one of the sections of the present thesis (Jardim, 2018). Somehow in distant correspondence with Sara Ahmed (2006), our work is also concerned with the fixity of a binary that should be interchangeable—whether that means the mobility of West and East in a spinning world or the alternations of turns, "speaker" and "receiver", predicted in the semiotic theory (Greimas & Courtés, 1993:125, Oliveira, 2013). What unites those propositions is the separation between "things" as objects existing in the natural world and the multiple *roles* they can play in the web of interactions forming society and culture, constituting them as *subjects* instead. Such possibility doesn't only comprise the multiple *human* subjects that participate in the West-Orient dynamics, but the objects we selected to emblematise this relation, the corset and the hijab respectively, can also be included as participant subjects, *actants* (Greimas, 1983:49-50)—the ones who suffer and perform actions— that constitute the narrative relations unravelling in the past and present.

From the moment Western and Oriental cultures came into closer contact, particularly in the 18th and 19th-century imperialist renaissances starred by England and France, the emerging Western discourse about the veil is marked by the need for construction and affirmation of both identities in opposition, which result in the production of fixed binaries. Although, as we explored throughout the sections in this thesis, the cultures in question are not necessarily "opposed," they are constructed as

a rigid opposition which, as observed by a number of theoreticians (Ahmed, 2011; Ahmed, 2006; Buruma & Margalit, 2004; Said, 2003; Spivak 1999), serves the construction and maintenance of relations of power. The problem of the veil in the West is central to this question of binarism as support to power relations and is deeply explored both in works about the veil as sartorial and religious practice (Ahmed, 2011; El Guindi, 1999), and in the way it appears in popular culture and advertising (Shirazi, 2003). As both "real" and "iconic" substance, the veil is a strong signifier that can be mythical, in the sense Barthes creates for the term: an appropriation of a sign that becomes a signifier to manifest a new meaning, that is myth (Barthes, 2009). Originally a marker of symbolic seclusion (Mernissi, 2011), the veil does manifest "secrecy," "privacy," and "modesty" for the Orient (El Guindi, 1999) as much as it does for the West (Ronberg & Martin, 2010)—even though those values are invested with different phoric qualities in different cultures. Shirazi's (2003) work about the veil in popular culture and advertising is emblematic of those distortions of meaning: the deliberate Western use of the hijab as a signifier of oppression and submission is not only distant from how its mother culture understands it, but a misrepresentation that is intentional, aiming at signifying difference and building a Western identity that relies on the Other as its presupposed contrary.

The problem of dress, far from being a "futile discussion," appears as imbricated with the problem of "nation" as language and, often, the discourse constructing the veiled woman as Other will be both fed by and feeding into nationalist/patriotic discourses. Recently, the invasion of "masked faces" in the Western world—in response to a global public health crisis, rather than religious belief—confirms that what covers the body is not only significant as communication praxis but that the relations we construct around material objects can overcome their function, creating oppositions. My recent examination of the niqab against the surgical masks and the disproportional debate around each one (Jardim, 2021b) remits to a number of other power relations linked to the matter of feminine dress as a "public passion". On the one hand, we have the problem of the woman as the "first Other" (Beauvoir, 1976a, 1976b), which is recapped by Spivak in her discussion of the woman and the subaltern: women who are not given a voice or often forced to "unspeak" themselves (Spivak, 1999). The issue of the veil in the West is necessarily in correspondence with those perceptions or markers of superiority and inferiority in the domain of culture and society, which supports the

importance of elevating both femininities—Western and Oriental— to the same plateau, instead of feeding the mythology of a superior, liberated Western femininity that stems from third- and fourth-wave of feminism, insisting on "unveiling" as a necessary step for "freeing" Muslim women (Robert, 2005). Nonetheless, Žižek's remark about French women feeling "alienated" by the *niqab*, suggesting "...that they perceive the wearing of a burqa as *their own* humiliation…" (Žižek, 2011:2, author's emphasis) permits yet a second interpretation, which feeds into our hypothesis of a parallel uniting both cultures, techniques and femininities: isn't the sight of the "oppressed" Muslim woman what reminds us, "freed" Western women, of our own prison? Our rejection of the niqab (even if worn by others, rather than imposed upon us) versus our prompt adoption of facial covering during the COVID-19 pandemic shows us that all our arguments against facial covering—that it is alienating, oppressive, that it objectifies women and, finally, that it poses security challenges—can be flipped backwards once the interest of covering the face favours Western (and male) lives...

Beyond the problem of gender and Otherness, the matter of feminine dress is also linked to the problem of nationality and identity. As pointed by Renan, a current mistake in contemporary discourse emerges from the confusion of "race" with "nation" (Renan, 1990:8): he explores the many narratives that constitute nations as we understand them to date, ruling out geography, language, race, and even religion as what holds a nation together. For him, it is the complex dance of "remembering" and "forgetting," as well as the will to live together, which form a nation: "... a spiritual principle, the outcome of the profound complications of history…" (Renan, 1999:18). Perhaps, our desire to constitute a parallel, rather than a binary uniting Western and Oriental feminine techniques, emerges from the desire of unfolding the blending of the veil in our Western landscape as one of those "complications of history", rather than accepting it as a phenomenon to be criticised and resisted, as it was in France and many other European countries in recent events.

In a way, the narrative of "nation" explored by Renan is intertwined with the matter of identity fetishism examined by Bhabha in *The Locations of Culture*, as a problem of clinging to an "original narrative" (Bhabha, 1994)—which, again, remits back to the questions of language and racial purity. The resistance to the veil is, then, a desire to cling to an illusion of "pure Europeanness," but the fear of losing this alleged "purity" doesn't only affect the dress and religion of the Other: the tightlacer, a form of

19th-century subcultural woman, was also accused, among other things, of "degeneration of the Anglo-Saxon race" (Kunzle, 2004; Steele, 1997). In a way, even the struggle against sartorial manifestations that challenge the established norms seems to unite our objects, strengthening the parallel we aimed at proposing through the emergence of veils and corsets as subcultural practices (Jardim, 2019a, 2020). The response of both cultures is similar, not only substantiating that our objects produce similar trajectories but that, perhaps, culture itself is something broader than the gaugeable visual differences we are so attached to.

With the view of proposing what could, perhaps, be defined as a "dissolution" (rather than union) of binaries, and using dress as the entry point to what can be understood as a broader issue, we return to the semiotic theory, in which it proposes efficient solutions in addressing hard oppositions. In his proposition of the semiotic square, Greimas accepts that things don't just go from one opposite to the other: values must travel through positions of "transition", which he names "subcontraries", so that they can reach the other side of a base opposition (Greimas, 1970). In our proposition of method (Jardim, 2021c), as well as in our work about the hijabista and our contrasting of the tightlacer and the Tuareg (Jardim, 2019a, 2019b), we utilise Greimas' theory concluding that, while hard binaries are identified with "tradition"—and that includes Religion, with the capital R, as well as Politics, and even the ideas of Nation and Race— the subcontraries, those "transition positions" that permit values to travel through the extremes, are linked to "updated systems," particularly Fashion: *par excellence* a system living from co-opting (or perhaps *parasitising*?) different cultural and subcultural manifestations, bending them into something palatable to mainstream audiences.

Finally, to close this effort to contextualise our investigation in the fields it tries to merge, the 1970s works from the Czech philosopher Jiří Zeman seem to offer an effective antidote to the debate around originality and appropriation that seems to plague both Fashion and Cultural Studies today. Growing from the Second Law of Thermodynamics—the one that postulates the matter of *entropy*, or a principle of irreversible gradient guiding the universe towards disorder—Zeman presents a theory of information that can only occur in the flow of space and, *ipso facto*, assuming a factor of degradation (Zeman, 1975:247). His theory of information and communication seems to have inspired those addressing the problem of hybridisation in culture and communication: once two cultures come together, they will evolve into chaos in a

process that is not reversible, as the purist opposers of "cultural appropriation" wish to defend. As entropy is a theory that allowed the scientific distinction between past and future—as each exists in the differences between two states of time, two states of energy, and two states of information—those notions can also be applied to the study of culture and identity in a globalised world, also permitting the support of an argument for a regard of the problem of culture and identity that doesn't sustain or reproduce the hierarchies of Otherness that form the mainstream discourses, in dress or otherwise. Considering Renan's affirmation that a nation is "a daily plebiscite" (Renan, 1990:19), recent events regarding the matter of politics and segregation seem to point towards a reactionary desire to "go back"—perhaps, to the times before the irreversible entangling of Islamic and Western practices. However, regardless of the current contemporary backlash, "going back" is not a possibility: what Zeman's work teaches us is that what is mixed cannot be "unmixed", as much as we cannot revert back to a past state of time and information. Although the sections contained in this thesis don't directly cite the tradition started at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, our aim of dissolving semantic binaries through our analysis not only echoes the theories developed by the group but partakes the perception of a general entropy enmeshing distant terms of multiple fundamental oppositions—the West and the Orient, but equally the tension between social classes, and even categories of gender—slowly but steadily evolve into chaos in the 21st century. Such semantic collapses may create the miscegenation of "opposed" cultures (and classes, genders, and so forth), but they mainly occasion translations of syntaxes blending different systems—such as "Fashion" and "Religion"—while also unveiling spaces where constructed distances can no longer be sustained.

2. Portfolio Review

Rather than reflecting on the historical aspects of Fashion from a sociological or anthropological point of view, the articles in this portfolio are concerned with two fundamental relations of communication—between the subject and her dress, and between the clothed-body and other subjects in society—and the manners in which the combination of those two forms of interaction are pivotal to the construction of gender roles and relations between subjects—in other words, the foundation of what we often

refer to as "society". The work contributes with two central arguments, one analytical and one methodological: that Fashion appears as a form of "intersection point" of various human, cultural manifestations; and that the apparatus utilised in the analysis of verbal, written text is pertinent to the analysis of 3D objects when regarded as communication praxis, as both clothes and the body are capable of constructing hierarchical relations with their viewers which are similar, if not identical to the ones established between the writer and the reader.

Throughout the outputs presented in this portfolio of publications, I opted for adopting a definition of *communication* that reaches beyond the theory of information, recognising that communication, if it is language, is also a production of meaning and signification: it cannot be reduced to the mechanist functions of "transmission" and "reception". For Greimas and Courtés, the axis of communication is the one in which the action of subjects over one another creates intersubjective relations (Greimas & Courtés, 1993:46): a definition that outstretches communication as an exclusively verbal or linguistic phenomenon, while also welcoming a number of themes my work explored in the scope of dress—for example, the problem of hierarchies, exchanges and transits of values, and the construction of narratives between subjects and objects, or subjects and others.

The clipped section of the phenomenon analysed in this document can be described as the construction and contrasting of two systems: Western feminine fashion, and the set of practices often associated with an Islamic feminine identity. Rather than addressing "fashion" in general, the work recognises the importance of distinguishing the Western fashion system and industry from other fashion systems without, however, walking into the trap of generalising Western fashion as the totality of fashion systems—or, as it was practised in the past of Fashion Theory, to claim a changing fashion landscape as the exclusivity of the West, condemning Others to have "costume".

Finally, throughout the outputs, I opted for utilising terms that are familiar to the average reader, instead of crafting cryptic meta-terms that need to be deciphered, only making sense in the confines of the analysis. Thus "West" and "Orient" play a double role in the writings included with the portfolio: they are used in their linguistic meaning, evoking the set of geopolitical concepts they refer to, while receiving a "coating" of significance permitting them to function as meta-terms—in a nutshell, they appear in

this document as both spoken language and the "language about language". Similarly to the need of delimiting the analysis to feminine practices, drawing lines between what is perceived as Western and Oriental is an important step from an analytical perspective, as the foundation of a Saussurean semiotic analysis is the identification of differences (Greimas & Courtés, 1993:100), or the alternations of variation and permanence (Greimas, 1986; Greimas & Courtés, 1993:197).

Our investigation opens with the article "300 years of bodies and corsets in their rhythmic manifestation" (Jardim, 2021c, section 1), which aims at reconstructing the method emerging from my MPhil thesis, *O Corset na Moda Ocidental* [*The Corset in Western Fashion*] (Jardim, 2014). The article revisits the investigation—an account of the Western, feminine silhouette from the 18th to the 21st century—aiming at exposing the theoretical collage that permitted the analysis, detailing its methodology and the point of departure to the subsequent works presented in this portfolio. The method described is practised step by step in my analysis of the 18th-century French dress included in Section 2 (Jardim, preprint, section 2): a detailed examination of the optical relations constructed by the intertwined narrative programmes of body, dress, and the different "tissues" and "matters" constituting one and the other. In this method and analysis, we argue that transformation in the discursive dimension of body and dress results from transformations in values, as well as in the "use" and "practice" of the body, utilising elements from a Semiotics of Text and Figurative semiotics as the foundation for a study of body and dress as communication praxes.

After the initial examination of the problems of gender and class, prevalent in the historical Western Fashion system, the work steps into Post-colonial theory with "Humility and Identity" (Jardim, 2016, section 3) in the examination of how young Muslim girls in London today use the hijab in combination with high street-driven trends. An output marking the beginning of a new investigation, the paper contains more questions than answers, laying an inventory of hypotheses that would set the tone of the project: the crucial role played by dress in the actualisation[1] of a specific identity and the notion of "Religion" and "Style" as systems of value, whose particular

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[1] The term is used following its semiotic meaning: in the frame of the triple category virtual/actual/realised. While the actualisation is an operation which turns a unit present (rather than virtualised), the articulation actualised/realised depends on the relation the subject established with the object of value: the actualisation marks the disjunction with the object, whereas the conjunction realises subjects and objects (Greimas & Courtés, 1993:9).

configurations of dress emerge as multiple processes forming the syntagmatic axis of Fashion and Culture. Besides debating the differences between two systems of dress—one that follows the codes of Fashion and one that responds to the vocabulary of religious commandments—that work begins to interrogate the matter of merging two systems of dress that seem, at first glance, to be opposed.

The first clue leading to the case subsequently appearing in the investigation—that is the notion of a parallel, rather than opposition, between Western and Islamic techniques of clothed femininity—emerges from the investigation presented in "Beyond the freedom vs oppression opposition" (Jardim, 2019b, section 4), where the generative analysis of Maria Idrissi's look for H&M *Conscious Fashion* advert reveals that the blending of high street and Islamic codes in dress promotes an operation of neutralisation of a category (Greimas, 1970:137; Greimas & Courtés, 1993:32), rather than a complex term (Greimas, 1970:137; Greimas & Courtés, 1993:32). That conclusion—seemingly of little importance—reveals that a union resulting in neutralisation cannot come from a base category, which shows that both systems utilised by Idrissi in her look come from contradictions belonging to the subcontrary axis (Greimas, 1970:137; Greimas & Courtés, 1993:32). In other words, that the trends she follows do not belong to a consolidated vocabulary of mainstream dress, but to the forefront of changes that feeds the Highstreet trends; and, equally, that the version of Islam comporting the mixing with Western Fashion cannot be that of traditional Religion, but a contemporary, secularised version of its dress codes.

The results of "Beyond the freedom vs oppression opposition" (Jardim, 2019b) point at an important distinction which is fundamental to this work: the addressing of a matter as a binary—understood as a fixed opposition of presupposed, opposed terms; versus its understanding as a parallel, by recognising that two systems constructed as opposed may share similar semio-narrative traits, hence not constituting an "opposition", in the semiotic sense. To clarify this problem, we resort once more to the semiotic theory, utilising the notion of base category that will reappear throughout our body of work. For Greimas, a base category is formed by an opposition, which is a relation of two opposed terms that are united either by an isotopy—a significant repetition—or by a relation of mutual presupposition (Greimas, 1970, 1986). Now, the "West versus Orient" category fits the relation of mutual presupposition or "solidarity": a relation of push-and-pull in which both terms are opposed, hence *fundamentally*

different, but not as distant so that no relation at all between them exists. In fact, Émile Durkheim points out that all binaries are false since they all seem to belong to the same "genus", but one: Sacred versus Profane (Durkheim, 2001:38). In other words, whether such a thing is true or false, something must *unite* a binary; otherwise, no opposition can be formed—to cite the well-humoured example Floch utilised, one cannot form a base category between a raccoon and a locomotive (Floch, 1990:29) but equally, as remarked by Lévinas, the alterity of the other doesn't depend on a quality marking *difference*: if that was the case, that would imply the commonality of genre which would annul the alterity in the first place (Lévinas, 1961:211). Henceforth, a binary is a delicate dance, constantly juggling difference and sameness.

Thus, to form a true opposition, both objects would have to be invested with opposing values in a (semiotic) category. Notwithstanding, the result of both analyses (Jardim, 2016, 2019b) show that such might not be the case, imposing a return to the start—that is, to my investigation about the corset (Jardim, 2014, 2021c, preprint)—in the effort of questioning whether the veil was subject to the same transformations and transits of value determining different narratives and interactions between the subjects. One of the results from that investigation was the understanding that the corset is not a unique, monolithic phenomenon in Western Fashion, but an object capable of manifesting different articulations of a category, as well as of producing different narrative interactions between subjects or diverse situations of visual communication that are aspectualised differently, producing discourses that, at times, shift out [*débrayage*] (Greimas & Courtés, 1993:79-82) and at times shift in [*embrayage*] (Greimas & Courtés, 1993:119-121) the markers of person, time, and space. An object that is material to myth, in the sense Roland Barthes attributed to the term (Barthes, 2009), the corset manifests an accumulation of meaning and value, as well as a rhythmic dance of absence and presence in our Fashion system, which invites the questioning: is the veil that different from the corset, when regarded from that conceptual framework?

A third moment in the investigation is built from this question, abandoning in definitive the hypothesis of a "true" opposition constructed between both objects and everything they emblematise: their cultural systems, societies, and the deeper values invested in those practices, particularly in the production of discourses about femininities. Such effort requires full use of the apparatus of the standard theory, the

generative trajectory, by accepting that the visual layers of objects are only the most superficial level of a manifestation—and, perhaps, the only level where any contrasts between corset and veil are sustained. When reaching the semio-narrative structures (the narrative and fundamental levels), however, more and more similarities were found between the objects, supporting the possibility of presenting those distinct sartorial objects, as well as their cultural traditions, in parallel rather than in opposition. In other words: when those objects are stripped from their visuality, what is left—narrative utterances and abstract values—are essentially the same, at times presenting similar historical trajectories likewise.

The "Corset and the Hijab: Enunciation, Intersubjectivity, and Dress" (Jardim, 2018, section 5) opens this moment of the investigation, presenting a broader reflection on the roles of enunciator and enunciate as interchangeable, substantiating that other roles too, such as "I" and "Other", "Western" and "Oriental", must be somehow invested with the same possibility of transit. "The corset and the veil as disruptive manifestations of clothing" (Jardim, 2019a, section 6) reintroduces a corpus of research to the analysis, contrasting how two controversial characters—the 19th-century tightlacer and the Tuareg man—"distort" established cultural codes of class, race, gender, and religion in similar manners, despite their belonging to different geographies as well as historical eras.

Finally, "The Corset and the Hijab: alternations of absence and presence in the 19th and 20th-century Fashion System" (Jardim, 2021a, section 7) and "The Corset and the Hijab: absence and presence in the 19th and 20th-century Fashion System" (Jardim, 2020, section 8) contain the culmination of the project, exploring an overview of one century of corsets and veils in England and Egypt, following the rhythms dictated by their absence and presence in society, and the historical-chronological overlap of those processes uniting the two "opposed" nations. While section 7 presents the preliminary examination of the cycle of values and their transformation in society utilising the operations in the semiotic square to map the narrative relations of appropriation, attribution, renunciation and dispossession of value (Greimas, 1983) faced by the objects throughout the 20th century, section 8 continues from that foundation to present a socio-semiotic analysis of the same corpus in the framework of Landowski's (2005) regimes of interaction, exploring in-depth the narrative roles and

competences invested in the two actants, corset and hijab, in their trajectory from established, programmed custom, to a simulacrum of fashionable novelty.

At last, the investigation full-circles in the final section, with another opportunity of re-testing the pertinence of the Semiotic theory to the study of non-verbal objects and the validity of our argument concerning the dissolution of "false binaries". The final output in the portfolio, "On niqabs and surgical masks: a trajectory of covered faces" (Jardim, 2021b, section 9), explores the manners in which COVID-19 and the epidemic of facial covering in the West turned around our perception of objects concealing the face and their meaning, reversing the direction of assimilation while also exposing our double-standards and the complex network of political interests and power relations behind the Western "repulse" for covered faces. At the same time the unfolding of what could be a new direction of the research and an unexpected finale, the article combines the mature theoretical and methodological quality developed throughout the works in the portfolio, confirming the relevance of the investigation to the understanding of our immediate present.

Aims

The project presented in this body of work was initially conceived as parts of a totality, which justifies their coherence and equivalence to a doctoral thesis. Building from the method and semiotic approach developed in my MPhil thesis (Jardim,2014, 2021c, preprint), the present work started with the aim of investigating the hijab in the West today—an approach that almost immediately proved to be saturated, even if there was a gap concerning the use of Greimasian semiotics as a method of investigation. The first two papers about the veil (Jardim, 2016, 2019b) open this phase of the investigation, testing different possibilities of the semiotic theory in its approaches to the object, emphasising the matter of blending the religious garment with typically Western, contemporary manifestations of dress.

The results of those first analyses, however, pointed towards what was going to become the core argument and aim of the present body of work: to champion the idea that, when viewed from the point of view of their most emblematic items of dress, Western and Islamic femininities can be placed in parallel, rather than the irreconcilable opposition that marks the mainstream discourses about women in the West and Islam.

In other words, to interrogate: to what extent can sartorial techniques of gender produce discourses, narratives, and values that are equivalent, even when they belong to "opposed" cultures? That question seemed to become multilayered as the investigation deepened, comprising a desire to extend the parallel to other cultural practices—such as the narrative roles of women, as well as the roles of clothing in general—and to theoretical traditions—by overlapping and intersecting disciplines by attempting at dissolving the constructed separations between them, such as Structuralism and Phenomenology, or by pushing a conceptualisation of Fashion as Communication practices, namely the utterances taking place between the body and its dress, and clothed-bodies and others. In fact, that particular point of resistance, or the idea that Fashion doesn't belong in the debate about Communications and Media, points toward the importance of discussing Fashion (and the body) *as* a medium: not only its "communications" *de facto*—photography, magazines, films, catwalks, and so forth— but in its material dimension. Fashion can be a social practice, but likewise, a screen where we make statements that communicate not only with the outside but with the inside of the body. Hence, one of the core claims of the present work is the importance of studying Fashion not only through its History, Technique, Artistic and Sociological dimensions—all of which seem to be well consolidated as fields of study today—but also in the multiple relations of communication it constructs, as a medium and as a practice that engages multiple bodies in society.

The aims described so far were consolidated throughout nine outputs, in which different sections of the corpus were evaluated, not only confirming the initial hypothesis but testing how those semio-narrative similarities between both cultures behaved in different trajectories belonging to different geographies as well as different sections of historical time. The work investigated different media—material objects in their use and practice, historical reports, and contemporary events—different locations—London, the UK and Europe, Northern Africa, and the mythical opposition England/Egypt—and different periods—from the 18th-century to the present.

Methodology

One of the aspects sustained throughout the contributions forming this portfolio of publication is the interdisciplinary character of the investigation, not only in its

intersections of Semiotics utilised as a Theory of Communication, Fashion Theory, and the address of Post-colonial matters linked to Religion, Gender, and Identity but in the selections of the corpus and cases that are in correspondence with the practices in contemporary Semiotics. The approach stemming from Lévi-Strauss' (1963) image of the *bricoleur* is evoked in Floch's preface to *Identités Visuelles* [*Visual Identities*], in which the idea of "making new with the old" is described as an intuitive practice whose result escapes the initial project, transforming the signs and the meanings through a "coherent deformation", protesting against the erosion of significance (Floch, 1995:7). Floch calls upon that image to introduce his study of brand identities, analysing how bricolage plays a role in the construction of those manifestations – an approach we repeated by examining the making of the *hijabista* as bricolage (Jardim, 2019b). However, my research is equally linked to Lévi-Strauss concept in the crafting of its methodology, in which it mixes fragments of different theories, as well as different ethnographical and historical studies, aiming at transforming those works in the effort of recombining them, improvising solutions that are, for the most, not *engineered*. If Lévi-Strauss engineer corresponds to established systems, his bricoleur is the one who experiments with the means available, finding new uses—or, to paraphrase Landowski (2009), perhaps *practising* those theories and corpus—and, through this new forms of making, constructing new facets of interpretation and analysis which destabilise the existing means to create new ones.

Described in detail in the "300 years of bodies and corsets in their rhythmic manifestations" (Jardim, 2021c), the investigation presented in this paper continues a method emerging from *The Corset in Western Fashion* (Jardim, 2014), stemming from the same theoretical and methodological foundation combining different aspects from the semiotic theory to approach the selected object—the corset, the hijab, and their correlation—in a comprehensive manner. The key portions of the theory covered by the body of work reference Greimas' *Structural Semantics*, namely its criteria for the selection and description of the corpus (Greimas, 1986:142-145); the Visual Semiotics proposed by Greimas (1984) and developed by Floch (1985) and Oliveira (2004) which are reliant on the homologation of a signifier (the plane of expression) and signified (the plane of content) following the postulates of Hjelmslev (1966); and the standard generative trajectory (Greimas & Courtés, 1993:157-160) and its articulation of surface and semio-narrative structures. Those works from Standard and Visual Semiotics are

directly or indirectly present in all the sections of the portfolio of publications, as they are at the base of theories forming my manner of looking at research objects.

Perhaps the most important piece of the puzzle justifying the pertinence of the analyses presented, the method developed by Greimas in *Structural Semantics* determines a particularity of the semiotic theory, lying in the criteria for the selection of the corpus. That is a great point of distinction between the semiotic theory and its counterparts in the Humanities, in which Semiotics chooses to gauge its manifestations through smaller yet generalisable sections of corpus which are examined in-depth, rather than the analysis of a large corpus in its totality. Such selections are not performed "at random" but following a rigorously elaborated method that relies on three criteria to verify the appropriateness of the corpus: representativity, exhaustivity, and homogeneity (Greimas, 1986:142-145). In a nutshell, the simultaneous presence of the three criteria in a section of the corpus ensures that the analysis of the part is applicable to the totality. Moving forward, representativity means exactly the synecdochic relation: that the selected section can represent the whole, at least in the portions of the phenomenon one aims at analysing. Exhaustivity, in its turn, is the verification of the representative section applicability to the totality—or, paraphrasing Greimas, that a "provisory corpus" can be tested on the larger, complete corpus (Greimas, 1986). Finally, homogeneity is the criterium ensuring that different sections of the corpus refer to the same phenomenon—in our case, the criteria of homogeneity refers to the need to verifying that each selection concerns our conceptual axis; that is, that each section addresses the matters of communication and interaction in dress. Throughout the sections of this thesis, each article presents an analysis of an enclosed case—an item of dress, a photograph, a video ad, or a small selection of practices belonging to a specific group—which, although constructing the impression of isolated case studies, are in fact carefully curated sections of a corpus attending those three criteria. Each selection presented, thus, was deemed as representative, exhaustive, and homogeneous, which not only justifies the pertinence of their selection as part of a larger research project but ensures a certain degree of generalisability of the analyses, in which the sections of a phenomenon echo the totality in which they are inscribed.

Moving forward, the greimasian method for selecting the corpus, in our present case, challenges the matter of chronology—an old problem in the humanities, synchrony and diachrony are debated by Landowski, who presents them as two distinct

manners of dividing history: in binary categories privileging abrupt ruptures and well-individualised borders (diachrony); or in a gradual manner, in which the passages are pervaded by transition thresholds (synchrony) (Landowski, 1992:49, 52). Using the criteria established by Greimas frees the corpus from the necessity of abiding by this dichotomy, permitting an address of the phenomenon that is independent of the problem of chronological time, dancing between what Landowski calls "reference points", "slices of life" that permit a periodisation of history (Landowski, 1992:52), or by analysing transits of values in spaces where different trends overlap regardless of whether the phenomenon fits in with the periodised history or not. That advantage of the method permitted analyses such as the one contrasting the 19th-century tightlacer in the Victorian Era and the Tuareg man (Jardim, 2019a), where practices distant in chronological time are contrasted and deemed to manifest similar narrative and discursive mechanisms.

Undoubtedly the most significant paradigm of the Saussurean tradition of semiotics, the articulation signifier/signified comes next as a mechanism enabling the analyses presented in this document. The distinction starts to appear in Linguistics, with Saussure's proposition of the linguistic sign as "dual in nature": the sign is nothing more than the relation binding a "concept" to an "acoustic image" (Saussure, 1922:66-7). That distinction was further developed by Hjelmslev in the distinction of the plane of expression and plane of content (Hjelmslev, 1966): the sign is the relation that binds one mechanism of manifestation (the signifier) to an abstract mechanism (the signified), which are in a relationship of mutual presupposition—the signified is not "gaugeable" unless it is manifested by a signifier and, equally, at least in the Hjelmslevian tradition, there is no manifestation (signifier) without content (signified) (Hjelmslev, 1966). That manner of analysing can appear in more than one way, as the signifier can be plastic/visual, textual, or syncretic—or a manifestation merging more than one substance, such as a poster or a magazine cover, in which the verbal and the image are articulated as one signifier. Our investigation has resorted to the analysis of multiple substances, some of which are visual (Jardim, 2016, 2019b, 2021b, preprint), some of which are verbal (Jardim, 2019a, 2020, 2021a). At times, even though we are not working with images or written texts but referring to practices, the analyses are still in correspondence with the matter of how "something" signifies a value, as is the case of our analyses of the veiling and lacing as cultural practices (Jardim, 2019a, 2021b),
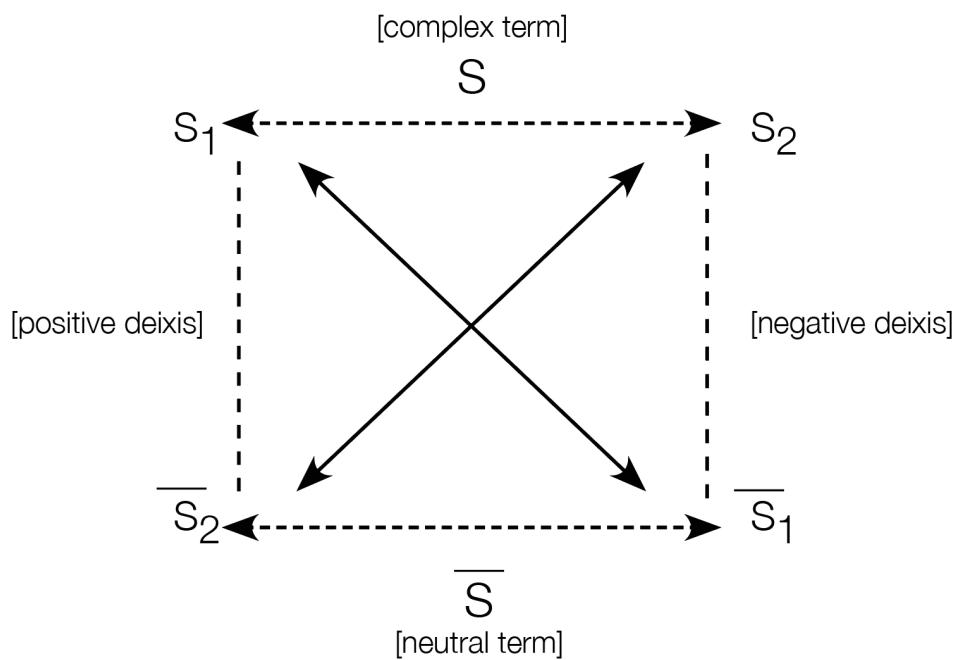
parts of a Fashion system (Jardim, 2020, 2021a), or simply the encounter of two subjects (Jardim, 2018).

The entanglement of both planes is at the core of the visual semiotic theory that informed this investigation: Plastic Semiotics utilises the articulation of planes to the analysis of 2D images and 3D objects, through the examination of its formants (Greimas, 1984): eidetic (relating to the form), chromatic (relating to colour), topologic (relations constructed in space) (Greimas, 1984; Floch, 1985), and material (Oliveira, 2004). The four formants are used to analyse plastic attributes of images and objects—which constitute the plane of expression—that can, then, be traced back to the contents they bring into manifestation, in the same manner that the sound of a word or the letters that constitute its written form signify an abstract content. In our section 2 (Jardim, preprint), Plastic Semiotics is utilised rigorously and strictly, presenting accurate descriptions of each formant, as well as the articulation of deeper structures that can be semantic or narrative: the use of a particular material, for example, is charged with cultural meaning, but also possesses attributes that demand to be apprehended "in the act," which constitutes meaning that is being signified as we come into contact with it, beyond the meanings that are inscribed by culture—for example, the rough touch of pasted linen from the 18th-century corsets, versus the sensuous touch of a dress made of silk. Equally, the visual organisation (or topology) of a dressed body, although containing some cultural meanings, also constructs visual relations that guide our gaze through the structures of the body: another example in which the visual manifestations possess a potential for signification that is larger than the meanings culture imprints in the objects we use and wear, which requires to be examined beyond the possible symbolic readings.

Finally, one of the central concepts from the greimasian standard method, the generative trajectory, is the main theoretical framework permitting some of the analyses (Jardim, 2020, 2021a) to unravel. Expanding from the articulation of expression (discursive level) and content (fundamental level), Greimas' contribution explores a third instance, the narrative level, which is constituted by utterances that bring abstract values (fundamental level) to manifestation (discursive level) (Greimas & Courtés, 1993). In his theory, each level possesses different attributes requiring different mechanisms of analysis; from a methodological perspective, it is possible to argue that each level can provide different insights into an object, as well as their own research

problems (Jardim, 2021c)—a possibility indirectly explored in that output (Jardim, 2020, 2021a), and described in detail in our method article (Jardim, 2021c).

The bottom layer of the generative trajectory, the fundamental level, is formed by an inventory of abstract, "undressed" values, that can be analysed through the organisation in categories, represented in the semiotic square: the articulation of different relations values can embrace, such as opposition, contradiction and implication, as well as combinations of positions: the union of an opposition (complex term), the cancellation of contrariety (neutral term), and the meta oppositions (complex term vs neutral term; positive deixis vs negative deixis), represented in figure 1.

[complex term]

S

S_1 ← - - - - - - - - - - - - - - → S_2

[positive deixis]   [negative deixis]

$\overline{S_2}$ ← - - - - - - - - - - - - - - → $\overline{S_1}$

$\overline{S}$

[neutral term]

Figure 1. Standard semiotic square displaying the three possible relations permitted by the articulation of a semantic category. The horizontal relations constitute the contrarieties—of the base category, S_1 and S_2, or of the subcontraries, $\tilde{S_1}$ and $\tilde{S_2}$—the contradictions—between S_1 and $\tilde{S_1}$, and S_2 and $\tilde{S_2}$— and the implications—between $\tilde{S_2}$ and S_1; $\tilde{S_1}$ and S_2. Finally, the horizontal relation—S and $\tilde{S}$—and the vertical relations—positive and negative deixis—must constitute meta-oppositions, meaning that the union of S is opposed to the union of $\tilde{S}$, as well as the union of $\tilde{S_2}$ and S_1 is opposed to the union of $\tilde{S_1}$ and S_2.

When organising our method (Jardim, 2021c), it was made clear that, although signification signifies[2] as one complete, multi-layered entity, an analysis of each

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[2] The wordplay might give the impression of a poorly phrased sentence but is, in fact, encountered a number of times throughout the works of Greimas, as well as Landowski and Floch: the idea of a
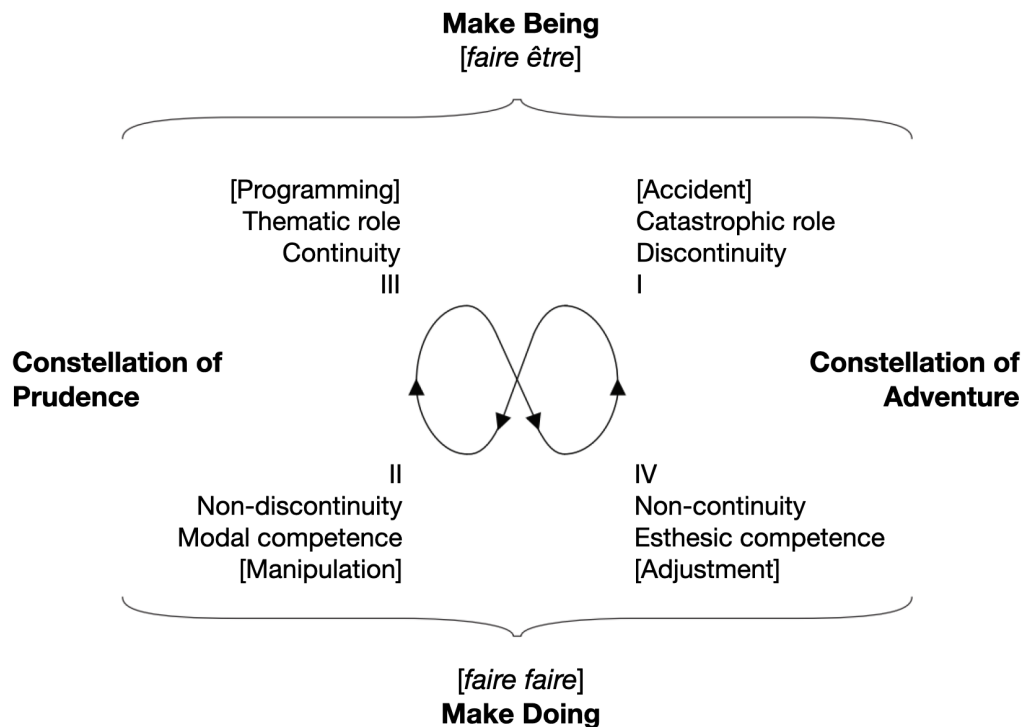
separate layer of an object can uncover how each level poses different research problems. The fundamental level permits the examination of dress as well as our social practices around it from the point of view of abstract values that transit: when those values travel through the different relations in the semiotic square—contradiction, contrariety, implication—the entire system is transformed. The analysis of the fundamental level, in that sense, is critical in the separation of the different uses of the same object—for example, the religious versus the subcultural veil or the fashionable corset versus the extreme tight-lacing (Jardim, 2019a, 2020, 2021a).

For Greimas, however, the inventory of values existing in the abstract level doesn't just "surface" to manifestation: those operations happen through complex narrative instances that mark the passage from a logic of classes to a logic of propositions (Greimas & Courtés, 1993:382). A "narrative utterance" is defined as a relation-function between at least two actants—in other words, so that an abstract content can surface into manifestation, a set of relations between different actants (or *agents*) needs to take place. In the standard theory, that level relates chiefly to the problem of acquisition or loss of objects invested with values—*programmes* that can be simple or complex, determining the different manners in which subjects actualise fundamental values into manifestation. In our method (Jardim, 2021c), the research problem we associated with this level links to the use and function—as different uses of the same object can create different "stories" about them—as well as with the distinction between object and subject, which is a constant theme in our investigation about the corset and the hijab, somehow present throughout all the following sections. Since *The Corset in Western Fashion*, our examination of the plastic of body and dress pointed towards an approximation of those two, not only in which dress mimics the body (and vice versa), but that each one possesses the potential for playing the part of object as well as subject. In fact, our works kept on encountering the idea that the rhythmic changes of Fashion communicate alternations in the roles of subject and object, in which body and dress take turns into the fulfilment of those parts (Jardim, 2014, 2019a, 2020, 2021a, 2021c).

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signification—as both the result of *semiosis*, or as opposed to "meaning", which is previous to the semiotic production (Greimas & Courtés, 1993:352)—that is not "given" but, literally, *signifies* in the act of being apprehended. The possibility of an "active" apprehension of signification is central to Socio-semiotics, which presents itself as opposed to a Semiotics centred in the "reading of codes", as is the case of the Peircean tradition, to focus on the apprehension of processes instead (Landowski, 2014; Oliveira, 2013).

The work presented in this document privileges the more contemporary address of the narrative level appearing in Landowski's writings (2004, 2005, 2009, 2010), where the narrative level is unravelled into regimes of interaction. Rather than sticking to the two functions of the narrative level developed by Greimas—*operation*, or the action of men over things; and *manipulation*, or the actions of men over men (Greimas, 1970, 1983; Greimas & Courtés, 1993)—Landowski explores the relations of the semiotic square to propose narrative utterances responding to different roles and competences: programming, founded in the thematic roles, and the accident, the catastrophic role; and manipulation, founded in the modal competence, and, finally, the adjustment, grounded in the esthesic competence (figure 2).

Make Being
[*faire être*]

[Programming]
Thematic role
Continuity
III

[Accident]
Catastrophic role
Discontinuity
I

Constellation of Prudence

Constellation of Adventure

II
Non-discontinuity
Modal competence
[Manipulation]

IV
Non-continuity
Esthesic competence
[Adjustment]

[*faire faire*]
Make Doing

Figure 2. From *Les Interactions Risquées* [*The risky interactions*], a simplified diagram containing the regimes proposed by Landowski. His work stems from the base category "continuity vs discontinuity", which unfolds in the transit of those positions resulting in different modes of interaction that are grounded in different roles or competences. The relations presented in figure 1 are sustained, in which "make being" is contrary to "make doing", as well as the relations invested with "prudence" are opposed to those invested with "adventure"; similarly, the two axes and two deixes are linked to different degrees of risk, which are inversely proportional to the production of meaning (or, simply speaking, the higher the safety, the lower the production of meaning, and vice versa).

Landowski's schema of the interactions is one of the most relevant theories to the body of work presented in this document, to the extent that his propositions

(Landowski, 2005, 2010) concern a vast possibility of relations established between a pair of actants—that concern, in the case of the present project, both the interactions established between body and dress and the interaction of clothed-bodies in society. Equally, the use of Landowski's narrative level provides, in the lack of a better term, a compelling narrative that supports the parallel developed throughout the outputs presented in this document. Through his ellipsis of interactions, a deeper understanding of the transits of values—from dress to body and back, as well as throughout different moments in the history of clothed-bodies—and the different mechanisms available for the actualisation of values into manifestations, a notion that was valuable throughout the corpus, even if the papers opt, at times, to bypass the use of semiotic metalanguage, in the effort of making the articles more palatable to their intended audience.

Finally, the surface or discursive level refers to the space and mechanism currently understood as "communication" *de facto* and, consequently, posing problems of analysis that are directly concerned with the matter of dress and the body as media, practices of communication or communication acts. The most superficial instance of the generative trajectory can refer both to what is called the "plane of expression" and the plastic formants, as well as to the apparatus normally pertaining to the analysis of verbal texts, written or spoken: the markers of person, time and space (Greimas & Courtés, 1993:379-80); the mechanisms of shifting in [*embrayage*] and shifting out [*débrayage*], installing or removing the aspectual markers in the discourse; and the thematisations and figurativisations of values (Greimas & Courtés, 1993:328-30). One of the chief contributions of the present body of work is, perhaps, the effort in transposing the apparatus analysing verbal manifestations to the analysis of sartorial manifestations—not by trying to inaugurate a new branch of semiotics, as is the case in the works of Floch and Oliveira, but by acknowledging the pertinence of the available tools, utilised in the analysis of verbal utterances to the analyses of what we named "sartorial utterances" (Jardim, 2020, 2021a). The key contribution, in terms of method, is the postulate of such sartorial utterances which are analysed as disengaged [*débrayage*]—projected in utterances and installing markers of person, time and space—or engaged [*embrayage*]—erasing the same markers with the aim of returning the one who gazes to the illusion of the enunciation in the act. The analyses of the discursive level are particularly relevant to the works in this thesis, in which they provide

the opportunity of debating the relations of distance and proximity and, subsequently, to the matter of dress as an active participant in the construction of a social interlink between subjects, chiefly in the prescription of visual relations that resurface as multifarious forms of spatial interactions. The discursive level of dress is most vividly presented at the start and end of the sections (Jardim, 2020, 2021a, 2021b, preprint).

Although some of the sections may have privileged different levels of analysis as well as different sections of the theories described in this methodology, when regarded as a totality, the different aspects addressed by each article reconstruct our method (Jardim, 2021c), emerging as a unity that is translated into a comprehensive investigation of the matter of the corset and the veil. Equally, the union of different moments of the semiotic theory permitted the object to be analysed from multifarious perspectives—visual, textual, and as practice—which reinforces the pertinence of the statements presented. Some of the strongest points in the contribution, such as the problem of dress as an agent, or the parallel between the West and the Orient, are not presented once and forgotten but re-emerge from each analysis, proving their iterative character.

Selection of the corpus

A central concern of the work was to distance itself as much as possible from problems emerging from legislation: it was never our interest to analyse the type of veiling occurring in places where its practice is *prescribed* by civil law, such as in Iran but, likewise, it was not of concern to analyse the type of veiling appearing at locations where its practice is *interdicted* by law, such as in France. The reason for that is simple: in an environment where a dress code is determined by legal constraints, it is very difficult to gauge any meaning beyond the binaries "conformity/rebellion"—or "oppression/freedom", an opposition we tried to dissolve very early in the project (Jardim, 2019b).

Building from the initial findings (Jardim 2014, 2021c, preprint), the same concern became true about the corset when delimiting the historical periods that would compose our parallel. As the work developed into an address of Fashion systems and the practices of veiling and corseting as either belonging to or communicating oppositions to Fashion systems, it became evident that hyper-stratified societies—such

as the ones observed until the early 18th century—are not of interest to the investigation, once the interactions in place at such social milieus leave little to no room for confrontations to the *status quo*. From the 19th century onwards, however, not only the advancement of industrialisation creates room for faster introductions of novelty, but the contact between both cultural traditions occasions the introduction of Orientalisms in the West—here meaning the appreciation of Oriental motifs in Fashion and the Arts—side by side with the Westernisation of the East.

Thus, the cases selected in the portfolio of publications respond, firstly, to the interest in measuring the point in time when sartorial manners moved from a force delimiting stratified manners of dress that result in stratified interactions between subjects, to a system of rhythmic changes; and, secondly, to find the most representative cases in which the transit of values—whether that means the alternations of Fashion and Anti-fashion, or the interchangeability of communicational roles—was the most important. Our initial case, the 18th-century French dress (Jardim, preprint), presents the perfect harmony governing the roles of the body and dress, which results in the perfect conformity between sartorial appearances and gendered social performances. Although the analysis focused on a Western object, it is plausible the same result could be found through the analysis of an emblematic appearance of dress from a stratified Muslim society, or any object belonging to a society in which prescriptions of dress are non-negotiable, and their values delimited in a symbolic system. That section of the corpus was, if not the most representative, at least the one with the best illustrative value: the baroque exaggeration of the 18th century not only communicated messages in a magnified manner, but it also created objects that can be reduced to simple visual cues that are almost universal—also inaugurating the case for the central argument in this portfolio of publication, namely that, beyond the plastic differences, similar values and narratives can be apprehended in different cultures.

The second case, split into two sections (Jardim, 2016, 2019b), is the complete opposite to the 18th century: not only in chronology but, chiefly, due to the type of society that produced that sartorial manifestation. If the 18th century is marked by a peak of stratification (announcing the beginning of its decline), which is followed by an utter social agreement on the meaning of sartorial manifestations, the 21st century not only brings the problem of miscegenation and cultural contamination but is the result of multiple resignifications of objects, adding the problem of non-consensus about the

meaning of each item of dress. The problem of interest, hence, becomes how a "simple" *bricolage*—conciliating a religious commandment to the commandments of the latest trends—becomes a universe in which codes of religiosity, nationality, and social class are neutralised. Those two poles—the French dress and the 21st-century *hijabista*—correspond to the top and bottom axis of a semiotic square, which we identified as "traditional" (or engineered) systems, versus the "updated" (or *bricolage*) systems throughout the outputs.

The cases following suit aimed at reconstructing the vertical deixes, which we attributed to Fashion (positive deixis) and Anti-fashion (negative deixis) mechanisms. The first section of that phase was presented in our examination of the role of disruption played by the tightlacer in the Victorian Era and the Tuareg man within Islamic systems of dress (Jardim, 2019a). Rather than understanding Otherness as what comes from the outside, the work reflects on the manner in which the "deformation" of the norm within the same system can produce and communicate semantic opposition as powerfully, if not more powerfully, than the shock between cultures. Through the study of the negation of norms, it became simpler to understand what the norm was—which permitted the selection of the corpus for our final sections (Jardim, 2020, 2021a): the key emblematic moments within both Fashion systems, in which a complete transit between both axes and deixes could be observed. Those papers also forced the definition of specific geographies that, again, were not selected at random but carefully picked as the most representative of and most critical for the phenomenon we aimed at analysing. England and Egypt appeared as two halves of the same matter, both permissive nations with no legal prescriptions or interdictions of dress, but also occupying a similar space "in-between" identities: both proud of a glorious past—whether that meant the Great British Empire or the Age of the Pharaohs—and at the forefront of a new world order, at the same time trying to construct bridges with their neighbours and participate in common identities, but clinging to their uniqueness and to what separates them—from the EU, or from the Arab World. Finally, England and Egypt sustained, throughout the analysed century, the role of dictators of trends in Fashion, but also in Economy, Politics, Literature, and Arts. The deeper we looked, the more evident it became that, if the mirroring of values prophesied by Said was going to appear somewhere, England and Egypt were the perfect cases to be examined.

Finally, two outputs (Jardim, 2018, 2021b) analyse similar cases but reflecting on different problems which are, perhaps, more obviously located in the field of Media Communications. They respond, however, to the same problem addressed in the totality of the portfolio: the manners in which sartorial enunciations can be read as the root of other forms of enunciations that construct, in their turn, the broader scope of social interactions. In a more philosophical manner, the discourses about the corset and the hijab consolidate mythical relations of "I" and "Other" that become so grounded in our social orders they can no longer be moved: the analysis in "Enunciation, intersubjectivity, and dress" (Jardim, 2018) aims at questioning how the dichotomies "enunciator/enunciatee" which are, in a communication situation, meant to be mobile and interchangeable, become fixed in the opposition West/Orient. That problem feeds directly into our initial impressions on the dichotomy of *niqabs* and surgical masks that seem to present a different manifestation of the same narrative: one in which objects serving similar discursive and narrative functions—the idea of a facial "interrupter" which works towards the goal of complying with a system of conduct—can degenerate into polemic contracts in which "false oppositions" are constructed (Jardim, 2021b). Those two sections of the corpus, although rich in possibilities, are the ones where future developments seem the most possible, as the analysis contained in this portfolio don't seem as exhausted as the sections linked to the rhythms of semantic transit. Nonetheless, the experimental character of those propositions is a value in itself, indicating the prospect of future publications with the aim of continuing from the problems raised and deepening the theoretical problems those two articles begin to address.

Original contribution to knowledge

From the start, there was a recognition that the project addressed an object that was saturated in every possible sense: not only the visual presence of the hijab in London was starting to become ubiquitous by the time my investigation began, but so was its presence in the media and advertising—not to mention in academia. After publishing my first impressions (Jardim, 2016), the work responded to the challenge of analysing an object capable of meaning anything and about which, it seemed, everything had been said.

The most important original contribution presented in this body of work, although not residing exclusively in the use of Semiotics to examine the object, emerges from the possibilities secured by the theory and method described above: it permitted to hypothesise and test the possibility of placing the West and the Orient in parallel, a solution only available when discourses are examined in their deeper, semio-narrative structures. In the confines of contemporary Communication and Media Studies, as well as the field of French Semiotics, the solution presented in the sections of this thesis is unique; the clues indicating its possibility might be suggested in the different works discussed in our Literature Review section (Ahmed, 2006; Buruma & Margalit, 2004; Greimas, 1983, 1987; Husserl, 1982; Landowski, 1997, 2014; Marsciani, 2013, 2014; Said, 2003), but the development of an analysis championing those principles would appear for the first time in the works contained in this portfolio of publications. Such contribution is important—for academia, as well as for society—not only because it exposes that the binaries we grew so attached to can only be sustained in very superficial layers of manifestations, but chiefly because that understanding impacts the foundations in which numerous relations of power are constructed. In other words, the efforts of this research project could be translated as pursuing the possibility of having a conversation beyond the power structures invested in the objects by looking at them in their simplest, bare semio-narrative formations. Such an approach would permit, in the vocabulary of Boaventura de Souza Santos, to reach beyond the "abyssal lines" (Santos, 2014) of hierarchical separations, by refusing to be determined by them.

Nonetheless, the dissolution of a West/Orient binary is not the only theme of the body of work: another important notion, at times collateral to the central opposition debated throughout the contributions, is the problem of body and dress, as well as I and Other, aligned to the binary *subject* and *object*. The idea of a prevalent West/Orient opposition put in discourse as a matter of "Us" vs "Others" is certainly constructed, to a large extent, through sartorial practices—the veil as a facial-covering played and continues to play a central role in this matter, acting as a central agent that "identifies" the non-Us (Jardim, 2021b). In that sense, our aim of analysing Fashion and the body as media of communication becomes paramount and appears throughout the outputs always as such: not a dissecting of the History or Sociology of "Fashion objects", but a profound understanding of the messages imparted and received by subjects, human or not, and the multiple hierarchies apprehended *from* such communication interactions.

Consequently, my work is concerned with the reversal of the current perceptions of body and dress, moving away from the concepts established in the semiotic theory, in which material entities are assigned the roles of *objects*, and human instances are assigned the roles of *subjects*. Throughout my method (Jardim, 2021c) and analyses (chiefly Jardim, 2020, 2021a, 2021b, preprint), not only the possibility of dress becoming an *actant*, henceforth possessing the actantial status of subject in its relations with the body but, likewise, the possibility of bodies that are *subjected* to the actions of dress, taking on the role of object. Understood at the narrative level, the complex interchanges between body and dress are not fixed in one possibility but also susceptible to changes—which we link both to the changes in the conditions of actors in society, particularly women (Jardim, 2020, 2021a), but likewise to the very rhythms of Fashion (Jardim, 2019a, 2021c): what are the visual transformations of trends, if not the manifestation of different values and narratives about our being in and with the world?

Hence, more than a debate about the struggles of a group or the manner in which power is exercised through dress and the discourses produced about those practices, the body of work is concerned with a narrower problem: the manner in which narratives and fundamental values that are similar can be surfaced in such distinctive manifestations which can even be articulated in "false binaries," that can only resist in the visual or verbal, surface plane of communication. In that sense, another central contribution presented in this work is the moving away from the tensions established in the debate about the veil in academia, which seems to oscillate between biased, misconstrued Western views concerned with the "impact on society"; and the Muslim perspective, necessarily bound by the desire of "unveiling misconceptions". By moving away from both, the work not only dissolves the binary through the critical analysis it presents: it moves away from binaries in the practice of research, firmly grounding the investigation in a critical root.

Results and conclusions

When presenting a collection of papers, rather than one single piece of writing, it is evident that the same tone and quality will not be sustained: if the finished book communicates the accomplishment of completed *work*, the collection of articles

denounces the experiment and the *process of writing*, as well as the different circumstances of each piece—in a nutshell, the distinction Barthes makes of *écriture* [writing] and *oeuvre* [work] (Barthes, 1975:164). The portfolio, which comprises works presented in different fields—Fashion, Communication, and Semiotics—as well as different end products—conference presentation, book section, journal article—will translate its diverse nature, that is both in correspondence with the interdisciplinary character of the investigation, and its desire to communicate with different audiences, from academic semioticians to Fashion and Design students. Hence, as much as its origin is multiple, so is its audience: while that means that the reading of this portfolio will always be incomplete, depending on the reader's levels of expertise, background, and experiences, that also means the works in this collection can communicate beyond the confines of the disciplines it merges.

The multiplicity of the works, far from devaluing its worthiness, appears as an ode to experimentation in theory which, perhaps, would only be possible in such circumstances: crafting a research project from scratch without the guidance of a supervisor (or the constraints of study programme...), drawing from past experiences and growing from feedback received in conference discussions, peer-review processes, and informal conversations with colleagues and students. In that light, one of the merits of the nine outputs is their ability to disturbing not only multiple concepts— such as Nationality, Identity, and even Fashion and Religion—but diverse bits of the theories intersected in this document—from the definitions of subject and object to the notions of *communication* across Semiotics and Media.

Departing from the description of a method for Fashion Semiotics (Jardim, 2021c), the investigation started with the aim of "testing" those results, interrogating if the same methodology could be applicable to understanding sartorial manifestations that didn't belong in the Western fashion system. "The Plastic of clothing and the construction of visual communication and interaction" (Jardim, preprint) reviews its results, while "Humility and Identity" (Jardim, 2016) and "Beyond the freedom vs oppression opposition" (Jardim, 2018) are the two works expanding on that objective, dissecting the problem of the hijab when worn in combination with Western clothes. That initial phase of the project started to indicate the paths that would permit the later developments of the research: the problem of "miscomprehension" of the veil when seen by Western eyes or the possibility (predicted by the semiotic theory) that the same

manifestation can communicate different contents, as much as abstract values can surface through different discursive levels (Greimas, 1983). Likewise, those four papers verify the pertinence of a plastic analysis to understand the semi-symbolic (Greimas, 1984; Floch, 1985, 1995; Oliveira, 2004) character of the veil—meaning that, beyond its symbolic meanings, which are mostly constructed and reproduced by cultural and religious practices, the veil is an "object" that requires an apprehension and interpretation in act and presence, rather than the pure reliance on decoding what is socially or culturally "established"—and the problem of looking at one system of dress using the repertoire of codes belonging to another, returning to the work of Lévi-Strauss (Lévi-Strauss, 1952), which seems to indirectly inspire a new wave of Fashion Theory addressing the problem of ethnocentrism in Fashion, theory and practice (Craik, 1994; Geczy, 2013; Welters, 2018).

The second phase of the project stems from a bold hypothesis—"...that the corset is, to an extent, the veil of the Western woman" (Jardim, 2020:18)—which emerges from the works of the two major theoreticians of Orientalism and Occidentalism: Edward Said (2004) and Ian Buruma (Buruma & Margalit, 2004). In Said, the Orient "created" by the West is presented in the metaphor of a reversed mirror that permits the formation of a Western identity through the construction of anOther in mutual presupposition, whereas Buruma & Margalit suggest that, when regarded beyond the constructed discourses, the two cultures are not so different. In a way, the results from "Beyond the freedom vs oppression opposition" (Jardim, 2019b)—namely, the understanding that the "hijabista" look neutralises systems, rather than merging them—were the foundations for this second phase, but also the need for a deep questioning of why the roles of "I" and "Other" in the prevalent discourses are so fixed.

That questioning invited Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's works into the investigation—not coincidentally, the "Other" against which the school of Structuralism defines itself, and the barrier Greimas himself seemed to wish to cross in his final individual work (Greimas, 1987; Landowski, 2017). Like every mutually presupposed term of an opposition (or like every binary), the theories do share a bond, one explored in poetic depth in Marsciani (2013, 2014), the starting point of the work "Enunciation, Intersubjectivity, and Dress" (Jardim, 2018), which appears more as proposition than as a result. A "zero degree" for the parallel corset-hijab, that work reveals that the problem being handled by the investigation is multi-layered in the overlapping of two

cultural traditions, but also in which it shows the places where theories can overlap, and oppositions dissolve, rather than unite in complex terms—a work that disturbs my process by presenting the "cracks" in the multiple aspects at play in my investigation so far: not only the discourses about the West and the Orient but the very theories I selected to support my analyses. Although the paper is a confessed unfinished contribution, it contains important developments in the problem of enunciation and the opposition I/Other understood in the light of the subject of enunciation as a presupposed pair of interchangeable roles, a notion which is in correspondence with the works of Sara Ahmed, who also uses Phenomenology and Orientalism to tackle a similar problem (Ahmed, 2006).

From that point, the papers following continue the path open by "Enunciation, Intersubjectivity, and Dress" (Jardim, 2018), addressing different discursive manifestations of the parallel identified at the fundamental level. "The corset and the veil as disruptive manifestations of dress" (Jardim, 2019a) continues the effort of placing both traditions in parallel by comparing how each system constructs Others that are not outsiders belonging to a different culture, but subjects from the inside who choose to "subvert" the established uses and norms concerning sartorial objects. Besides advancing the conversation about the use of the apparatus of enunciation to the understanding of sartorial communication, the work also explores how different moments in the cycle of trends can be homologated to different values, exposing the alternations of "fashion" and "anti-fashion" and how they are communicated through different uses of the same object. The work reconnects with the roots of my approach to Socio-semiotics, chiefly Eric Landowski's regimes of interaction, now re-operated as mechanisms used by the Fashion system to narrativise different interactions between body and dress, which unravel into different relations between the subjects and the system: conformity, complementarity, opposition, contradiction.

Expanding from those findings, the two outputs discussing the 19th and 20th-century Fashion systems (Jardim, 2020, 2021a) close the investigation, presenting an address of the development of both objects in mainstream Fashion in England and Egypt—which we substantiated as the most representative "home cultures" of corset and hijab—following the thread of the problem of *absence*, *presence*, and *return* of those objects, in, out, and back to the Fashion system. Undoubtedly, the outputs that are the most representative of the quality and potential of the research—and, perhaps,

ones that could have been developed into a single, longer piece of writing—those papers consolidate the parallel between corset and hijab, England and Egypt, but also the theoretical contribution of utilising the apparatus of enunciation to the analysis of sartorial objects and, finally, the proposition of the need for reading the generative trajectory in reverse, from value to manifestation, with the aim of addressing one more hierarchy: the one invested in the reading of meaning.

At last, the final piece of the portfolio, "On niqabs and surgical masks: a trajectory of covered faces", appears as a test—of method and hypothesis—shifting the focus from the established forms of dress of one system and the other, to reflect on the welcoming of facial covering in the West in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Jardim 2021b). Another "first impressions" work, the article full circles the investigation back to its beginning, but in reverse: no longer the assimilation of the dominant culture by the Other, but in the suspension of long-established directions of dictation of power structures through modes of dress, result of a public health crisis which forces another marker of otherness, a "Sino-sign" (Phu, 2011:133), the surgical mask, into becoming a fact of daily life among Westerners. A short piece reflecting on the double standards exposed as a result of our current circumstances, the argument presented in that final contribution is a culmination of what is discussed throughout this thesis: that objects with similar functions, manifesting similar values and narratives, can be invested with polemic contracts that are constructed, and serve clear power agendas and the maintenance of socio-cultural imbalances.

The outputs described in the previous paragraphs present yet another contribution to the fields of Communication, Fashion Theory and Semiotics, which is a study of dress that breaks free from the need for analysing the visual elements of clothing—an approach that seems to dominate the use of Semiotics in the field of Fashion Studies. Returning to Barthes' address of clothing in their multiple substances—written, image, and real (Barthes, 1967)—without, however, deflecting into the study of the language of Fashion (Barthes, 1967, Greimas, 2000), the articles utilise the apparatus for studying language, reoperating the theory to accommodate material objects and the practices developed around their use which are understood *as* language and *as* communication, instead of focusing on the discourses *about* dress. Regarding the trajectory from *The corset in Western fashion* to "Absence and presence in the 19th and 20th-century Fashion Systems", perhaps the body of work presents yet

another, fourth dissolution of oppositions: the one contrasting Fashion and Communication.

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