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Laces and ties: fashion, identity and gender in the Rio de Janeiro illustrated press – 1900 – 1914

Abstract

This article brings reflection on the advent of change in women´s behaviour, which associated with new clothing styles created a modern feminine identity, in tune with Modernity. The new female identities, in Brazil as throughout most of the Western world, sparked men´s feelings of rage and discomfort – remarkably visible in publications of the press, mostly produced by male professionals. Based on visual images found in Rio de Janeiro´s illustrated magazines from the early twentieth century, a period marked by urban transformation, the advent of feminist movements and the illustrated press itself, we will analyse how the professionals depicted the relation between clothing and behaviour of the women who pressed to enter the labour market in those early days of that century.

Keywords: fashion, identity, gender

Volume 3 Issue 4 - 2018

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Received: May 04, 2018 | **Published:** August 28, 2018

Introduction

In the visual depictions published in the magazines of these new groups of women, we can see that appearance and fashion became characterizing features of women who refused the housewife role and were therefore seen as frantic, transgressive, disobedient to institutions and infringing the social axioms that separated the spheres by gender, class and in Brazil, also by race. Thus, unsubmissive roles in various social groups reaffirmed themselves and women constituted one of these groups. As of 1900, when the carioca[1] women seeking education and professionalization put on her hat, tie or vest, she made these items of clothing a symbol, not only of glamour and success, but also of emancipation. By doing so, the new women´s clothing style presented in the carioca press became a weapon in the struggle for appearance and consequently, a tool used by male chroniclers in illustrated magazines against women´s fight for social rights and liberation from class oppression. The chronological markers are delimited from the beginning of the illustrated magazine's circulation in Rio de Janeiro *(O Malho,* 1902*; Fon-Fon!,* 1907*; Careta,* 1908) until the end of *La Belle Époque*.[1] After 1914, especially after the end of World War I in 1918, women´s new way of dressing and behave were disseminated among women of different social classes and groups.

Insubordinate women

The French poet an art critic Charles Baudelaire, in his famous essay *The painter of modern life,* published in *Le Figaro* in 1864, described the woman as one of the beauties that came into view along with Modernity in the Western world. For him, the enchantment and seduction employed by the modern woman originated from the intrinsic relation between beauty and appearance, a relation translated into the "binomial women and attire".[2] For Baudelaire, the historic experience of modernity melds with the aesthetic experience of modernity. This amalgam pinpoints the problem of modernity, initially formulated in the ambit of aesthetics and art criticism, in which context fashion played a prominent role. For Baudelaire, only fashion embodied his concept of modernity, where the present does not make sense in opposition to the past, but in the intertwining between the ephemeral and the eternal. Only fashion would synthesize, symbolize and concretize these two concepts to perfection, which is why Baudelaire elevated it to a founding element of modern self-consciousness. For the French writer, fashion was therefore a key-element in his reflection on modern beauty and identities.

Another important issue reflected on in this article refers to the relation between identity and clothes. Identities are intimately linked to clothing because clothes are an empiric reality of dressed bodies inasmuch as they express and shape the identity, imbuing it with an explicit material reality. Clothes link the biological body to the social being and the public to the private. For Monneyron,[3] clothing forces us to recognize that the human body is more than a biological entity: it is also an organism of culture and a cultural artefact. Thus, clothing constitutes the border between I and the Not-I.

In *On psychology of fashion: a sociologic study* (1895), the *fin de siècle* sociologist Georg Simmel identified fashion as one of the constitutive elements of social hierarchy. According to Simmel, fashion is born in the upper classes and descends progressively to the lower ones, due to social competition and a process of imitation and differentiation that reinforces the social hierarchy. In another study, *Woman and Fashion* (1895), Simmel draws attention to the fact that women adhere to fashion with singular exuberance, given their weak position in the social hierarchy – the position of inferiority they always have been doomed to hold. Thus, "fashion would be the valve that would sense women´s need to distinguish and enhance their individuality to a higher or lesser extent, when deprived of such satisfaction in other areas".[4] Because, women´s existence as "social outcast, declared or latent, arouse in her an aversion against everything that is already legalized, firmly established. (…) in the continuous aspiration of new fashions (…) there is an aesthetic expression of destructive drive that seems to be inherent to all outcast existences, while still not totally enslaved".[4]

Competition between social classes is for Simmel the drive of fashion, as it also was for Pierre Bourdieu, who in his text *The Tailor and his Fashion Brand* (2012) pointed to clothing's role as a class distinction marker, showing how clothing is an aspect of cultural capital, an element in the way the elites establish, keep

[1]Carioca means the inhabitant of Rio de Janeiro.

and reproduce their positions of power by means of reinforcing the relation between class domination and subordination. For the author, fashion creations serve as differentiation tools, first among segments of one and the same class and, subsequently, among different social classes. However, more recent studies of fashion have challenged this reflection based on the competition between social classes. The democratization of fashion and the ascension of subcultures and street styles have made the dynamic of social classes less central. Other identity aspects are increasingly more emphasized in the reflection on fashion construction. Among these, gender has stood out as the most significant one. Contemporary theorists like Entwistle[5] & Williams[6] present fashion as an element essentially related to gender. By asserting that clothing has been used throughout history to hide or enhance sexual differences in its most intrinsically biological sense, they also make gender a marker of clothing codes. Such analysis show how fashion helps reproducing gender as a form of corporal style, thus revealing the existence of a complex interaction between sexual bodies and gender identification, as well as understanding gender ambivalence as an essential aspect of fashion.

On the other hand, contemporary reflection on gender and fashion has been produced from the feminist point of view. For the second wave feminists – emerging in the 1960s – fashion was an important manner of gender identification which embodied practices aiming at objectifying and limiting women, thus reinforcing her cultural link to narcissism and triviality. More recently, feminists influenced by post-modern analysis have developed a less negative view on fashion, recognizing the inescapability of questions regarding style and cultural formation in relation to body and looks. The new feminist thinkers began to see fashion as part of a female culture, a sphere of pleasure and expression that goes beyond replication of patriarchy, capitalism and class domination, inasmuch as fashion also defines and redefines gender borders. Historically, until the end of the Old Regime of the eighteenth century, sexual differences were not strongly signalled in the way of clothing. Gender differences came to be deeply evident in clothing throughout the nineteenth century, along with the advent of Modernity. In the bourgeois society, clothing became an important tool for sexual differentiation and the upper class woman´s appearance was rather an artistic production. Clothes became part of a woman´s personality; and clothing became a constitutive element in the social mobility process, as it entered the household economy and, at the time, marriage was the only way to grant a woman economic security.

The new role of clothing extended beyond appearance as it got woven into identity. This was the beginning of the Female Self seen as a work of art. Clothing and frills merged with beauty and kindness built the ideal woman in the modern bourgeois society in the nineteenth century, sparking what art critic John Berger[7] classified as "women´s social presence". For Berger, "women´s social presence" revealed itself in Modernity "through gestures, voice, opinion, expression, clothing, likes, evoking in men a sensation of physical emanation, an aura", while "a man´s social presence" is expressed by his power.[7] The advent of huge modern urban centres in the Western world, throughout the nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth, created, as we have seen, a new aesthetics, studied by Baudelaire and Simmel. New forms of beauty associated with new forms of identity were appropriate in the new urban landscape. These were forms that matched masculine greatness with female enchantment and allure. In the modern urban universe, women of all social classes now made the streets a place for pleasure, exhibition and voyeurism. People´s show-off in the city streets and the consumption of luxury goods created an aesthetics of seduction that built a universe full of symbols that served the purpose of subverting anonymity: in this urban universe, occupied by an anonymous crowd of people, it was important to socially distinguish oneself and clothes became keys to behaviour and personality. Thus, clothes constituted powerful symbols in the art of dissimulation and disguise.

The novelty of women showing off in public occasioned a powerful exchange of glances between men and women, engendering the practice of "scopophilia":[8] a female visual experience that simultaneously involves the pleasure of looking and men´s admiring gaze. This experience, according to Berger,[7] translates the visual relation between men and women in Modernity, which is laden with male power, inasmuch as "men act and women appear".[7] Practicing "scopophilia", women´s way of looking is the same as men´s, in the sense that women see themselves through the eyes of men.[8] But the correspondence between the male visual act of judgement and the female practice of self-policing confined women in a limited space of social action – therefore, even when stepping into the public space, the majority of women continued living under male tutelage, chained to the ideology of domesticity. The practice of "scopophilia", however, presents a double dynamism inasmuch as, at the same time that a man watches over a woman, he also gives her pleasure. Besides, the identities (female or male) are multidimensional, hybrid and in constant transformation. The feminist theories of post-structuralism have shown to what extent gender identity and subjectivity always have been built socially, thus rejecting the categorization of women as a homogeneous group, along with the view that the feminine and femininity are unilateral conceptions.[9] In these analysis, the identities are not fixed, static or binary, but discursively negotiated and renegotiated.[9]

Two assertions apply to the female context in Modernity: the first shows that women establish themselves as individuals; the second draws attention to the fact that the modern street – from the middle of the nineteenth century till the first decades of the twentieth - was not an exclusive place for upper class women, who, shrouded in "garland and lace",[2] turned the public space into a place for pleasure and showing off. Lower middle class women also walked the modern streets seeking a place in the labour market. For these women, apart from being a place for pleasure and showing off, the street was also a working area – which until around the 1880s was reserved for men. Many women of the petty bourgeois were engaged in the feminist subculture; they aspired for a redefinition of women´s place and role in the bourgeois society, seeking accesses to education, the labour market and full citizenship. Men perceived the women that aspired to enter the public in search of work and professional realization as marginal, because they escaped the rules of domesticity established in benefit to men, in line with the dominant male ideology. By redefining their position in the social hierarchy through education and work, these women transmuted from objects to subjects, breaking free of male tutelage.

In this context, women´s clothes and looks, aside from serving as indicators of status and distinction among individuals and social classes, they also became regulating elements of conduct and habits.[10] The women who started to get access to education and the labour market in the 1880s in Europe and in the United States, were seen as marginal and ridiculed in the press, above all due to their clothing style, quite contrary to the bourgeois style rooted in domesticity. Their

style, classified by fashion sociologist Diana Crane as "alternative" and "non-conventional", consisted in the use of items from men´s wardrobe, such as ties, hats, jackets, vests and shirts, mixed with items from women´s own wardrobe. This style was mainly, but not exclusively, adopted by young women in search of independence. They were mostly students, independent professionals and scholars, along with primary school teachers, saleswomen, telephone operators, typists and office workers in general. In the early twentieth century, the big capitals in the Western world were taken by women who adopted this wardrobe and they grew in number as more and more women became educated and professionals. The history of female sportswear shows that men´s wear started to be used in the middle of the nineteenths century by upper class ladies in Europe and the United States, for a ride on a horse or a bicycle or for walks and picnics. Later, this kind of female sportswear was adopted outside the sporting arena by lower middle class women, who were entering the labour market in professions until then considered male territory. Therefore, according to Simmel and Bourdieu´s analysis, we understand that the sportswear initially used by upper class women spread downward through the pyramid of social stratification, creating the core of the alternative style that progressively would be adopted in everyday life by middle class and working women - as of the second half of the nineteenth century in Europe and in the United States and in the early twentieth century in Brazil. The style was discrete, but seemed to masculinize the female figure, as their clothing had a touch of business men´s wear. The combination of men´s business attire and women´s customary items insinuated respectability and seriousness associated with non-domestic work. But, by blending the established dress codes for each gender, the new dressing style seems to have aroused, especially in men, certain feelings of discomfort in relation to women who apparently were eliminating their sexuality and with it, their gender. Thus, women at the late nineteenth century and the two first decades of the twentieth had a choice: she could dress the professional way or chose to look sexually attractive.

Professional women: the imperfect female

In the early twentieth century, a large number of women began to occupy the new urban space of Rio de Janeiro, after the urban reform plan undertaken by engineer Pereira Passos and the public health physician, Oswaldo Cruz, from 1903 to 1906. The Central Avenue and surrounding areas were made into a mecca for shopping and showing off. Here, "scopophilia" and voyeurism also turned into visual economy tools and were directly related to women´s universe and fashion. In August 1909, a *Fon-Fon!* columnist described the new waves of madams and misses that he, as a Baudelairean *flaneur,* saw strolling on the sidewalks of the Avenue, getting off *streetcars* or wandering about around Rua do Ouvidor, showing off their "rustling skirts of silk or laces, fine essences (…) mind-blowing *dessous,* lacquer shoes or slim Havana-coloured, tall boots". For the Carioca high-class women and men, it was the female beauty ideal *la parisienne* who sparked visions of rebellion and freedom and not the North American woman. There was no such thing as women´s freedom, least of all feminism, not only seen as a symbol of unsubmissiveness, but also as a demonstration of exaltation of poor white or black women from the lower middle class, who hated men and wanted to occupy their space in the labour market. But here too, some women made it to the universities, others started to work in the trades and offices and others again, especially primary school teachers, started to join the ranks of the feminist movement that had started to reverberated here in the second half of the nineteenth century.[11]

Thus, the early twentieth century is also the beginning of important transformations in the social hierarchy, as the social places established for each gender got mixed up as the lower middle class women progressively entered the labour market. On the one hand, these changes were accompanied by an ample discussion about women´s rights, such as the conquer of full citizenship, lead by a group of female feminists; and on the other hand, by an ample press coverage, which in text and photographs linked the female achievements – for the better or the worse – to what they called "Feminism in Brazil" or "Our Feminism". Since the nineteenth century, photographic images depicted female behavioural styles associated with clothing styles. In the early twentieth century, the widespread use of photography in illustrated magazines created a new way of looking and rates a woman´s beauty. According to fashion historian Lou Taylor[12] the passion for black and white photography is truly modernist. The photographic image captured the sense of modern clothing and thereby influenced women, the main fashion consumers and magazine readers. Photography turned into a new art of public depicting of an individual, making him more aware of his appearance. From the visual records encountered in the illustrated magazines that began to circulate in Rio de Janeiro in the early twentieth century, we see that the wardrobe coming into use, especially by the primary school teachers, was quite different from the upper class women´s clothing. This category of working women evoked a paradox. On the one hand, they were quite well respected due to their function as educators. Quite often, they appeared in the illustrated magazines in columns reserved for the carioca *grand monde,* like *Fon-Fon!´s* "Our Instantaneous ones". In the photograph published in the July 1907 edition of *Fon-Fon!* (Figure1**)**, we see a group of elegantly dressed female teachers. The women in the photograph taken in the Central Avenue seem to mirror the same behaviour they kept in the classroom, as described in her reflections on the female teachers´ behaviour in class. According to the author, a teacher in class kept a closed face; she showed no smile, no affection, no corporal contact and no demonstration of sexuality. This strictness was proof of her immaculate behaviour. Looking at the photographic image, we can infer that the teachers' behaviour in public reproduced the atmosphere in the classroom.

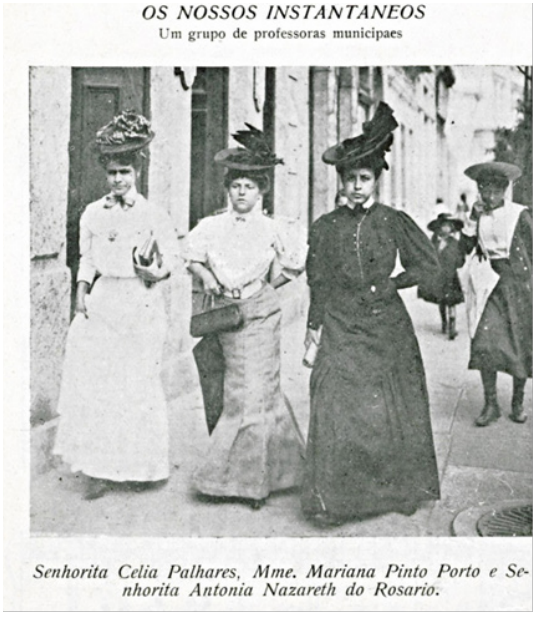
OS NOSSOS INSTANTANEOS
Um grupo de professoras municipaes
Senhorita Celia Palhares, Mme. Mariana Pinto Porto e Senhorita Antonia Nazareth do Rosario.

Figure 1: Group of elegantly dressed female teachers.

Their clothes too, although elegant, were composed of items of evident seriousness, like items from men´s wardrobe mixed with traditional items from women´s wardrobe: skirt and blouse, or a long-sleeved shirt with folded and buttoned cuffs; high-buttoned collar; a large scarf around the neck, *foulards* tightened by a broche or a bow-tie; and a belt to mark the waist. The first young woman at the left is carrying books; the one in the middle and the one on the right are holding paper rolls, items indicating women with access to education and the labour market. We can see that the teachers clothing is different from upper class women´s clothing, as it embodies the affirmation of a femininity that evoked strictness and represented the social function of that category of women: the workers. However, if we on the one hand see images of elegant primary school teachers photographed and presented by the illustrated magazines in columns reserved for the upper class, we on the other hand need to be aware that a great number of primary school teachers lived in difficult conditions: Due to their meagre salaries – half of what men were paid - they were forced to live a frugal life. In "A feminist´s newspaper", a 1909 chronicle published in 1933 in the posthumous book *Complex souls,* author Carmen Dolores outlines the sad and pathetic image of a feminist primary school teacher. The person, who is living on the brink of her economic possibilities, feels like a failure involved in an inglorious battle. Sitting in front of the mirror, she correlates her sad image with her almost indigent clothes and even compares her looks with that of a man. Besides being "thin, battered and wasted", the poor teacher was dressed in "worn-out low boots, a used hat and a navy blue, frayed *jaquette,* faded on the back from the sweaty long walks on summer days"; and, like a man, "she took double steps and checked the time".[13] Thus, the description the author draws of the feminist teacher highlights a femininity that is totally opposed to the upper class ideal of femininity and therefore, "she deserved nothing but scorn".[13]

What do these visual and textual representations reveal about the working woman seeking emancipation? While building a new female identity, the behaviour and clothing of each group are distinction markers between classes and social groups, as Georg Simmel and Pierre Bourdieu tell us; but they also indicate a new social behavioural style that escape the norms held as natural for women. The upper class white women embodied, in the photographic images, a female identity marked by domesticity and the traditional segregation of sexual roles; their model was the French fashion and the *parisienne.* Women from the working class, from the petty bourgeoisie and the feminists, however, built their femininity by bending the rules. The perception of this rule-bending was given by new ways of behaviour in public, together with a clothing style that related social belonging and behaviour to clothing. Although a lot of teachers lived in quite modest conditions, their work nevertheless gave them more economic independency and freedom to move around. Above all, their entry into the labour world encouraged the stepwise entry of other women into careers considered masculine, such as independent professions – an area women were shut out from until the 1880s.

The photograph of young students at Fine Arts (Figure 2) in the painting group of Eliseu Visconti at ENBA – National School of Fine Arts - published in the *Fon-Fon!* Magazine in 1910 shows a group of three boys and four girls. All of them are posing in irreverent postures and clothing, using corporal language to show how they were against the rules of society and good education. They seem to want to show the photographer that they were living a happy life of leisure, unbound by social conventions. From left to right, we see student painter Isolina Machado wearing a long time; the fourth girl, Fedora Rego Monteiro, is wearing a big jacket. Both are dressed as modern young girls; masculine items complemented by items of the feminine attire, represented by the waist tightened by a broad belt, long pinned-up hair, wide sleeved blouse and delicately tight skirts. For those young women, jacket and tie were symbols of rebellion and emancipation. Something similar appears in the countless images of young ladies entering universities depicted by magazines labelled "Our Feminism". These images show that, at graduation ceremonies, the young women were using unisex clothing – cutaways, high-collar shirts and bowties, as well as short hair – that, from the gender point of view, empathises an apparent equality between the genders. In the photo captions, the columnist emphasizes that, at around eight to nine o´clock in the evening, he would see the young students on the streetcars in Lapa (vizinhança), on their way back from the *Pedagogium,* or walking around Largo de São Francisco, carrying their paper rolls. Both images and captions confirm that not only did the young women in the early twentieth century move around in public while striving to get an education and a place in the society, but they also associate these achievements to their clothing, quite different from the upper class women´s fashion.

Figure 2: Young students at Fine Arts.

Mirtes de Campos was the first woman to enter Law School of the Federal District at the time, still in the 1880s. In 1910, she was already the Director of the National Ministry of Education and also considered a great criminalist. The illustrated magazines often photographed the lawyer strolling down the Central Avenue like a lady, dressed in elegant belle-époque fashion clothes. High waisted tulip skirts, lace-embroidered *chemisette* – according to descriptions in the fashion editorials - with high folded collar and a huge hat tied with a big ribbon. Mirtes´ professional background confronted the reigning ideals of femininity: she was a lawyer defending women and the working class; she declared herself in favour of divorce and was, above all, an active feminist. However, dressing as an elegant upper class lady, she seemed to give continuity to the English suffragettes´ tactic, who dressed in the latest Paris fashion to affirm their femininity, at a time when feminists were considered manly women. Nevertheless, one element was not in tune with Mirtes` feminine and elegant bourgeois clothing, showing her professional identity: she

was always carrying paper rolls, as most of the women who worked outside their homes in professions that required access to education. Due to her feminist background, the detractor's didn´t leave Mirtes alone. While the photographs depict her as an elegant and feminine lady, in a space reserved to personalities of the carioca grand monde, the caricaturist Klixto, for example, presented her in his drawings with masculine traits. In Klixto´s view, due to her profession, Mirtes was a paladin of feminism – or in other words, a manly woman.

In 1910, the Feminine Republican Party was founded in Brazil (PRF). Its founders were primary school teacher and the first expert on Brazilian hinterlands, Leolinda Daltro,[14] poet Gilka Machado, described by a countryman as a "fair little mulatta" and the first lady at the time, Orsina da Fonseca. The party, whose mentors were intellectualized women, also recruited a great number of primary school teachers, who saw it as an urgent task to organize a party in favour of women´s right to vote, which they considered the only possible way they could fight discrimination against women and get access to the labour market. A photograph (Figure 3) published in *Revista de Semana* (Weekly magazine) in September 1911 of a demonstration promoted by the PRF in the Catete neighbourhood, shows the party`s young militants. According to the newspaper *O Paíz* (The Country) in an edition of October 21, 1911, the PRF militants got together in demonstrations and other public acts wearing pins that identified them as a group: white clothes, banners, badges and the party´s banner. The newspaper also informs that one of PRF´s tactics was to mark their presence in the Chamber of Deputies, in the Senate and at all civic celebrations. But taking a closer look at Figure 3 evokes some questions: what would make a group of female militant feminists, racially mestizo and from the lower middle class, adopt as their self-image upper class women´s clothes? And why did they choose white as the group´s identity colour?

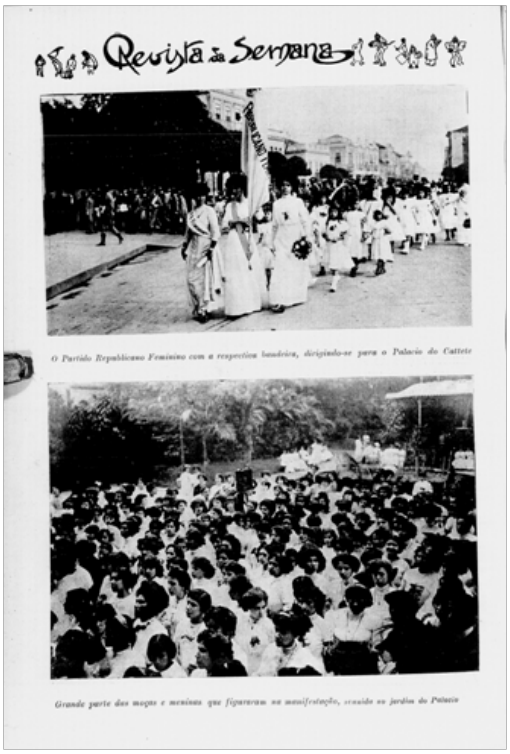

Figure 3: A demonstration promoted by the PRF in the Catete neighbourhood.

We know that, at the late nineteenth century, white had become the symbol of the English suffragettes in their campaign for women´s right to vote. Therefore, one of the possible explanations why the Brazilian PRF militants adopted white as their colour would be as an allusion to the English suffragettes. On the other hand, these militant women knew they were being judged, not only by their attitudes, but also by their looks. So the answer to the two questions above may be that they decided to dress elegantly, according to the standards of the upper class fashion, to show that they were not manly women; and to use the colour white to allude to the feminine pureness both in private and in public, also making it an identifying feature for what they were fighting for. In this case, we may interpret the looks and the clothes of the PRF militants, not as a sign of conformity with the upper class women´s standards, but as a deliberate strategy – and as such, a political mechanism to challenge the definitions of femininity and citizenship at the time. Reflecting more deeply on the young militant´s clothes, we notice that they also may be signs of women´s political intervention into men´s universe, by creating essential feminine looks. Therefore, we may say that interpreting the looks of these women as conventionally feminine and conclude that they in some ways were at odds with the intentions of their political action, would be to miss the point. Women´s relation to their looks may be interpreted in view of Simone de Beauvoir`s *The Second Sex* (1970), where the author asks herself "what is it to be a woman?" which she answers herself: "You are not born a woman, you become one".[15] To be a woman, in the present context, is to become active in the public realm and, thus, refuse the limitations of the exclusively private sphere, acting freely in exclusively male domains like the street. In this case, a woman is not in the street to show off to men´s gaze, but to claim her social rights and spaces as an individual using a political strategy of performativity.

Then, if demonstrations - as women´s performative spectacle - combined ways of dressing with social behaviour of a social group of women, not exclusively upper class, the act may reveal a possible subversion through dramatization in public. The clothes they wore, apparently in conformity with upper class women´s standards at the time, imply a different function in the dramatization: a political strategy – as a protest and/or as a demonstration of an explicit political awareness that reveals itself through shared identity by means of dressing. Judith Butler[16] states that identities are constructed through repetitive acts. Consequently, the clothes and bodies in performative acts are performative political mechanisms that at that time defied definitions of female identity and citizenship. Saleswomen and typists disputing employment with men adopted the same strategy as the PRF militants. The typists, by the way, were the workers who more than any other affronted men at the time. In an ad for the Remington typist school published in the May 1910 edition of *Fon-Fon!* (Figure 4), we see a typist wearing pinstriped skirt and shirt (tailored pieces, with typical cutting, modelling and textile especially used in the confection of men´s wear) and tie. In their process for entering the labour market, the typists disputed employments with men and frequently managed to squeeze them out. Male candidates who lost out sent protest missives to the newspapers in 1911, one candidate argued in a letter to the newspaper *A Noite*: "only Brazilian citizens can sign up for the typist selection and only persons with full civil and political rights are citizens, which means that people who has no right to vote are not citizens". In general, though, the press saw women typists as excellent workers. It is true that their salaries were quite a bit inferior to that of men; the work position offered little or no opportunity for personal growth and above all, women constituted

an easy workforce for male supervisors to handle.[11] Nevertheless, the important issue for our analyse here is the fact that middle class women conquered their workspace in offices, which gave them more economic and behavioural freedom, including wearing clothes that evoked their independence.

Figure 4: A typist wearing pinstriped skirt.

Conclusion

The caricaturist Raul Pederneiras, a fierce antifeminist and opponent to any female professional performance, registers in the *Fon-Fon!* magazine (Figure 5) a caricature of the PRF suffragettes campaigning for women´s voting rights in 1914. The image illustrates the arguments mentioned above. We see that the caricaturist uses clothing, social class, age and race as visual markers for this new class of women. The image shows that fashion, apart from serving as a distinction code of gender construction, also identifies women´s dressing styles with their behaviour. In the foreground, Pederneiras presents a group of women that includes matrons and young militants, one of them black. In the background, we see a group of women armed with sticks. The women in the foreground are dressed differently than upper class women. As this different clothing style in the drawing seems to be associated to the mixture of class and race, the image inevitably draws our attention to the social diversity of women taking part in new women´s groups that were more frequently present in the urban space; included in these groups are the dreadful feminists who, with their sticks, frighten the caricaturist, as we can spot in the lower left-hand of the image. This way, Pederneiras reveals in his drawing that the new groups of women that were entering the public space in search of education and work were socially and racially heterogeneous. It also shows that the clothing style these groups adopted served as an affirmation of a new female identity, which transmuted into a political tool women took hold of in their struggle to move up in the social hierarchy. These findings lead us to conclude that the struggle between men and women in the early twentieth century not only expressed a war between the sexes, but a conflict of gender, class and race; and that, by associating new ways of dressing with new social behaviour, the clothing adopted by female students or workers served as a political weapon in their fight for emancipation.[16]

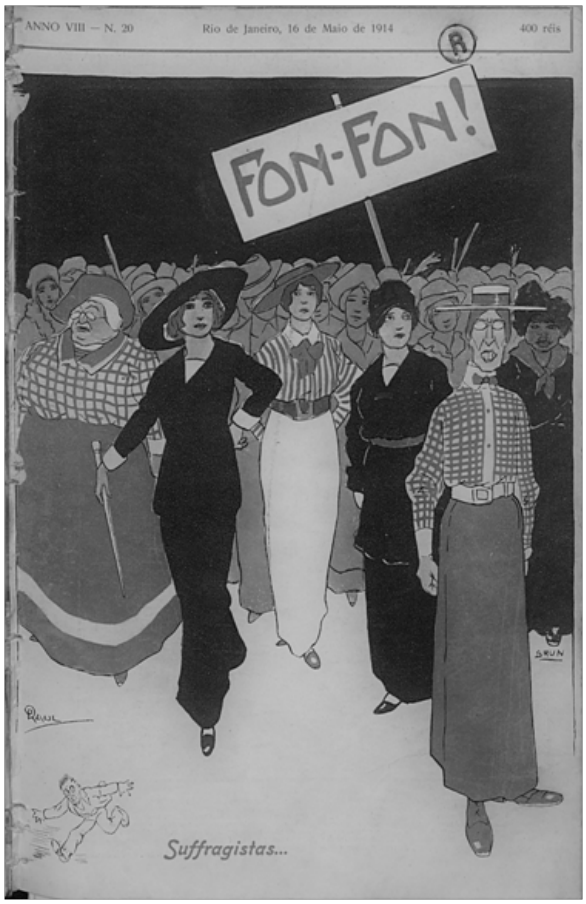

Figure 5: A caricature of the PRF suffragettes campaigning for women´s voting rights in 1914.

Acknowledgements

None.

Conflict of interest

Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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Citation: Oliveira C. Laces and ties: fashion, identity and gender in the Rio de Janeiro illustrated press – 1900 – 1914. *J His Arch & Anthropol Sci.* 2018;3(4):609–615. DOI: 10.15406/jhaas.2018.03.00139