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Written Fashion

Gurli Rosenbröijer's Fashion Newsletters from Paris 1949–1957

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Abstract

The fashion newsletters by the Finnish journalist Gurli Rosenbröijer were analyzed in the context of the concept of "written fashion" and the history of "the golden age of couture", the heyday of Paris *haute couture* fashion.

Rosenbröijer was a Finnish citizen who lived in Paris for decades and was thoroughly acculturated to French society and values. She was a member of an association of accredited journalists who followed French *haute couture* in particular and fashion in general, as well as related fields of industry such as materials and accessories.

She introduced her Nordic readers to the relationship between Paris fashion houses and journalism. She described collections and drew conclusions of the proposed styles of a fashion season. Rosenbröijer engaged her readers with the concept of *haute couture*, illuminating its core features as well as explaining its differences from unlisted *couture*, *"hors concours."* At least initially, critical of confection, ie. factory-made anonymous clothing, Rosenbröijer came to witness its rise in quality and volume, as well as the emergence *prêt-à-porter,* ready-made clothes of high quality.

The work and role of mannequins in the fashion business was of a special interest to Rosenbröijer. In her view, it was vitally important to live permanently in Paris in order to understand the birth and slow change of fashion, which was based on the interplay between the *Parisiennes* and *couturiers*. Her conception of fashion was very different from that of fashion as a short cycle or fashion as one look at a time.

An ardent Francophile, Rosenbröijer devoted ample space to praising the excellence of French culture and elegance as one of its prime results.

The central idea and motive of these newsletters was to mediate the Paris atmosphere to Finnish and Swedish fashion creators. As a gifted writer, Rosenbröijer captured the atmosphere in an optimal way.

Keywords: fashion, haute couture, prêt-à-porter, ready-made clothes, journalism, "written fashion"

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1 Introduction

The Golden Age of Couture is not only the title of an important and enlightening fashion publication (Wilcox 2007), but also a term that describes the post-war (1947–1957) rise of *haute couture* in Paris, as well as the recovery of *couture* in other countries.

After the Second World War, Finnish borders were open and people could get a passport in order to travel abroad freely. Yet, traveling was not easy, even for wealthy people. There were strict limitations to exchanging foreign currency. Traveling from the North was expensive and, at first, slow. When traveling to Central Europe, Finnish people first crossed to Germany or Sweden by passenger ship and then continued by train. In 1952, the new larger Helsinki airport was opened, and flying became a more usual means of reaching Paris during the 1950s.[1]

In the absence of possibilities of "sniffing the Paris air" personally and frequently, there was a special need and appetite for news from the fashion capital, and not only news but also a well-mediated atmosphere. It was to this need that Gurli Rosenbröijer's fashion newsletters responded.

Gurli Rosenbröijer, a Finnish journalist and author, sent monthly fashion newsletters from Paris to Helsinki from the end of 1948 to the autumn of 1969. Thanks to two *couturiers*, Aune Paasikivi and Riitta Immonen, who have preserved copies of the newsletters, there are two separate sets of them available. One set comprises the Finnish-language newsletters from number 11 to number 100, spanning from October 1949 through November 1957. The other set consists of newsletters from number 33, November 1951 to number 221, September 1969. The former set is almost complete with only three newsletters missing from 1957. The latter set, mostly in Swedish, is less complete.[2]

This study is based on analysis of a total of 647 pages of 89 fashion newsletters from the 1949–1957 collection, which coincide with the "golden age of couture". The writer of the newsletters lived and worked at the very heart of Paris fashion. She saw practically all the collections presented by the *grand couturiers* and milliners,[3] some of whom she knew personally. But that was only part of the news material. More importantly, she lived amidst *couture* personnel and clients, several of whom she also knew personally.[4] Furthermore, she was one of the four foreign journalists who were members of the A. (Art) E. (Elegance) C. (Couture). The A.E.C. was formed by 50 (later 80) news chroniclers, who worked

permanently in Paris.[5] In addition to *couture* collections, they were invited to learn first-hand information about the fabrics of each season and textile novelties.[6] They also followed closely in the first row the development and gradual acceptance of fashionable mass-made clothes.

A prime example of Rosenbröijer's position in the inner circle of Paris fashion was that she received immediate news of Christians Dior's unexpected and premature death in 1957. At that moment, she was in Spain but returned at once to Paris in order to attend the funeral.[7]

Haute couture of the 1950s has been described and analyzed in numerous publications, both in general histories of fashion and histories and biographies of *couturiers*. The seasonal flow of fashion collections is not the key point of this text, although it also appears occasionally. My aim is to investigate what Gurli Rosenbröijer found important to communicate in writing to Finnish fashion professionals about Paris fashion and French elegance—in addition to providing descriptions of *couture* collections—and how she explained the birth and life cycle of fashion.

This study does not cover every topic of the newsletters. There are quite interesting themes on e.g. fabrics, hats, and accessories still to delve into. Here, the focus is on the fashion of female clothing, its creators, presenters, and wearers.

Although there is a great deal of time-bound content in the newsletters, the contemporary reader will also find plenty of wisdom about elegance that is valuable for learning even now, 60–70 years after the publication of the newsletters—or, indeed, any time.

2 Written fashion

The term "written fashion" describes the corpus of the analyzed newsletters perfectly. The newsletters consist of written information with no drawings or photographs accompanying them, and they are all about fashion. Even pure gossip, which has no direct connection with the styles of the season, provide some motivation for understanding the world in which Paris fashions—women's dress styles, to put it simply—were born and circulated. The term is also a quotation from *The Fashion System* by Roland Barthes (1967/1983), whose concepts and findings both do and do not fit research on Rosenbröijer's texts.

In the beginning, Barthes wished to apply semiotics (semiology) to women's clothing which was seen in everyday life. He failed in that project and "soon realized that a choice had

to be made between the analysis of the real (or visual) system and that of the written system" (ibid: x). He chose to study written texts, i.e. fashion magazines from 1958 and 1959—the years immediately following the time frame examined in this study. He was convinced enough that what he found described women's fashion so totally that he came to title his publication *The Fashion System*.

The term "fashion system" is continuously associated with Barthes. As will be seen later, although some of his findings were inaccurate and misleading already at the time when the study was first published in France in 1967, part of his analysis and terminology continues to be usable for fashion studies. Yet, Barthes' word choices can be criticized, because his perspective on fashion was narrow, as it was limited to magazines only. Drawing from many sources, Yunia Kawamura (2004) argues that the fashion system consists of fashion professionals who are organized, have power, and who transform clothing into fashion. Among these operators are designers, organizers of fashion shows, fashion gatekeepers and organizations. While Rosenbröijer hardly mentioned fashion magazines as such, journalists and the other operators were repeatedly present in her texts. Thus, she indeed wrote about the fashion system in this broad sense.

Despite his rigid structural approach, there is a certain insight in Barthes' (1983: 3–5) notion that fashion exists in three distinct structures: 1) real clothing, 2) image-clothing, and 3) written clothing. He justified the total focus on written clothing by way of its structural purity (ibid: 8). While Barthes carefully avoided any contact with real clothing, at least he was fair in referring real clothing as the "mother tongue," from which the other two structures are translated. The ontological distinction of structures concerning the circulation of fashion is interesting for two reasons. First, when a fashion was, in the 1950s, introduced as real clothing, such as that in a *défilé* of a *haute couture* house, the diffusion of fashion relied to a great extent on its translation into another structure by journalists of that time. Second, it is important to realize that fashion is a social fact, and launching it does not necessarily depend upon the existence of the artifact. The origin could as well be a verbal description or an imaginary illustration—which was true in the 1950s, and is even more so in the virtual reality of today.

To Barthes, real clothing was burdened with practical considerations, such as protection, modesty, and adornment, whereas written clothing resided completely in its meaning. The latter was unencumbered by any parasitic function and entailed no vague temporality (ibid: 7–8). Real clothing was excluded because "in order to analyze the real garment in systematic

terms, i.e., in terms sufficiently formal to account for all analogous garments, we should no doubt have to work our way back to the actions which governed its manufacture" (ibid: 5).

Gurli Rosenbröijer did not analyze in systematic terms all real garments she saw, but indeed, worked very close to the manufacture of the garment which she wrote about, whether it was the construction methods of *haute couture*, factories of developing mass-production or excursions arranged by fabric manufacturers and dealers.

3 Gurli Rosenbröijer and her fashion newsletters

Gurli Rosenbröijer was a Finnish journalist and author who spent most of her life in France. Gurli Sofie Ingeborg Sevón was born in Helsinki on April 16, 1892 to a Swedish-speaking family of businessman Axel W. Sevón and his wife Sonja Noschis.[8] The reasons for her early contacts with France and the French language are not known, but she had definitely spent enough time in France to become perfectly fluent in French and acculturated to French life, culture and upper-class values. The reason may have been her father's business affairs. She rarely wrote about her own clothes but mentioned, when later writing about Moussia—a famous mannequin of La Maison Worth—that after the First World War, her friends purchased at Worth's and she herself once ordered an evening dress from Worth's, perhaps just because Moussia had carried it so well in a *défilé*.[9]

In one of her fashion newsletters from the summer of 1951, Rosenbröijer wrote that she knew this unique nation so well "thanks to the happy fact that in my youth I could live not only in Paris but in the countryside as well." She mentioned the château, located 14 km outside of Orleans, which had been her second home outside Paris for 28 years. She especially lamented its poor condition after the German troops had occupied it during the Second World War.[10] In several other messages she mentioned her friendships, which had lasted for decades, and her adult French goddaughter.[11] Even though she often mentioned her vacations with her friends in their country houses and mansions in different parts of France, she rarely revealed anything of her or her friends' lives in them. Actually, she ended one of her newsletters with a sentence: "The high iron gates close the world behind me, and now begins a story that I will never write, a story of my private life in France."[12]

The young Gurli Sevón went to school in Finland, and she graduated from a high school in Helsinki in 1910.[13] Soon after her graduation, she started her university studies. According to her M.A. degree diploma from the University of Helsinki, issued in Swedish in November 1914, her major subject was Finnish and Scandinavian literature, and the other subjects were esthetics and modern literature, art history, and Swedish language and literature.[14]

In March 1916, Gurli Sevón married Edvin Bertil Rosenbröijer. He was born in 1887 in Baku, Azerbaijan, where his father worked for Nobel's oil company. At the age of two, he moved with his parents to their native country, Finland, first to Vyborg and then to Helsinki.[15] The Rosenbröijers' childless marriage lasted 27 years and ended when Lieutenant Colonel E. B. Rosenbröijer died in a military hospital in Helsinki in September 1943.[16]

In her marriage, Gurli Sevón kept her maiden name hyphenated with her husband's name. She was usually referred to as Mrs. Rosenbröijer for short, and sometimes as Sevón-Rosenbröijer. She signed her fashion newsletters and personal letters with either version of these names.

As a young university graduate, Gurli Rosenbröijer worked for some time as a teacher in Helsinki. However, writing was what she really wanted to do, and she wrote her first book entitled *Noveletter om kvinnor (Short stories about women)*, which was published in Swedish in Helsinki in 1919.[17] However, she wished to write in—and especially about—Paris and, more broadly, about France. In 1926, she founded Bureau Finlandia, a press agency, located in the premises of La Chambre de Commerce Franco-Finlandaise, at 97 Rue Saint-Lazare, Paris 9. The agency served not only the press but also visitors from Finland and Scandinavia, in business and pleasure. She was very willing to share her own acquaintance with the city, and in 1928 she published a travel guide *Nio dagar I Paris. En vägledning för Parisbesökare*, in Swedish, and in Finnish under the title *Yhdeksän päivää Parisissa. Opas suomalaisille Parisissa kävijöille (Nine days in Paris. A guide to Finnish visitors to Paris)*. She had found it useful to write the first guidebook of that kind in response to a demand she had met while serving already for some years as a guide and as an interpreter for travelers in Paris (Sevón-Rosenbröijer 1928: 5–7, 13).

After the Second World War, Mrs. Rosenbröijer was a widow and a writer —a career woman who was free to settle down where she pleased. She had friends and work contacts in Helsinki and in Stockholm, and she visited Finland and Sweden almost every year, but she decided to live in Paris, where she felt most at home. There she could both write and also serve Finnish and Scandinavian people who visited Paris in fashion or other business. She

must have had some means and a good income, judging by the fact that her home and office were located at a prestigious address, 196 Avenue Victor Hugo, Paris 16. Her main occupation was indicated on her business card: Correspondante d'*Uusi Suomi*, a Helsinki-based conservative newspaper, but she also informed other papers and ladies' magazines.[18]

From the end of the 19th century to the Second World War, there were a few *couture* houses in Helsinki which made individually designed, hand-crafted and labelled ladies' clothes in the spirit of French *haute couture*, but there is little information on their actual contacts with Paris. Instead, there are interview and press data on the contacts of Finnish *couturiers* with Paris in the post-war years. A long article entitled "Ulkomaanmatkailijoita" ("Travelers abroad") in the ladies' magazine *Muotikuva* (*Fashion image*) from 1946 described profoundly the impressions of five Finnish *couturiers* and one buyer of the leading department store, who traveled to Paris for the first time after the war. It was not mentioned who organized the visit, but it may well have been Gurli Rosenbröijer, who was able to provide them with recommendations both for fashion shows in *haute couture* houses and high-quality fabric dealers.[19]

Paris was the dream destination of Finnish *couturiers*. It was the unquestionable "capital of fashion" in the post-war years 1947–1957, "the golden age of couture", as it had been for centuries (Steele 2019; Wilcox 2007). Kaarlo Forsman, the only high-ranking male *couturier* in Finland, visited Paris yearly, but he wished to deny its effect on his work and rather emphasized his independence (Lahti 2010: 47, 57).[20] In contrast, Riitta Immonen, who had started her business during the war and whose *couture* house became the largest in Helsinki, was openly enthusiastic about Paris ever since her first trip there in 1949. She explained widely what impressed her: seeing the collections and then observing the adaption of *haute couture* outfits to different personalities. Above anything else, it was a question of confirming her reliance on her own solutions, freedom from anything formally learned. Feeling the Paris atmosphere was vital but copying would have been a scandal (Koskennurmi-Sivonen 1998; 2008: 30–36).

Ulla Bergh, a *couturier* specialized in knitwear fashion, also visited Paris in 1949 and told about it very openly in the context of her fashion show in the beginning of 1950.[21] She had acquired her yarn from Paris already before the war, and she returned to the same suppliers as soon as it was possible after the war (Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2017). Likewise, Kaisu Heikkilä, a *couturier* based in Tampere, an industrial city located 180 kilometers north of Helsinki, identified her work, quality and style with those of Paris. She was able to travel to

this dream city for the first time in 1951. Two years later, she even announced her next trip in a local newspaper, which indicated her presumption that her clients would appreciate her acquaintance with new styles and the acquisition of materials (Heikkilä-Rastas 2003: 84). These *couturiers* had regular contacts with Gurli Rosenbröijer when in Paris, or if she was not available, with her secretary Madame de Milleret, a Finnish woman married to a French count.

Mrs. Rosenbröijer mediated Paris atmosphere to the Nordic *couturiers* in the form of fashion newsletters, which were like miniature monthly magazines, 6 to 9 pages long. They were densely typed on very thin silk paper sheets in A4-format with single-spaced lines and with only one-centimeter margins. Before the era of copying machines, the newsletters were typed through numerous carbon papers, which meant that the quality of a copy depended on its place in the pile. Gurli Rosenbröijer wrote every message twice over: one set in Finnish and another set with identical content in Swedish.[22] It is not known how many *couturiers* subscribed to Rosenbröijer's newsletter. Probably it was read in Sweden, too, but the majority of the issues— both the Finnish-language and the Swedish-language ones— must have been distributed in Finland. Some of the *couturiers* and milliners in Helsinki were primarily Swedish-speaking but at least one Finnish-speaking person received the Swedish-language version of the newsletter, obviously because there were not enough copies in Finnish.

Each newsletter had a header placed on the top left of the first page. The header of the Finnish-language version was "Tiedonanto " (Finnish for "information") and the equivalent Swedish header was "Message," presented with running numbering and a date—usually the first day of the month. It referred to the mailing day, as the events described had taken place during the previous month. Positioned to the right of the header, there were the words: Place Vendôme–Étoile, which did not refer to Rosenbröijer's own address but rather to the area where the news came from.

The messages often ended with a reminder that the information reported was to be kept between the writer and the reader, and nothing should be passed to the press. This was vital to Mrs. Rosenbröijer as writing for the press was her main occupation, and writing the newsletter was to disturb neither her income nor her agreements with the press. In one newsletter, she exceptionally mentioned that the information contained in it may be used in presentations within her readers' enterprises.[23] After kind regards and a wish to see her readers in Paris, the final lines read: Gurli [Sevón-]Rosenbröijer, 196 Avenue Victor Hugo, Paris 16, Tel. Tro24–08, Reception 11–13 o'clock.

During the reception mentioned on the bottom line, Rosenbröijer received French, Finnish and Scandinavian cultural and business people, their families and friends. While meeting with her and getting inside information on what was going on in Paris was valuable for all visitors in town, Rosenbröijer was especially helpful in opening the right doors and introducing newcomers into the manners required for conducting business with the French (Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2008: 32–33).

Gurli Rosenbröijer was perfectly fluent in at least three languages—French, Swedish and Finnish—which she needed in her main occupation as a journalist and in writing the fashion newsletters. Misspellings and corrections with a pencil were amazingly few, although she typed everything with an ordinary typewriter of her time, i.e., with no possibility of text editing. What is surprising is that she did not always type the French accents correctly. This may be due to having a typewriter with the Scandinavian characters (ä, ö and å) for her correspondence to the North. If so, the typewriter probably did not have all of the French accents, which would explain why they were sometimes missing or added by hand.

As an experienced journalist, Rosenbröijer was, of course, a fluent writer but she was also an expert in mediating the atmosphere around her. This quality was praised in the women's magazine *Viuhka* 1/1951:

> Gurli Rosenbröijer is a fine short-story writer. She masters the difficult field of literature. Her stories have the same kind of original charm as she does herself. The same may be said of her articles. She is able to capture the atmosphere of a moment and bring it close to her readers. Having read her report one has the feeling of having been there oneself. That must be why Gurli Rosenbröijer has so many grateful readers.

In December 1949, Rosenbröijer revealed her plans for her usual turn-of-the-year visit to Finland and Sweden. She wrote:

> This time I will not arrange any dress show. The situation has returned to almost normal. Anyone interested can again travel to Paris and see the great collections […] As I have tried to explain, our profession is a wearing one. In addition to everything else, it forces us to live on a tray, and our appearance is an object of most criticizing glances. That is why we cannot wear a model of a season six months later. We have no time, wish or strength to devote ourselves to our clothes. Here is the reason why our dresses must be

> so neutral, so well sewn and so simple that they are not noticed. […] and so I can return to my own dressing style which is in harmony with my profession and my private life. […] Nothing to photograph, nothing to show, but also, nothing to criticize.[24]

Among other things, Rosenbröijer was the Paris correspondent of *Muotikuva,* a Finnish fashion magazine. Generally, it was impossible to know which texts were hers, as the pages usually combined text and images with no accurate reference to authors or other sources. However, in the second issue of 1950, a long text entitled "Muotikuumetta" ("Fashion Fever") was clearly written by her. The text was co-presented with a photograph of her in a taffeta blouse by a Finnish fashion house. This was a rare—if not the only—picture published of her. Furthermore, in spite of what she had written in the latest newsletter prior to her trip, the magazine featured hand-drawn illustrations of her French *couture* clothes, which the illustrator of *Muotikuva* had seen and drawn during Rosenbröijer's visit to Helsinki in January 1950. This was exceptional, and publishing these drawings is unlikely to have happened on her initiative, although she had shown her French clothes to her contacts in Finland. The information provided by her was strictly written fashion, texts only.

Officially, Gurli Rosenbröijer moved back to Finland in January 1968, although she still continued to send her newsletters from Paris at least until September 1969. She died in Helsinki in May 1983, at the age of 91.[25]

4 Haute couture and fashion journalism

One of the key functions of fashion is diffusion and the fact that it is adopted by different people as such or in a modified form. “There is no fashion if it does not descend in the street” said Gabrielle Chanel (quoted in Sainderichin 1995: 19). For her, copying meant that she was successful, and she enjoyed it.[26] Schiaparelli was another *couturier* who was rather flattered by than afraid of copying.[27] However, dishonest ways of spreading fashion were a problem. As soon as *haute couture* fashion was discussed, copying was discussed, too (e.g. Wilson 2003: 87). Numerous ways of copying, stealing *toiles*, and lawsuits arising from such acts were related throughout the years.[28] Writing about troubles of copying may have simply indicated that this nuisance was a continuing companion on the side of fame, but it may also have served as a subtle warning to the readers who were fashion professionals and to whom Rosenbröijer endorsed *haute couture défilés* in Paris.

Fashion journalism at its best was not only a welcome but also a vital way of mediating fashion, and this central role was based on confidentiality. The press was obliged to respect the strict protocol of revealing the new lines of the season, and here the journalists faced certain problems with printing schedules, as the rules were different for written and image fashion (cf. Breward 2007 on image fashion). Only written reports were allowed immediately at the time of the press shows.[29]

The first eyes from outside the *couture* house to see a new collection were those of the text journalists. They were not allowed to draw even the smallest sketch in their notebooks. To be able to report what one saw demanded the sensibility to see both the whole and the details and to take quick written notes. Janie Samet (2006) phrased it like this: “A journalist is someone who takes pictures with her eyes and turns them out in words which make images.” This ability was supposed to serve strictly written reports, which would, then, elicit images only in the mind of the reader. Rosenbröijer used almost the same wording, referring to spies who were able to “photograph with their eyes” and could work in the guise of journalists. As some of the journalists were skilled in sketching as well, the fashion houses went to great lengths to supervise that the rules were respected: e.g. notebooks could be checked at exits. Some fashion houses sent their agents to nearby bars and cafés in doubt that some reporters would find the nearest place where they could sit down and make sketched notes of what they had just seen.[30]

The designs could be photographed or drawn inside the fashion house, but these images could not be published anywhere in the world before a certain date— generally 3 to 4 weeks after the press shows—set by the Haute Couture Syndicate. In this way, the *haute couture* houses wanted to protect foreign and domestic buyers, who had their turn after the text journalists. The houses showed great solidarity towards professional buyers who, in turn, wanted to be ready to serve their fashion audiences in other countries and in the provincial towns of France.[31] This phase of the fashion process, when honestly conducted, was of a great financial importance and thus worth prioritizing to a certain extent. The houses were actually so busy when serving professional buyers that they had no time to lend out dresses to be photographed or to receive private clients.

Private clients were the "raison d'être of haute couture" (Palmer 2001: 41), but they were the last in the timeline to view the new collections. In the 1950s, they were still the main object of interest when fashion was observed in practice. Yet, there were more and more wealthy foreign clients, especially from across the Atlantic, who came to Paris in order to update their wardrobe (ibid: 41–49). However, as a subject of journalistic interest, their taste was not of the same importance as that of the *Parisienne*.

The mutually agreed schedule of showing protocol was strictly followed by most houses.[32] However, as a favor to his important private clients, Jacques Fath let them in to see the new collections already with the press. And on the other hand, in 1956 Balenciaga and Givenchy broke with the schedule and decided to show to the press after foreign buyers.[33] In the case of the serious, distant and independent Cristóbal Balenciaga this was not surprising (cf. Golbin 2007: 20; Miller 2007: 28–29). He did not care about the press anyway and never gave interviews. Regarding engagement in public relations, he was at one end of the continuum. He did not appear after a show to receive applause and never offered any refreshments, not even a glass of water.[34] Dior was described as kind and shy. He appeared to receive not only applause but also hugs and kisses.[35] At the other end of the continuum was Jacques Fath, who was cheerful, outward-oriented and extremely generous. He did not spare champagne in his shows, and to his luxurious parties in Château de Corbeville, he invited *le tout Paris*—the fashionable elite of the city—and the journalists who lived in Paris.[36]

5 Description of fashion

Gurli Rosenbröijer was a journalist who saw fashion collections among the accredited journalists. However, her fashion newsletters were not written in the same manner as the pieces she wrote for magazines and newspapers. When writing for fashion professionals, she could focus on different details, such as ways of viewing the *haute couture* collections. In the autumn of 1954, she chose to highlight the huge difference between professional buyers and private clients.

According to Rosenbröijer, foreign buyers looked at the collections like hound dogs who had to catch their prey. They were interested in only a few creations which they intended to copy in a simpler and less expensive form. If they did not perceive "new" details to be copied, they usually did not find the collection interesting at all. Instead, a French private client looked at the collection from a completely different viewpoint:

> First, she looks at the collection as pieces of clothing intended to be worn by an elegant elite group. Second, she looks at it as she looks at clothes among which there are designs that suit herself. Third, and this is most important, she examines the collection in order to accustom her eye to the new lines and to gather into her subconsciousness information on what trend the ever-changing fashion is about to take. The Frenchwoman's way of looking at the collections is in harmony with the style in which the grand couturiers create their designs. Absolutely, they do not create their collections to facilitate the work of the clothing industry.[37]

The most usual way of describing a collection or a summary of several collections included merely facts about the outfits. The newsletter from March 1951 was exceptionally heavy with such descriptions of the collections of several *couturiers*, although Rosenbröijer wanted to keep herself disciplined and report only the tendencies of the greatest: Dior, Fath, Lanvin-Castillo, Rochas, Dessès, Griffe, Paquin, Schiaparelli, Lafaurie, Balmain, Alwynn and Tiseau. More interesting than lists of the creations of all the others were the arguments for the significance of Schiaparelli. She was not only a rich personality but she also always presented a collection which had the strongest impact on the future fashion in general, not only her own. The French fashion journalists wanted to see each Schiaparelli collection at least three times

in peace in order to fully understand all the details. The novelties of the spring collection of 1951 were exaggerated, irritating and bold, but Rosenbröijer was convinced that, in a couple of years, those features would come back in some details. They would be disciplined and tamed, both in Schiaparelli's own classic outfits and in the creations of Rosenbröijer's readers.[38]

Rosenbröijer could tell what was modern, i.e. fashionable, at any given moment or mention that such and such collection was beautiful or successful. But normally there was no reference outside the described outfits themselves. In Barthes' (1967/1983: 21–22) terms, the referent of written clothing was fashion, as shown in the cases of Fath's and Dior's autumn collections in 1952:

> Fath uses a tunic also with cocktail dresses and great evening dresses. The tunic can then be of lace and the skirt of silk muslin. The theme can be varied endlessly. Ball dresses are of ankle-length and most often pleated. The great evening dresses are worn with boleros which have puff sleeves and long hanging ends knotted on the waist. The neckline forms a deep angle in front and in back, shoulder straps are very narrow.
>
> Suits often have a jacket which curves inward at the waist, but the waist is looser than before and it is not tightened with a belt. Many jackets are quite straight and loose. Many collars are so far from the neck that inside them there is enough space for fur or lace ruffle. Plenty of buttons are used and they are placed in surprising ways. Fabrics are tweed, flannel, coarse woolen fabrics and broadcloth-like fabrics which are not always broadcloth. Skirts are nowadays always comfortable to move in.

> In the masterful collection of Dior, the line is extremely clear, thoughtful to the end, conscious. There is not a single detail that would be arbitrary, born from a sudden artistic whim. Every design is a sophisticated synthesis of numerous drafts, one developed from another. There do not exist clothes which would be more difficult to make and more difficult to carry that those of Christian Dior. From one collection to another, his silhouette has become longer. This silhouette is no more cut with a strongly tightened belt, but the waist is significant in any case and it should curve inward. The chest and hips are rounded so that the profile curves elegantly. All seams between the chest and waist are vertical. Dior himself says that his silhouette resembles a stylized ant, and it is from the ant that he has also borrowed his favorite colors, blacks, browns,

> and whites. All couturiers present beige and brown colors, and they will probably prevail on the side of black in the fashion of this winter.[39]

The viewed outfits were rarely placed in a context. In Barthes' (1983: 21–22) terms, they appeared in the "world", and together they formed a set consisting of clothing plus the "world", which referred to fashion. The "world" was, for example, Cannes—the site of the film festival.

> Jacques Fath […] he had just got the honor of making an evening dress for Mme Coty [the wife of President René Coty]. It is of banana-colored lace and has a long train. Lace has become hypermodern in one fell swoop, thanks to the Cannes lace exhibition. In one moment, all luxury shops in Cannes are full of lace dresses, mantillas, collars and blouses. Laces are of different colors and qualities.[40]

Or, the "world" was of a more ordinary sort, such as a festive dinner in a sports hotel,[41] or a week-end trip to the countryside:

> On a tour to fashion artists' shops, we noticed that cotton velvet is very popular. It is used for dresses and coats of the same material, which are suitable for both day and evening wear. In addition, cotton velvet has the advantage that it is excellent for week-end trips to the countryside. Such a fabric does not need any particular cut, because it drapes well. A jacket from cotton velvet can be worn just as well with trousers as with a skirt.[42]

In a summarizing description of the fashion season Rosenbröijer wrote in March 1957:

> After seeing about 5,000 designs, the main impression we have got is that, in the collections of this fashion season, fabrics charm with their beauty. In the serious hours of the day, jersey, linen, crepes, tweeds, cotton, flannels, excellent wools, and mixed wool and silk rule. In the hours of joy, muslins, organdies, taffetas, laces and soft silks burst out like giant flowers. All clothes are without any stiffeners, tarlatan, corsets, any austerity. At all hours, in fashion "le flou" is prevailing. It can be translated with the words soft, floating, vague.[43]

In this description, there was a hint of the "world" in the reference to the serious and joyful hours of the day, which steered the reader's thought to possible events of those hours. In the same newsletter, Rosenbröijer compared high fashion to wine: Just as one vintage may be better than another, so would 1957 be a good year in fashion. Fashion had found its new form and learned to master *le flou.* This had been seen in many perfect collections.[44]

Sometimes the written report described fashion details in a way that was reminiscent of what Barthes (1967/1983) wrote about the advantages of text (speech) over images: The meaning of an image is never certain. The image freezes an endless number of possibilities, while words determine a single certainty. Fashion texts fulfill a didactic function. They represent the authoritative voice of someone who knows all there is behind the jumbled and incomplete appearance of the visible form, and thus it constitutes a technique of opening the invisible (pp. 12–14). In the same reports in which Rosenbröijer revealed in writing what was invisible, she also showed her interest in such matters of clothing which, for Barthes, were burdened with practical considerations (p.8).

One prime example of this was an explanation for why a skirt by Dior was easy to move in, thanks to hidden pleats, although it looked straight and tight. Another example was a description of how Fath had achieved the line of the fashion which he launched at the time of his untimely death in 1954:

> […]These kinds of skirts are longer than those of tailor suits or small dresses. To achieve Parisian elegance and to make the skirts bulge like sails, the right shape of gathered petticoats must be worn with them. In Jacques Fath's salon, the audience may see what these petticoats should be like in order to make the dress drape in the proper and elegant way. The collection starts with the mannequins entering in petticoats and bras. […] When one sees the mannequins in these petticoats, one can understand how different dresses become if they are supported by this "thick" foundation than if they just hang over nylon underpants.[45]

6 Haute couture and hors concours

> *Haute couture* is, by definition, French and it gets its nutrition from the "air of Paris." Another climate would be fatal to it (Ormen-Corpet 2000: 298).

In her early newsletters, Gurli Rosenbröijer must have explained to the reader the system of *haute couture*, and by the end of 1949, which is the beginning of the collection analyzed here, several of her readers had already visited Paris and attended the *défilés* of one or another *couture* house. However, from time to time, she refreshed the readers' memory regarding the phenomenon called *haute couture*. Its raw material was difficult to define, as it was formed from the ideas of *couturiers*. And, for example, in Dior's ateliers, there was just one sewing machine per 30 employees, which would have been scandalous in the hypermodern industry.[46] She also highlighted the importance of *haute couture* and its existence only in Paris and nowhere else. *Haute couture* was clearly the highest peak of Paris fashion, but by no means the only avenue of getting elegant made-to-measure clothes in Paris. *Couture* also existed *"hors concours"* i.e. as not listed among the about 20 houses entitled *haute couture*,[47] and during the 1950s, it became necessary to explain what was *prêt-à-porter*, a new high category of ready-made clothes emerging between *couture* and *confection*, the low category of ready-made clothes.

A description of the entire *haute couture* creation process was included in the newsletter from August 1952: It began from the fact that a *couturier* sensed what the *Parisienne* was tired of and what should be new in the following collection. Then followed sketches by the designer—or those bought outside the house[48]—which were given to the *première d'atelier*, who made the *toiles*. She could add or remove something and even make suggestions to the *couturier*, who, in turn, examined the *toile* on a mannequin and selected the material. When the *couturier* had accepted the design, the *première d'atelier* supervised making the dress cut according to the *toile*.[49]

In the following year, Rosenbröijer revealed more details about the c*outure* house's operations as a response to one reader's inquiry regarding staff qualifications: There were no formal qualifications. In Paris, there were some private courses and schools for dressmaking. However, the primary way to learn and advance in the house hierarchy took place in the *couture* houses themselves. The lowest level was that of an errand girl and an apprentice. If

she had skillful fingers, she could reach the position of a qualified dressmaker. From among them, some women advanced to the position of a forewoman—a *seconde d'atelier.* She needed to excel not only in the profession, but also to possess psychological skills that allowed her to deal with each individual dressmaker. She had to encourage them through thanking, sternness and criticism. And again, from among the *secondes* someone became a *première d'atelier*, although usually only after a career of 20 years. Their main work consisted of fittings to which they applied their individual methods. By virtue of her talent and position, a *première* could have new ideas and innovations to present to the *couturier* when she or he was creating a new collection.[50]

Rosenbröijer highlighted the meaning of fitting which, according to her, was a special French skill exercised with unbelievable precision and patience. The importance of fitting could be understood in the light of the fact that *couture* dresses were not unique in design. For example, Christian Dior's best-selling design of the winter collection of 1952 was made 117 times for different bodies and personalities.[51]

Fitting was not only connected with adapting a dress to different bodies. First and foremost, it was a question of comfort:

> Patou has many straight tweed coats which have a thick vertical fur border in front.The dress is then of the same tweed. It is straight, but always comfortable to walk in. A well-dressed Frenchwoman always goes properly and freely. She does not tiptoe so that she needs to be afraid of falling over on each step. The clothes of a grand couturier must always give freedom.[52]

The above was an excerpt from a description of Patou's collection. He was the "the inventor of sweater dressing" and "the father of knitwear design" (Donofrio-Ferrezza & Hefferen 2008, 25; Polle 2013: 90–97). Although Jean Patou prematurely passed away as early as 1936, not only his name but also certain of his ideas prevailed in 1954, when Marc Bohan took over.

Gabrielle Chanel, who early in her career was an advocate of comfort and jersey (de la Haye 2011: 22–27) just like Patou, noted again after her comeback that "a dress is never right if it is uncomfortable. One of the prerequisites of elegant clothing is that the wearer of the clothes moves freely."[53] These notes came from the houses famous for comfortable knitwear, but as for fitting they were applicable to all *couture*.

In Finland, Riitta Immonen, an enthusiastic reader of Rosenbröijer's newsletters and a frequent visitor to Paris, expressed the same idea concisely: "A dress must be loose inside and tight outside" (quoted in Koskennurmi-Sivonen 1998: 210). This statement implied negotiation between the private bodily comfort and the perfect individual fit that was perceived as gracefulness. This corresponded to the *couturier's* conception of femininity, but it could be interpreted more metaphorically, too, as the well-fitted dress helped to cope with the "tightness" of the social world outside.

One point that differed from what is usually written about the creation process of *haute couture* (e.g. Palmer 2007; Shaeffer 1993) was the role of the *vendeuse*, a female salesperson. As she was neither a designer nor a seamstress, her input was not so obvious. However, Rosenbröijer knew the importance of the *vendeuse* as a consultant in the production process. The *vendeuse* had the vital contact with the client. She was the one who knew the lifestyle and wishes of clients, and she was the one who needed to win the client's confidence. And gathering information did not stop there: The clients' wishes concerning the following season were mediated to *couturiers*, and thus certain tendencies were created in the Paris atmosphere.[54]

Rosenbröijer was acquainted with many *vendeuses* personally and knew that they had to have good taste and an eye for what suited the body and personality of the client as well as an ability to express it diplomatically. When the *vendeuse* helped the client to choose a dress, it was useful to know how it could be altered and adapted to a certain woman in a way that would be the most flattering for her. Thus, she could by no means be unaware of the construction of the dress. The client's reliance on her *vendeuse's* taste was often so strong that if the *vendeuse* moved to another *haute couture* house, the client followed the *vendeuse* instead of being faithful to the *couturier.*[55]

Palmer (2001) has discussed the same thing in different words from the *vendeuse's* perspective, regarding her key role in client contact. She has pointed out that, during the selection of a garment, design modifications occurred and that redesigning was a collaborative effort between the *vendeuse* and the client. Such redesign as an aspect of *haute couture* has been largely overlooked in favor of promoting the designer as artist (p. 49).

The role of the *vendeuse* was undoubtedly interesting to the readers in Finland, where the roles of the *vendeuse* and designer—often also that of the *première d'atelier* as for fitting—were combined in a *couturier.* Her or his taste and style had to be trusted, as all clothes were one of a kind. Most of them were designed for a single private client, and the

design process was at least begun in the presence of the client. The only case when the client could see a finished garment before buying it was when she bought a piece that a mannequin presented in a *défilé*. Such dresses were not duplicated but could be altered. The client's possibility to suggest some alterations depended on the *couturiers*, whose flexibility varied. (Koskennurmi-Sivonen 1998; Heikkilä-Rastas 2003; Lahti 2010.)

Gurli Rosenbröijer also wanted her readers to be properly acquainted with the deep roots which nourished *haute couture* and extended to small villages, which alone would not have been associated with luxury fashion. The existence of *couture* had a decisive significance to an uncountable number of enterprises and millions of people in France. The more a *couturier* could shine with the splendor of his/her house and the elegance of its products, the more he/she could sell all over the world, and the more families could feel their economy safe. The effect of *haute couture* on the economy of the whole country was in no proportion to the small number of women who ordered their dresses from the *grand couturiers*.[56] Jacques Heim placed it in an even larger context when he called Paris fashion a central engine, which gave power to uncountable number of industries in the entire world.[57]

La Chambre Syndicale de la Couture had to struggle to explain the same inseparable connection between *couture*, small industries, and craftspeople during the war (1940–1944), when the Nazi rulers wanted to move *haute couture* to Berlin and Vienna. The Nazi regime's effort was a strange project, because, on the one hand, "the tyranny of Paris *haute couture*" was not wanted, and on the other hand, it was considered to be so important that it should have been taken over and moved. Lucien Lelong and Daniel Gorin, the president and the secretary of La Chambre Syndicale de la Couture, had to explain why *haute couture* could not exist outside Paris: It was embedded in French culture and tradition cultivated by a community of specialists and spread across numerous crafts (Grumbach 1993: 27–30 ; Veillon 1990: 151–155). At the same time, Maggy Rouff, herself a *couturier*, published a book entitled *La Philosophie de l'élégance*, in which she compared *haute couture* to an extremely sensitive and delicate machine whose parts may come from outside but which must be strictly assembled in Paris. And another writer Germaine Beaumont noted: "It is just a dress and the whole country made this dress"(Rouff and Beaumont quoted in Veillon 1990: 159).

In 1955, it was estimated that about 4,000 *Parisiennes* ordered all their clothes from *haute couture* houses. Approximately the same number of women ordered part of their dresses from them but also bought from smaller fashion houses. The third group was formed by women who ordered from *haute couture* houses only occasionally, but normally from small

ones. Due to currency regulation, only a few private clients came from other countries,[58] although they were attracted, for example, by employing people with an aristocratic title, especially to impress the clients who came from across the Atlantic.[59]

Embroidery, which was the most luxurious flagship of Paris *(haute) couture*, was almost absent from Rosenbröijer's explanations of the Paris fashion system in general and the descriptions of collections provided by her. Sometimes it was mentioned in passing:

> They [cocktail dresses] are usually sleeveless and little embroidered jackets are worn with them. […] great evening dresses have enormously much laces, beads, sequins, rhinestones and straw laces.[60]

One report from August 1950 even implies that perhaps Rosenböijer—a friend of luxury and elegance in a simple and understated form—did not personally appreciate flashy embroidery, as she wrote:

> The embroidery of the more "dressy"dresses is now, as always, simply fantastic. They have been made of silk in most charming colors or they are of mother-of-pearl and gold thread, but all that makes a garment a future museum piece.[61]

The fact that Rosenbröijer valued the cut and style of a dress over decoration became clear when she was reporting from Italy where *couture* employed 25,000 embroiderers. And the number was even expected to rise to 100,000 when the orders of the autumn season began to come in, as "Italian women loved rich decoration, while French women appreciated the line and style before anything else."[62]

Neither embroidery nor embroidery specialists were described at length or in detail. Even the rather concise description of Balmain's evening dress was exceptional:

> The embroidery for this luxury dress was ordered from a specialist [name not mentioned], and it demanded 200 hours of work, 2,000 pearls, each cut from mother-of-pearl in the shape of a flower, were needed, plus 8,500 sequins. When the whole dress was ready, Marie-Thérèse presented it to Balmain in his salon in the same light in which it would be presented to clients. Still then the couturier noticed something to be

changed. In the presentations of the first week, this dress was ordered 15 times, one as a birthday present for an 18-years-old girl.[63]

The scarce information provided about embroidery was unexpected as Rosenbröijer knew very well that Finnish *couturiers* were interested in embroidery, and their embroiderers worked with the same materials as the Paris *couture* houses and embroidery ateliers (Koskennurmi-Sivonen 1998; Heikkilä-Rastas 2003; Lahti 2010).

In order to understand the high number of elegant women in relation to the small number of regular *haute couture* clients, it was important to know the other ways of buying dresses in Paris. Since 1945, there were two classes of enterprises: one simply *couture* and the other higher and more prestigious *couture*-creation, which had strict rules and could be called *haute couture* (Grumbach 1993; Palmer 2001). The designers of *haute couture* were referred to as *grands couturiers*. Rosenbröijer wrote mainly about *haute couture* and mentioned just in passing that, in Paris, there were fashion houses of the second class, which actually were not of second class at all. She seemed to be reluctant to underline this distinction. Rather, she referred to some enterprises, usually new and interesting ones, just as fashion houses, which were *hors concours*.[64] For example, in November 1949 she recommended Alwynn as a new fashion house which was worth visiting.[65] But a couple of months later, disappointed with its collection, she mentioned that Alwynn's *modéliste* Benjamin was not yet a *grand couturier.*

The great favorite of Rosenbröijer seemed to be a new fashion house that Count d'Amécourt established by the name of Tristan Maurice, also in 1949.[66] Other fashion houses recommended by her were Raphaël,[67] the excellent house of Jeanne Lafaurie,[68] and Claude Rivière, whose collection was genuinely Parisian, because she was a true *Parisienne* and sensitive to everything that moved in the atmosphere of Paris.[69] In the context of these houses Rosenbröijer wrote about simple, understated elegance which, in order to be perceived and appreciated, demanded an educated eye and good taste learned at homes and embedded in the long history of French culture. *Parisiennes* had this taste and Rosenbröijer shared it, and in her writing, her appreciation of it was connoted throughout and often openly expressed.[70]

7 Confection, boutiques and prêt-à-porter

In 1955, Rosenbröijer recommended a small fashion atelier on the fifth floor at 49, rue de Richelieu, not easy to find but worth visiting. That was where Countess Maxime de la Falaise (née Birley), a former employee of Schiaparelli, presented daily her own designs. The interesting point was that she specialized in "separates," which satisfied the taste of the modern woman as the pieces were practical with multiple possibilities of combinations. The concept seemed to be so new to Rosenbröijer that she did not have a Finnish word for it and she used the English term instead.[71] It must have been a new concept to the French, too, as in an issue of *Elle*, which appeared in the same year, the term "separates" was also used in English and placed in quotes (Grumbach 1993: 137).

In April 1950, Rosenbröijer wrote for the first time that her readers might be interested in visiting "boutiques," small shops that *couturiers* had opened on the street floors, where anybody could walk in and buy cute designs for half the price of what was being paid up in the salons. Rosenbröijer was as ambivalent as *couturiers* about whether these shops were a happy idea for *couturiers* or not.[72] It was known that *couturiers* already had accessory shops, but the new idea was to sell what would be called *prêt-à-porter des couturiers*. However in 1950, Marcel Rochas was strictly against selling *prêt-à-porter* clothes with a *couturier's* label on them in a boutique. According to him, "they would be a caricature of couture. Anybody could buy them and wear them in whatever way without being fitted to a client."[73] That was an opinion which was to lose the game eventually (e.g. Grumbach 1993: 103), but at that moment, it reflected the importance of French art of fitting—as also highlighted by Rosenbröijer—and the fact that "cultured French women feel aversion towards ready-made clothes."[74]

Copying was and remained a hot potato in the hands of fashion professionals. Copies appeared in both *couture* and industrialized techniques. One initiative for solving the problem inside France in 1950 was Les Couturiers Associés formed by *couturiers* Carven, Dessès, Fath, Paquin and Piguet. Each house created seven models which could be legally copied and sold in 25 towns in France. In accordance with the French temperament, the entire *couture* world was then arguing for or against the idea.[75] The volume of this effort did not meet the demand for elegant clothes in a more affordable category. The members of the group changed,

and the idea was short-lived. In 1953, Fath gave up and started his own industrial, more casual line Jacques-Fath-Université (Guillaume 1993: 44–47).

The efforts made by the *couturiers* were not enough to respond to the growing demand for ready-made clothes, especially elegant but affordable ones. The slow development of the clothing industry had been noticed already before the war. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs had urged Lucien Lelong, *couturier* and head of the Chambre Syndicale, to analyze American production methods (Grumbach 1993: 103). In the mid-1950s, only 40% of women wore ready-made clothes, whereas the equivalent number in America was 80% (ibid: 138). At the end of the 1940s, *confection* was still based on copying and adapting *haute couture* creations. Although Rosenbröijer did not have high opinions of *confection* at that time, occasionally she found something positive to suggest:

> It would be interesting to the representatives of our [Nordic] couture and confection to see a collection of a Paris department store. The fashion created by the grand fashion artists presents itself there as it is adapted for every-day people and every-day life. In that kind of a collection, one can perceive clearly, which lines become prevailing, and thus pointing out the development of fashion.[76]

Despite the attempts of both *couturiers* and department stores to contribute to ready-made clothing, the word *confection* continued to have negative connotations and was associated with unlikability among French consumers. One indication of *confection's* lower status was that journalists wrote about it anonymously.[77]

Finally, in 1950, Jean-Claude Weill and Albert Lambereur did what had been suggested to Lelong already 15 years earlier. They spent some time in the United States and got acquainted with industrial production methods. What exactly was different from the French methods has not been reported as much as the (apparently) new concept: *prêt-à-porter*— grammatically improper but more prestigious than *confection* (Grombach 1993: 151). It was a direct translation of the English term ready-to-wear. Ironically though, Mrs. Roger had used the words "la couture prête à porter" already in 1850, whereas Charles Fredric Worth used the words "Nouveautés Confectionnés" in 1868 (ibid: 138).

Two years after the famous excursion, Rosenbröijer met Albert Lempereur in person in order to be able to provide her readers "a clear picture of what is happening at the moment in the French ready-to-wear industry."

She gave a long description of Lempereur's business history and hobbies and presented him as the chairman of "La Fédération du Vêtement Feminin." He had actually noticed young girls as a fashion consumer group between children and grown-up women and, to fill this gap, had founded an enterprise entitled Virginie as early as 1928. But now it was a question of fashion created for modern women who no longer had time to sew their own clothes. Rosenbröijer was sure that "with Mr. Lampereur's help the modern Frenchwoman would be freed from her anti-confection complexes," and she saw *prêt-à-porter* as a healthy development. It continued what *couturiers* had already started in their boutiques, and naturally this was due to the superior quality of Paris chic.[78] Lempereur was also a central figure in the development of the brand called "Les Trois Hirondelles." Thirty producers of ready-made female fashion committed to high quality were entitled to use this label aimed at young women.[79]

Albert Lempereur appeared in a couple of newsletters, whereas there was not a word about Weill, the other important personality of *prêt-à-porter.* They had brought back ideas of American industrial methods, but these ideas alone did not solve the problem of industrial production in France at large.

In May 1953, Rosenbröijer reported that there was a real revolution going on in *confection*. All fashion observers had noted that the finish of *prêt-à-porter* had improved, and yet it was much less expensive than the designs of *grand couture*. At that point, all fashion specialists highlighted the fact that ready-made clothes could not compete with the designs presented in *couture* houses, as machines could not replace hands. The speech of Robert Buron, the Minister of Economic Affairs, attracted a great deal of attention, when he showed his approval of the efforts of *confection*. He reminded the audience of the fact that the Frenchwomen did not need to lose their personalities if someone had a similar dress: with a scarf, belt and hat, they could keep their style.[80]

In the same newsletter, Rosenbröijer wrote about three categories of *prêt-à-porter*, the highest of them being the category of luxury. A deep-rooted doubt about ready-made clothes was still visible in the report. When the producers of *confection* had invited the specialist press to the presentation, Rosenbröijer called it "a venturous attempt." However, all fashion journalists loyally noted the happy development that had taken place in *confection*. The gradual approval of ready-made clothes was also confirmed in a large survey study conducted among Frenchwomen. Forty-six percent of them accepted ready-made clothes, while forty percent preferred custom-made clothes. Fourteen percent did not answer the question.[81]

What had been learned in America was not directly applicable in France. Frenchwomen had different taste and they had a different body figure, too. In 1955, Mademoiselle Susanne de Felice defended her doctoral dissertation which dealt with the scientific accurate measurement of Frenchwomen.[82] It was a good start but not sufficient as her data was too narrow for the industry. Soon after that study, *confection* producers decided to survey 50,000 women in order to form three types which would correspond to "ordinary" Frenchwomen. All this was presented to invited journalists, which indicated the importance of this initiative.[83]

Although Rosenbröijer used to attend annually the Cannes film festival on the French Riviera, La Côte d'Azur in French, she did not actually report about the local fashion. Instead, she focused on the *couture* dresses on celebrities.[84] As the French Riviera became known in Finland in the 1950s, it would have been interesting to know that there, too, developed a notable ready-made fashion line, *la mode Côte d'Azur*, sold in the boutiques in Mediterranean resorts. There were some positive notes on *prêt-à-porter* in Cannes,[85] but important boutiques were seldom mentioned. In May 1957, Marcel Boussac invited and entertained the Paris fashion journalists on the Riviera, but then, too, it was his fabrics that were in focus, not boutiques.[86]

The production concept of *la mode Côte d'Azur* was named *couture-série*, which referred to series, multiple copies of one design, and to *couture*, thus avoiding the concept of *confection* (Vernet 2004). However, when this line of fashion was exhibited in Marseille in 2004 to 2005, Harroch (2004) entitled her article in the exhibition publication "J. Tiktiner. Une Maison de Prêt-à-porter sur la Côte d'Azur 1948–1989," thus indicating which one of the concepts survived.

Boutique culture as a wider phenomenon started in 1957 and was aimed at young consumers (Fogg 2003: 7). It became internationally better known as a British rather than French concept. That same year, however, *grand couturier* Jacques Heim opened a boutique for young girls. Rosenbröijer described its intimate atmosphere with enthusiasm. She regarded the appearance of a boutique like this as a cultural-historical example of an enormous change in manners. The boutique formed surroundings where young girls could listen to their favorite records while developing their taste and learning the difficult art of choosing—without the presence of their mothers.[87]

Coincidentally in 1957, Riitta Immonen, a Finnish *couturier* who had a very good sense of the spirit of times—at least partly thanks to Rosenbröijer—opened a boutique in Helsinki where her casual (semi-)industrial designs were sold. They were not aimed particularly at

youth, but the clients were definitely younger than her *couture* clients, although some of the *couture* clients were among the boutique clients, too (Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2008: 133–135).

Along with enhanced quality of *confection,* its producers became more and more confident in its design and independent in its schedule. Instead of producing clothes which imitated *haute couture*, by 1957 *confection* changed the schedule of its press shows. When *haute couturiers* presented their collections to the press and private clients, *confection* models were already sold to retailers in France and abroad. Although somewhat reluctantly, even Rosenbröijer had to admit that:

> In their inexpensive simplicity, in any case, they have to match what the audience reads about the designs of the grand couturiers. In Paris we have seen that, this year, confection has wiped out more and more extra details. As a consequence of this decision, confection designs have reached much higher quality.[88]

Two years earlier, in 1955, she had noted that the simplicity of the *grand couturiers* is not at all the same thing as the simplicity of *confection*.[89]

Rosenbröijer's relationship to *confection* remained ambivalent. It was understandable as she followed the taste of the Frenchwomen who liked neither the term *confection* nor the actual ready-made clothes. On the other hand, she admitted that the world went towards high-quality *confection*—inspired by Paris *haute couture*, often illegally. When she wrote at length about *confection* in the autumn of 1957, after all, it was mostly about *prêt-à-porter des couturiers*. According to her, *couturiers* found that their task was one of educating the masses and helping them to develop their taste in dress as well as their elegance at a lower price than *haute couture* had allowed. For the client, the label of the *couturier* was a guarantee of good taste and high quality. Furthermore, the client could be sure that the dress was "modern," i.e. fashionable.[90]

This was a very innocent and bona fide conception of the label. Although license production was common in the world of fashion already in the 1950s, as Rosenbröijer knew, *prêt-à-porter des couturiers* probably still was so close to *couturiers* that they were able to control their name and production at least in their own country. And Rosenbröijer, who knew the quality because of her long experience and constant updates on materials and techniques, did not hesitate to trust this production line.

Over the years, as *couture* shrank and *prêt-à-porter* expanded, a *couturier's* label got a more cynical connotation as in the title of the article of Pierre Bourdieu and Yvonne Desault (1975) "Le couturier et sa griffe: contribution à une théorie de la magie." They did not only write about the magic effect of a *couturier* but also of alchemy, or symbolic transubstantiation. This referred to the label with a *couturier's* name, which caught the consumer's and viewer's attention and transformed a fashion item into something more valuable than it was in its actual materiality.

This phenomenon of shopping and showing all the more visible labels became globally known. In 1957 it was not yet a practice of the masses. The label served as a road sign towards a novel consumer behavior for women who had either made their own clothes or used the services of dressmakers without a label. As Rosenbröijer pointed out, they needed to be educated and given a guarantee.

At the same time, a new *prêt-à-porter* and boutique concept was developed in France. It enjoyed more freedom in that it was not connected with the rules of *haute couture* or the debate of whether or not a *grand couturier* should give his or her label on an industrial dress or coat. Rosenbröijer recommended to her readers the boutique of Lucette Hervieu in Avenue Matignon, because she had good taste and she adapted those lines that had broken through in *haute couture*. These outfits were between *confection* and *haute couture,*[91] which still in 1957 had to be mentioned. Thus, nothing went on without some reference to *haute couture*. Boutiques and clothes of this type became later known as *prêt-à-porter de luxe*, but Rosenbröijer did not use this very term. Sometimes she wrote about luxurious ready-made clothes, luxurious *confection* or *confection de luxe* in French in connection with Schiaparelli.[92] The term *prêt-à-porter de luxe* continues to be used without a strict definition.

8 Mannequins, beauty and wearing a dress

The work of mannequins was of special interest to Rosenbröijer, and she described their work and training in many newsletters.[93] She knew several of them personally, and all journalists seemed to know gossip about mannequins.[94] They were described as an ambitious professional group whose work was hard, disciplined, and vital to *couture*. They were carefully trained up to the smallest detail to carry suggested new creations, and that was why new fashion looked so natural on them.[95] They had to have not only the body, posture and movement but also good taste. The personal devotion to presenting certain outfits was expressed in such expressions as "my dress" has been sold in so and so many copies or "my coat" had success.[96] This devotion and excellent performance was also credited with a percentage of the price of a well-selling design.

A mannequin performed well if she was friendly, self-assured, and free from all complexes. A tired or unhappy face would have risked the entire *défilé.*[97] To complete her own knowledge of a mannequin's work, Rosenbröijer used as a reference her friend Freddy's book which described it from the inside of an *haute couture* house. According to Freddy, a good mannequin inspired the fashion designer, was polite, naturally sweet and had unrestrained behavior. She moved with the same precision as a ballet dancer, and thus she wanted to inspire a fashion journalist to express the beauty of the dress in words. But the most difficult task was to carry a simple everyday dress.[98]

According to Rosenbröijer, there was an enormous difference between the elegance of a mannequin and the elegance of a noble woman. A mannequin had to bring forth the dress and not herself. That was the key function of the profession. But the dress had to bring forth the personality of a noble woman. The noble woman was never a walking advertisement for a *couturier.*[99] Reference to a certain provenance of a dress had to be more subtle and indirect, noticed only by persons who had an eye to recognize the style.

In spite of a certain ontological difference between Barthes' (1967/1983) analysis of fashion models in images (cover girls) and Rosenbröijer's description of *couture* house mannequins, there were similarities as for the function of their bodies. According to Barthes, the body of an ideal cover girl represented a rare paradox. On the one hand, her body had the value of an abstract institution, and on the other hand, it was an individual body. Its essential function was not aesthetic but a "deformed" body with a view of achieving a certain

generality. The cover girl's body was no one's body; it was a pure form, which possessed no attribute (pp. 258–259). "A certain generality" and "no one's body" represented the same idea as Rosenbröijer's notion that a mannequin had to bring forth the dress and not herself. Although she might have been a star, her function was to lend her starry shine to the dresses she presented in a *défilé*. However, as individuals and different types of femininity, these "no one's bodies" were inspiring to *couturiers*. They were as important at the beginning of the creation process as at the end of it when presenting its results.

Still, discussing the body and mannequins Barthes wrote that there was a yearly decree that certain bodies were in fashion (p. 259). Certainly, this was partly the case also in Rosenbröijer's texts: *couturiers* sought and found new mannequins who inspired them and presented their clothes in the best possible way. But "a yearly decree" represented quite a different conception on fashion. Rosenbröijer rather underlined the continuity in fashion, and in accordance with that, the same mannequins appeared time after time and continued to be popular.

At the third point, the views of the body converged again, when Barthes (1967/1983: 259–260) wrote:

> The third solution consists of accommodating clothing in such a way that it transforms the real body and succeeds in making it signify Fashion's ideal body. […] in the case of the "transformed body." there is complete submission of circumstance to structure by means on an art (couture).

Here he had come to the very core of *couture* but in a much more theoretical way than Rosenbröijer. Also, in Rosenbröijer's view, a properly chosen and well-fitted dress made the client's body look fashionable, but more importantly, it brought forth her personality, not the body. (See the concept of *passepartout* in chapter 10 "Elegance and the overwhelming excellence of France.")

According to Patrizia Calefato (2004), in the fashion world, the stereotype of female beauty and body was inescapable, for it was based on acritical repetition, ideologized allusion and received meaning. However, on the other hand, the mannequin's body, as a body subjected to the garment-as-signified, transcended its own limits and thus paradoxically transcended any stereotyped crystallization of meaning. The moment models began to be

called by name, e.g. Twiggy and Jean Shrimpton in the 1960s, they began to signify not only the garment but also themselves (pp. 58–59).

Calefato's examples represented the time when cover girls became internationally famous and *haute couture* began to decline. Yet, the same phenomenon of personalities stepping out of stereotypes was known a decade earlier in the *couture* circles. Paris mannequins of the 1950s were celebrities whose lives were followed closely, in good and in bad. They were often known by their first name, like Angelina, Sophie, Fabienne, Maria-Thérèse, Jackie, Barbara, Catherine, Teresita, Claude and Brigitte, or by a nickname, like Bettina, Praline, Freddy, and Lucky.[100] They were the stars of *couture* houses just like the movie stars of big American film companies (Sainderichin 1995: 15). They were recognized in Paris, on the Riviera and in different occasions. Ghyslaine was a special case as she was exceptionally small for a mannequin. Dior wanted to employ her because she had the exact measurements of Princess Margaret, who was Dior's client.[101]

Rosenbröijer wanted to highlight that in France working as a mannequin was a respectable profession, suitable even to the daughters of high-society families, although some young women had to convince their parents for some time.[102] Early modeling was associated with poor moral and improper behavior, and only gradually it gained a positive status of a desirable profession for young women (Craik 2009; 233). This status was not so obvious for all, as after her trip to Barcelona, Rosenbröijer wrote how difficult it was to get young Spanish women to present *couture* clothes. It was not considered to be suitable in a country where a daughter of a wealthy family could not even go to see a *couture* collection without the company of a family member.[103]

In Paris mannequins had suitors and admirers. They ended up in splendid marriages with wealthy men[104] or with less splendid, good, respectable men.[105] They had children and returned to work in fashion houses. Rosenbröijer corrected a misconception held by foreigners that only young women could work as mannequins. According to her, the most wanted mannequins were over 40 years old. Prettiness and youthfulness could be assets, but more important were elegance and ability to present an outfit at its best, and not to mention a slim body maintained with very disciplined eating and drinking habits.[106] She also noted that Bettina, the most famous and popular mannequin was not beautiful. Instead, she had *esprit*—liveliness and intelligence—and most importantly, any dress always looked elegant on her.[107]

The measurements, weight, height and waist, of new mannequins seemed to be of continuous interest, and they were reported from time to time,[108] but all along the decade, there was only one mention of a full-bodied mannequin.[109]

However, there were also scandals when some young women could not find a balance between their own life and all the luxury that surrounded them in their work. They ended up on a slippery slope, such as nude photography.[110] Or, being a mistress of a wealthy man ended up in a disappointment and even an attempt of a suicide.[111]

In 1950, a new agency A.M.I. (Association Modèle Ideal) was founded. It helped in finding models who could be photographed for fashion magazines. The problem was that the most beautiful women were aristocrats who did not want to be in photos, although it was acceptable to work as a house mannequin.[112]

While fitting and adapting designs to different body types and personalities was one of the keys to successful *couture*, ideals of beauty varied. This could be seen in those women whom *couturiers* employed as new mannequins. In the spring of 1954, Rosenbröijer paid special attention to female ideals of the time: Small women were in fashion, but tall women—"queen figures"—continued to be admired as well. Givenchy's new mannequin, Joan, represented the latter type. Fath's mannequin, Françoise, was neither tall nor short but equaled an average-height Frenchwoman. Yet, none of these women embodied a typical *Parisienne*. Instead, according to Rosenbröijer, Patou's Suzy had the classic silhouette of a *Parisenne,* which meant that she was fake thin. She looked unbelievably slim and yet she was prettily round in all those places where a woman had to be round. Dior's Victoire represented the female type, namely a fairy, which had been launched already in the previous year.

In spite of launching the fairy, Dior indicated that he was able to dress elegantly a woman with a difficult body. She was Madame Germaine Coty, the new first lady of France. She had her first *couture* outfit made at Maison Dior, but her body type was certainly not found among the mannequins as she weighed 100 kilos.[113]

In her book *The Feminine Ideal*, Marianne Thesander (1997) entitled one chapter, dealing with the same period during which Rosenbröijer wrote her newsletters, "Clearly Defined Female Forms c. 1947—64." According to Thesander:

> It was principally the breasts and waist that were accentuated in the new fashion line; the hips still had to be narrow, although the tightening of the waist gave them an added

> roundness. The basis for fashionable dress was, as previously, corsetry, but the ideal was glamour, not naturalness (p. 158).

This paragraph captures the same ideas that Rosenbröijer reported. Sometimes she paid attention to underwear and how it was fundamental for the fashionable silhouette,[114] but she mentioned the waist more often than breasts. The waist was clearly marked, slightly curved or elevated with a short bodice as in the empire line.[115] Writing about the breasts was inevitable in the autumn of 1954. According to Rosenbröijer, the sensation of Dior's new H-line was a sensation only to foreign journalists:

> We, who live here in Paris, would have been greatly astonished, had the foreign journalists not rushed to send telegraph, radio and telephone messages about the defeat of Marilyn Monroe after Dior's presentation. The absence of ball shapes hypnotized the recently arrived foreigners from the beginning of the show. Mass suggestion was so efficient that the Americans immediately started to whisper "flat-chested look"— without noticing their mistake. […] there were whispers of foreign journalists' descriptions of how Dior, in order to obtain an impression of a flat chest, had bound the breasts of his mannequins, bringing to mind the binding of Egyptian mummies. In such an astounding way Dior's quite normal new bra had been defined. One cannot understand why bra makers have been so horrified of their impending bankruptcy. On the contrary, they should be happy about the fashion which demands new kind of bras. They should also know the coming boredom of pointed breasts under pullovers which have been seen all over the streets, offices, stores, salons, films and theaters. Lollobrigida herself does not know yet that she is becoming old-fashioned.[116]

Actually, neither foreign journalists, and this time nor Rosenbröijer, got this quite right. Dior had not flattened the bust; he had lifted it (Thesander 1997: 162; Palmer 2009: 98). The mannequins wore a new kind of underwear, as Rosenbröijer already knew, but the breasts pushed up were quite round, although not ball-shaped, as exemplified by a photo from 1954 (Palmer 2009: 98). This type of one-piece foundation underwear consisting of a corset and a bra made the torso from bust to hips look longer, which was the key point of the H-line.

Dior's new fashion line was not a whim. What he especially wanted was to get away from the ideal of the exceptionally full bust, which he believed had become an object of

vulgar attention (Thesander 1997: 163). Whether the abandoned breasts were full or pointed, Rosenbröijer applauded: “Everything has changed, and chastity has returned in honor. Just here is the entire sensation.”[117] She had discussed the bust line and underwear in several newsletters, but never before had she expressed her own opinion so strongly.

In the last newsletter of the year 1954, Rosenbröijer returned to the topic of the breasts and new lines. She repeated that Dior’s new line demanded a new kind of bra. The breasts were higher and more separated than before. She brought foundation garments to a focus in general and discussed Frenchwomen’s underwear at length. She reported about Marie-Louise Lebigot, a famous corset maker. And, most interestingly, she provided a description of Fath’s *défilé* in which the mannequins first came in dressed in bras and petticoats. The purpose was to show how the suggested line was constructed and how it should be worn. However, in the same newsletter, Rosenbröijer reminded the reader that no elegant woman wanted to look like a mannequin, who declared the extreme lines of a fashion house, and this was connected to the fact that the fashion houses moved carefully from one line to another.[118] This slow movement will be discussed later in the chapter 11 “Birth and lifecycle of fashion.“

9 Paris atmosphere

> If you don’t come to Paris, you’re missing the boat. There are more ideas in a thimble here than in all of America (Sydney Blauner quoted in Palmer 2007: 80).

Jacques Heim expressed the same idea in different words when he spoke to financial and fashion journalists in 1952. According to him, “fashion exists in dense waves in every cubic meter of Paris air, and fashion houses are some kind of condensers which capture these waves.”[119]

Mediating the Paris atmosphere, those waves in the air, was the very core of the “information club.”[120] Actually, to understand fashion, Rosenbröijer found being in Paris more important than seeing the collections in person. They could be seen even in other countries, but Paris could be lived only in the city itself.[121] The Paris atmosphere meant an undefined historical, social, cultural and financial concoction that was “steaming out from a boiling kettle.” This atmosphere prepared people to be intuitively ready for the new so that they were

able to receive it.[122] It formed a fertile soil for creativity of all sorts from which fashion was mainly discussed in the newsletters. To be able to do it, a fashion chronicler had to do the same things that *couturiers* needed to do: read modern literature, see the newest films and theatre plays, go to art and other exhibitions and view what *Parisiennes* wore and how they did it. In the Paris atmosphere, women created fashion just as much as designers who drew fashion images.[123]

> We know that all collections are different from each other and that all collections are full of ideas and, from this foaming sea of ideas, some ideas are hurled to the street. Fashion is not a result of one collection but many collections. And these collections, in turn, are the result of what happens in the Paris atmosphere.[124]

Seeing the 5,000 to 6,000 *couture* creations of the season was exhausting and yet only part of understanding of what was going on. Even more important was fashion as it was lived:

> One secret of the elegance of a *Parisienne* is her carelessness, which is, however, precisely calculated and staged. Every visible thought of minding her clothes fights against elegance. A woman must entirely forget about her clothes in order to develop her charms in full bloom.[125]

> Fashion artists get their inspiration from this luxurious elegance that the best dressed women in the world carry with such everyday carelessness which is characteristic only to really great elegance. […] These really elegant women are far too sophisticated to tolerate overly exaggerated changes.[126]

This combination of the highest elegance and (seeming) carelessness was of central interest. It was not often expressed as clearly as in the quotations above. Rather, it appeared in terms of taste learned from childhood on and perfected throughout life, and which, in turn, allowed a certain nonchalance, as if "she were totally unaware of the charm that shines around her."[127] This kind of nonchalance was not at all typical of Finnish women, but Rosenbröijer did her best to convey it to her readers when they visited Paris (Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2008: 33–34).

There was an exceptional receptivity towards fashion, and it also rippled again and again in new circles.[128] All over the world, there were fashion artists, who had ideas and

ability to implement them, but only in Paris there were favorable circumstances for an individual artist's talent to come out in a way that would have an effect on the fashion of the day. The *Parisienne* was only in Paris, and she was the most coquette woman of the world and she has always been surrounded by great luxury.[129] This reciprocity provided an explanation to why foreign talents shined in Paris. Jacques Heim noted that it was not possible to build a fashion city by regulations or decisions. Paris had developed into a fashion city through centuries. A fashion creator did not need to be from Paris but she or he needed to have staff with passion for fashion. Heim pointed out that the French susceptibility opened doors to many foreigners.[130] And Rosenbröijer put like this:

> In the world, there are millions of dressmakers and tailors, who are able to make nice and beautiful clothes, but artists who create ideal models, role models of dressing in the western world, are hardly as many as fingers in a hand. They are all in Paris. And if they are born elsewhere, they do not get any peace before they come to Paris.[131]

When reporting about Violette Cornille, a handbag designer, Rosenbröijer quoted her to summarize the qualities of the Paris atmosphere:

> […] it is utterly impossible for a Parisian fashion designer to create anywhere but in Paris. Nowhere else is there such an inspiring atmosphere, which is indispensable for a creative artist. And also, nowhere else have you the same skillful, intelligent and quick staff as you have in Paris, and without skillful assistants, the designer is lost.[132]

Rosenbröijer often compared France and Italy, which had made a lot of propaganda to promote its own fashion—without being able to raise it to the level of France. She totally agreed with the French who were not modest at all, and she wrote: "They [the French] are convinced that if an individual of another nation is good for something, she/he certainly settles down in Paris."[133]

Schiaparelli was an Italian, but according to Rosenbröijer, her talent was unleashed only when she settled down in Paris, and the same applied to Balenciaga and Raphael, who first worked in Spain.[134] Steele (1999: 255) perfectly agreed when writing that Schiaparelli could never have become internationally famous had she stayed in Rome or in America.

Anyway, equally for a French person, Paris was important as a source of inspiration and a site of successful business. When Gabrielle Chanel made her comeback in 1954 after a long voluntary exile and made the greatest fashion news of the decade so far, Rosenbröijer noted that it was Paris that made Chanel what she was. When reopening, she was at the age of 75 but in Paris that was no obstacle.[135]

10 Elegance and the overwhelming excellence of France

"Elegance is simplicity that destroys a man." (*Couturier* Tristan Maurice)[136]

Gurli Rosenbröijer loved to praise the splendor of France. She explained that in order to understand it all one must know the history and culture of the country and the great resources of its colonies.[137] To convince her readers, she recommended them a book written by her friend Count André de Fouquières. He wrote about the cultural contribution that *couturiers* had made to French history. The book helped Rosenbröijer's readers to understand how France had, throughout centuries, maintained its dominant, overpowering position as the home country of elegance, taste and refined culture.[138]

While she described the greatest splendor in dress, Rosenbröijer continued to remind the reader about its simplicity and the fact that one had to have a cultured eye in order to perceive simple elegance.[139] She wrote that the finest elegance is never visible to the general public.[140] However, in Paris one could see the ideal forms of coming fashions, and only in Paris could one see how great elegance was to be worn.

> Elegance should never be connected with value in money. If one wants to be elegant, one should never refer to something as being expensive. This is something that all Paris mannequins know, and it is very difficult to learn for some women.[…] An elegant woman never thinks of such things. That is why great elegance is so absolutely simple and natural. This is the secret of being natural which most amazes American millionaire women.[141]

Throughout the years, Rosenbröijer wrote about simple elegance, but in March 1955, she managed to crystallize this issue to her readers when reporting about the collection of Jean Patou:

> The collection of Jean Patou belongs exactly to those, which foreigners think they have seen before and which the Parisians always consider entirely new. His clients are best-dressed aristocrats. They dress so discreetly that an outsider only grasps that a woman among them is elegant but does not know what she is wearing. […] This collection, praised by the Paris press, truly represents the concept of "simple hyperelegance." The colors are navy blue, yellow and rosy colors of dawn. Marc Bohan, the famous modéliste of the fashion house has a splendid eye for color and a sure instinct for knowing how an elegant *Parisienne* dresses daily.[142]

And in June of the same year 1955, she continued to write on the same theme in more general terms:

> An example of the skill of Paris couturiers is their ability to give the same design a personal character depending on the client. It is not unusual at all that the same design is ordered tens of times by Parisian clients who at any moment may meet each other. But it is exactly the fact that the clothes bring forth a *Parisienne* and not vice versa makes the same designs look totally different on different women. This is exactly why the fittings of grand couturiers play the part that demands patience. All details and proportions are tried out again and again on each client.[143]

These brief excerpts represented perfectly what later on was called a *passepartout* effect. The initial idea of this metaphor was a visual-aesthetic one and came from picture framing. Just as the *passepartout* cardboard is usually simple and neutral and used to underline the picture and not itself, so are clothes, when harmoniously elegant, often so obvious that they do not attract any special attention. Instead, they let the person be in the central role. If the French word is analyzed in its components: *passe par tout*, "pass through everything", its second meaning—a *passkey* —can be discerned. And, thus, the metaphor is easily extended to be used in social contexts. Dress as a *passepartout* is something that opens doors and helps the wearer to transcend socio-cultural constellations. (Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2003.)

The *passepartout* metaphor was originally introduced by Riitta Immonen, a Finnish *couturier*, whom Rosenbröijer escorted to *couture* houses and fabric dealers in Paris for almost twenty years (Koskennurmi-Sivonen 1998, 2008). Immonen may have absorbed this idea when observing elegant *Parisiennes* and exercised it in her own creations, although she put it in words as late as in the 1990s.

In February 1957, Rosenbröijer explained to her readers the difference between the words *elegant* and *chic*. Actually, the word chic had emerged already in the fashion ateliers of the previous century, but obviously it was not widely used, as it was re-introduced in the 1950s. A mathematical solution could be elegant but not chic. That is, elegance had to be simple, sophisticated and without any exaggeration or unnecessity. Instead, chic referred to a personal, superficial and temporary effect. A chic woman could be dressed in any clothes, not necessarily *couture*. A *couturier* could provide a woman with elegance but not with a personal chic style. Mannequins had this chic stylishness. That was why they were so sought after to work with *couturiers*.[144]

Italy was another country which Rosenbröijer knew well and visited often. She found some excellent points in Italian fashion, but they were mainly materials, especially the Agosti Collection in Milan, and craftsmanship. As for *couture*, however interesting things she viewed, she held to her own opinion that there was nothing comparable to Paris.[145] She wrote about Italians even in a condescending style from the point of view of "the [French] nation which has the refined intelligence which totally lacks any complex of inferiority." The French "have treated Italians as a gifted child who deserves all encouragement."[146] In September 1951, she had a persuading argument to support her opinions: the Duchess of Windsor had turned down an invitation to see Italian *couture* in Florence, although she was in the city.[147] Furthermore she wrote:

> It is even more unfortunate to Italian couture that both Italian and foreign press have written quite openly that Italians do not create anything. Instead, they are entirely dependent on French influence.[…] More than anything else Dior's collections of 1948 and 1950 have been imitated in Italian designs.[148]

A couple of months later, Rosenbröijer praised the unique taste that existed only in France. The exceptional extravagance concerning ideas, money and talent created the soil in which taste flourished. She defended it against both Italian and American fashions. She had seen in

Paris a few American fashion experts, who had been attracted to Italy but whose verdict on its *couture* was as crushing as her own. Italians could not compete with the French because they lacked creative talent.[149] Somehow, some years later in 1955, after a visit to Italy, she finally consented to admit that, after France, Italy was the only country which had its own refined taste.[150]

There was no way of getting around the fact that Marquis Emilio Pucci attracted the attention of the whole fashion world in 1954, when he received the "fashion Oscar", Nieman-Marcus prize in Dallas. Two years later Rosenbröijer spent enough time in Florence to get acquainted with the designer, his fashion collection, famous fabrics, and the headquarters of the production in his historical palazzo. She had to give credit both to this Italian nobleman-designer and his fashions.[151]

The Italian dependence on French fashion has been reported in the histories of Italian fashion. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Fascist regime made numerous efforts to make Italian fashion independent (Paulicelli 2004). Before these efforts Paris was the main source of inspiration, and Dior's appearance on the fashion scene, at the latest, rendered the efforts towards independence empty again. However, the Italians did not always simply copy French designs as such, but rather, they were "translated" and adapted to Italian taste (Peri 1991, White 2000: 75–78). The attitude of the Italians towards French fashion was surprisingly similar to that of the Finns, who also spoke about adapting or applying fashion to a different country (e.g. Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2002: 67). Rosenbröijer did not write any remarks on this, although she must have noticed this similarity.

It was understandable that Italian *couture*, *alta moda*, did not enjoy the same kind of prestige as the Paris *haute couture*. It was not only a question of taste and quality. While Paris was the only absolute capital of fashion where *grand couturiers* were organized and press shows were clearly scheduled, Italy suffered from the competition inside the country. Buyers preferred to go to Rome while the press preferred Florence. This was harmful, and the powerful press authority Carmel Snow gave her judgement. She shared Rosenbröijer's opinion that fabrics are interesting in Italy but real *couture* designs only exist in Paris.[152]

Yet, it is surprising how little credit Rosenbröijer gave to Italy's cultural history. In spite of the interruption caused by the Fascist regime and the war, Italy had a splendid history with its roots especially in the renaissance era. The country did not have similar sources of wealth in the colonies as France did and of which Rosenbröijer often reminded her readers. No doubt, Italy was the less wealthy country of the two. However, in the circles of *couture* clients of the

1950s, which were familiar to her, people must have been well aware of Italian concepts such as *la bella figura*, *la sprezzatura*, and *la dolce vita* (Paulicelli 2004: 1–15), all connected with the same forms of life that Rosenbröijer cherished in France. *Sprezzatura* represented the careless elegance which was so well learned and rehearsed that it felt and appeared to be an in-born quality—not very different from French nonchalance. Maybe life in Italy was just too *dolce* for Rosenbröijer, who preferred more reserved forms of elegance.

Meanwhile, Americans attracted Paris *couturiers* to create *confection* designs for them. Rosenbröijer saw them pressed between two powers. On one side, there were the enormous profits which were appreciated by the financial directors of *couture* houses. On the other side, *couturiers* were openly blamed for submitting to work for nouveau-riche taste and the vulgar ideology that aims to lay its hands on ready-made things without any effort or sophistication. After all, however excellent *confection* could ever become, *couture* was as necessary for it as a laboratory was for the best-organized factory. However, it had to be admitted in 1952 that American taste had developed after Paris *couturiers* had started to have an effect on American *confection*.[153]

But to keep up with fashion and good taste, being in Paris was necessary. Rosenbröijer wanted to show this with the example of Sophie, her mannequin friend, who returned from America:

> […] she had an impression that she came from the countryside and knew nothing about fashion. As long as she was in America, she felt that there were all sorts of beautiful things and that the difference with Paris was not so great. So quickly an eye may get used to it.[154]

At the same time when Americans attracted French *couturiers*, Italian fashion potential was noticed, too. It took a form quite different from flirting with French *couturiers*. American technological and marketing know-how fueled Italian fashion industry, which eventually raised to world fame. The connection was manifold: financial support, involvement in the industrial organization in Italy, cultural model, and a keen market (White 2000). This was not noticed, or at least not reported, by Rosenbröijer who preferred to focus on *couture*.

Britain was less often mentioned in the newsletters, but Rosenbröijer did not hesitate to give her judgement as she did when commenting on Princess Margaret's outfit during her visit in Paris in 1952: "Everything was very well made in London but lacking the hallmark of

Parisian sophistication." And to complete this, she told that the Princess did not hide her fall for French fashion.[155]

The praise of the superiority of French elegance reached its highest peak in the report from the Cannes Film Festival in 1954:

> Of course, they [the wives of American millionaires] were impressive in their dresses from Paris salons and their jewelry from Rue de la Paix and Fifth Avenue. But all this vanished like ashes in the air on the side of the superior elegance of French women. As often before, we could note now that elegance, just as all refined culture, must be passed down as a legacy through many generations.[156]

Rosenbröijer also reported another, much more practical and down-to-earth difference between French and American women, which was originally presented by an American fashion influencer Mrs. Lambert:

> […] in their relation to fashion, American women are not nearly as independent as Frenchwomen. An American woman wants advice and guidance, but a Frenchwoman has a hunch of fashion already before it comes around and she forces the fashion to suit her according to her own personality. Every Frenchwoman is a *couturier* in her soul, and she can judge a cut like a technician. The American woman has no such experience. The second big difference is that the Frenchwoman wears a dress for a long time, takes care of it, and wants to have a perfect cut, whereas the American woman prefers to change her dress. The American woman prefers to throw away her dress as soon as it has lost its first freshness.[157]

Elegance depended both on French culture and the individual brought up to it. Civilized manners and refinement of dress developed through generations did not suffice for elegance. It was vital that an elegant woman knew her own personality. She had to know her faults and let experts explain, compensate and solve them for her.[158] Good taste could be a gift of birth or a consequence of a woman's own efforts to develop it. To clarify the connection of taste and elegance, Rosenbröijer quoted her journalist colleague's book *Guide de l'Élégance*. According to Jacqueline du Pasquier:

> Elegance depends on taste and taste must be developed from the childhood on. Elegance is always individual, because what suits one woman supposedly does not suit another. Elegance is not obtained with money. A well-brought-up woman who is dressed simply is more elegant than a woman who is dressed by a grand couturier but who speaks loudly and moves clumsily. A vulgar woman can never be elegant. An elegant woman is never a slave of fashion. Fashion suggests, but elegance rules. She chooses from fashion only what suits her. Knowing oneself and observing oneself are the necessary conditions of elegance.[159]

The unfailing and experienced taste of the Frenchwoman was both inspiring and demanding for c*outuriers*. Thus, the basis of elegance was in the client herself, because: "There is no *couturier* who could save a woman of bad taste, as she would ruin the creation with ugly accessories or colors."[160]

11 Birth and lifecycle of fashion

The *grands couturiers* are often seen as geniuses, creative individuals and dictators of fashion, and if not quite so, at least the beauty of female fashion from the large part of the 20th century is presented in their name. There is no doubt about this if one looks at the piles of thick, glossy publications which carry *couturiers'* names on their covers. The best known of them, Christian Dior (1957/2007: 12–14), put this in a perspective, at least on his own part, when he wrote about the formation of the fashion house in his name. He gave great credit to Madame Raymonde, whom he called "my other half [… who] has supplied me with all those qualities which I have never had time to acquire for myself," and Madame Marguerite [Carré], to whom he specifically created a post of *directrice technique* and whose sphere extended to the whole of Maison Dior.

Gurli Rosenbröijer summarized this as follows: Madame Marguerite made the impossible to be possible, and Madame Raymonde looked for those accessories that allegedly did not exist.[161] Dior (ibid.) also noted that an individual dress was the work of many different hands, and the collection itself was the work of a multitude of different workrooms and

designers, inspired by secret jealousies. But then again, only the personal taste of the head of the house existed to give a certain unity to an otherwise heterogeneous assembly of garments.

Exercising his or her taste to achieve coherent guidelines of a collection was a more realistic approach to a *couturier* than perceiving his or her work as that of a single-handed genius. However, even the best of taste did not succeed if it did not find an echo of acceptance from journalists, foreign buyers, and above anyone else, *Parisiennes*—the ideal target group of *haute couture*. All of them were able to analyze fashion and they knew how new fashions emerged.[162]

A collection did not have to based on a single idea in order to be coherent. In 1955, Rosenbröijer wanted to speak for the autumn collection of Givenchy, which had been both blamed and praised abroad. She explained that, as a creative fashion artist, Givenchy had independent ideas, such that would have an effect on general fashion later on. Thus, those people who looked at the collection subjectively might discard some of his ideas.[163] The term *subjective looking* did not appear repeatedly, but it is interesting because of its opposite, *general looking*, which is not mentioned but which an experienced journalist had to exercise. She had to be sensitive to both the smallest details and the whole. And she had to realize which features would function as baits that would, or would not, capture the interest of the *Parisienne* in the future.

In Rosenbröijer's texts, the *couturiers* were central and celebrated figures. She wrote about them as great artists and about *haute couture* as a particular branch of art.[164] But even if they were treated as artists, she did not consider them to be the sole source of creativity and the origin of fashion. Fashion was something that was constantly incubating in Paris: amidst the *Parisiennes*, art and culture at large. Paris was "a boiling kettle"[165] that *couturiers* observed. Their part was to distill new styles from this process and crystallize them in their new collections. To convince her readers, Rosenbröijer quoted Antonio Castillo, the new *couturier* at Maison Lanvin, who said: "[…] it is quite wrong to believe that fashion artists create fashion. Fashion creates itself. The skill and talent of fashion artists lie in the fact that they invent an already existing fashion."[166] This is also why Rosenbröijer argues that Paris journalists were rarely surprised by anything they see in the collections. They already unconsciously knew the new as they had seen it coming in Paris.[167]

> At this time of the year, we begin to get a hint of what a *Parisienne* thinks about new fashion.The first thing that can be observed is that, at the same time with the garçonne

> outfit, the masculine, classic tailleur is disappearing for the first time in many years. Actually, couturiers have been attacking it already for a long time, but the *Parisienne* has stubbornly kept hold of this suit, which has resembled a masculine outfit and which has been so comfortable. Now it seems that the time has come when she has got bored of it. Until now, against the couturiers' wishes, she has wanted to have them, also for evening wear, and the couturiers have been obliged to make them for her, although they have never thought of tailleurs as anything but before-noon wear. However, it is impossible for them to get their own wishes through, if the *Parisienne* is against them. This is good to remember for all of those who think that couturiers decide what is in fashion.[168]

This conception of the interplay between the *couturier* and the *Parisienne* was very clearly expressed in the newsletter which was written in October 1949, but the same idea was present throughout Rosenbröijer's texts. In spite of this: "In reality, there was no new fashion before it was crystallized in a couple of thousands of models, in the collections *grand couturiers* in Paris."[169] This sounded paradoxical but was not. Fashion was incubating in the interplay but *Parisiennes* were not able to announce it to the world. That was a task of the *couturiers.*

If the *couturier* was at least a little demystified, it may seem that the *Parisienne* was mystified instead. However, Rosenbröijer did not actually mystify the *Parisienne*. Rather, this was her short-hand expression for what she had known all her life and what she was observing all the time. In fact, at an early stage of the Second World War, *couturier* Lucien François (quoted in Veillon 1990: 34) wrote, quite bluntly, that it was a quasi-duty of the *Parisiennes* to remain coquette:

> The day they cease to be coquette, one half of Paris will be unemployed because the foreigners would no longer want things that would not be created in response to the needs of women here […]. Each woman in Paris is a living poster of propaganda […] the universal function of the *Parisienne* is to remain coquette.

Rosenbröijer found that if one wanted to understand fashion, it was vitally important to live in Paris and make constant observations of dress: what was selected from the collections, how the dresses were adapted to different personalities, and what were the thousands of details through which fashion developed slowly but unceasingly. About twenty percent of the designs

in any collection were surprisingly new, and it was those designs that the foreigners bought, as well as the ones that were written about in the press. Yet they were not the ones typical for Paris elegance.[170] Only being in continuous touch with fashion as it was worn made it possible to understand fashion. Fashion did not blossom one day but evolved slowly and consistently every day of the year.[171] Although foreign buyers and income brought by them were important, finally the whole world tuned to look at what the *Parisienne* chose.

Seeing collections was only part of knowing. It did not provide a full understanding. If a foreign journalist came to Paris twice a year in order to see the collections, she could not have an educated and experienced eye to distinguish all of the fine details of a *couture* collection. She could be tempted to report only sensations. The difference was described as follows:

> This kind of annoyance is nothing new among the French journalists. This is repeated every year, because foreign journalists tend to be interested in those few exaggerated designs which attract attention and with which the *couturier*-artist plays and amuses him/herself as he/she pleases. As soon as these come out, the French journalists put their pens down and smile, benevolently and critically. The foreigners, instead, begin to write with full speed, which they have completely lost while looking at extremely discreet and simple models, which always form the majority [of a collection]. However, they are just these latter styles that are characteristic of each collection, while the few exaggerated models are a kind of a power effort of pushing through a new line. But it is much more difficult to write about the understated models. For that purpose, you have to live in Paris.[172]

Here Rosenbröijer indicates that she completely identified with the French journalists. And she was one of them. She was among the local professionals who were invited to receptions and presentations of novelties, all round the year and not just at the time of introducing new collections. At the end of 1953, Rösenbröijer made an exceptionally long trip to Finland and Sweden. After having been away from Paris for two months, she had a lot to catch up with. At the beginning of her newsletter in January 1954, she wrote quite feverishly:

> After being away for two months, my French colleagues and myself have an impression of Paris as a flaming forest fire, a sparkling labyrinth of ideas. In our kaleidoscopic circumstances, fashion rockets launch their spark cascades to the sky without

> interruption. They flame, glow and die before we have time to pick up more than only a few of them. Each of us sees the dazzling fireworks only from one's own point of view. That is why it is necessary for us to exchange continually our thoughts about "Paris", not only some private views but with everybody. Information about the luxury of Paris closes like a jungle, unless you clear your way every day.[173]

Rosenbröijer was very convinced that only living in Paris could help to understand fashion and educate the eye to see the variety of styles that were offered to women and how different women made their choices. Her fashion reports differed dramatically from the usual conception of *haute couture* of the "golden age" and, for example, from what Anne Price, a British journalist (quoted in Wilson 2003: 86) said: "[…] in those days we were reporting one look, *the* look. That was what fashion was about." This may well reflect what was expected in other countries where *haute couture* was looked up to and where no newspaper or magazine was willing to give space for variety, which would have been even confusing. At the same time when Rosenbröijer wrote about the *Parisiennes* as if they had made a collective decision, she wrote about their individuality, too. According to her, there were always many fashions in Paris.[174] She could tell how high the hem was from the floor and how it had changed since the previous year in such and such collection, but she did not fail to remind the reader that, in Paris, all dresses were adapted to a woman's personality and body. This fact and the other proportions of a dress, materials and colors were the key elements of elegance.[175] Her mannequin friend Sophie was an example of the *Parisienne*, who was not dependent on fashion but who knew fashion, that is, she knew what would stay in the near future.[176] The *Parisienne* was never a slave of centimeters,[177] and not a slave of fashion, which served her. Elegance was not a question of money but rather of good taste, consideration, and taking as good care of her clothes as of herself.[178]

Furthermore, who wore a dress made a difference. There were very special women who were not only clients but who fed *couturiers'* inspiration, such as Odette Massigli, the wife of the French ambassador in London, Lolita Lavier, Hélène Rochas, Marlene Dietrich—and not to mention Duchess of Windsor,[179] and Audrey Hepburn for Givenchy.[180] Furthermore, there were daughters of important families, who had grown up in the Paris atmosphere.

> Just they [upper-class daughters] become clients without whom there is no haute couture, real women of pedigree whose assortative gaze makes a *couturier* tremble like

> a leaf at the same time when their sovereign elegance is like champagne for his/her creating talent. […] from among them rise the society stars whose taste will be decisive to the great fashion of Paris. For the Paris couturier, it is more valuable that one of them orders two dresses from his/her house than that somebody nouveau riche orders thirty dresses. Genuine elegance attracts the new rich people like a candle attracts a flock of moths. And that is good [financially].[181]

The vital importance of the client's role in the selection and acceptance of new designs in Rosenbröijer's conception of fashion is akin to Herbert Blumer's (1969) theory of collective selection as an explanation of how fashion is born and spreads. As a scholar of fashion, Blumer observed both fashion designers and foreign buyers in pre-war Paris—although he published his theory 30 years later in 1969, the year of Rosenbröijer's last newsletters. Blumer had two main findings. First, buyers (seemingly) independently made amazingly identical choices at the fashion openings. It was a world of close concern with the prevailing tastes and prospective tastes of consuming public. And second, and perhaps more importantly, Blumer found this same phenomenon of collectivity among designers. Dress designers develop an intimate familiarity with the most recent expressions of modernity in areas such as the fine arts, contemporary literature, political debates and happenings and discourse in the sophisticated world. They continually translate themes both from these areas and media into dress design. They seek to catch the proximate future as it is revealed in modern developments. This responsiveness in its more extended form is the chief factor of a Zeitgeist, a spirit of the time (ibid: 279–280, 283).

The same idea of *couturiers'* necessity of knowing what was happening in the cultural and social life was present in several of Rosenbröijer's newsletters. She noted that "each of the twenty *grand couturiers* of Paris worked completely alone without a common understanding among their colleagues, but all of them continuously observed fashion, i.e. successful designs, during the season. No one had seen the collections of the others, but everybody knew what the others had done."[182]

While Blumer observed the buyers at the time of the collections, Rosenbröijer wrote both about buyers and *couturiers'* concessions to foreign tastes, but, more importantly, about the tastes of *Parisiennes* and their responses to the collections as well as their ways of dressing between collections. In her view, the most important selection took place among the *Parisiennes*, and that was the main concern of any *couturier*.[183]

Thus, in spite of certain similarities, Rosenbröijer's view of fashion differed from both Blumer (1969), who observed foreign buyers and designers only at the time of the collection showings, and from Barthes (1983: 8), who based his analysis on fashion magazines and argued that "fashion changes abruptly each year, but during the year it is absolutely stable." Barthes has not been alone with his conception of fashion as something short-lived. Gilles Lipovestky (1987) maintained the same idea of ephemerality when naming his book on fashion *L'empire de l'éphémère.* In contrast, Rosenbröijer reminded her readers several times of the fact that fashion changed slowly. A *couturier* would never wish that his/her client's dress looked old-fashioned during the following season. New dresses had to be in harmony with the dresses that a Frenchwoman continued to wear from the previous season.[184] When approximately 200 outfits of a collection were shown, they had to be new but, at the same time, they had to convince about the continuity in fashion.[185] Sometimes it took years for a new design to become really fashionable, and on the other hand, it could take 10 to 20 years for a *grand couturies's* dress to become completely unfashionable. They were like masters' paintings which, in the right surroundings, always looked good and resisted time.[186]

Barthes (1967/1983), writing about the arbitrariness of the sign, compared linguistic signs [words] with fashion. He claimed that although words as signifiers were relatively unmotivated in their relation to their signified [a real-world object, for example], they were not arbitrary. On the contrary, in the fashion system, according to Barthes, the signs were relatively arbitrary. The justification of this argument was that "it [fashion] is elaborated each year, not by the mass of its users (which would be the equivalent of the 'speaking mass' which produces language), but by an exclusive authority, i.e. the editors of the magazines" (p. 215).

Barthes drew his conclusions from his data, of course, and that data were magazines. Thus, when reading Barthes, one must think of fashion as it is presented in magazines, not as fashion as it is worn on human bodies. In contrast, Rosenbröijer observed fashion as it was worn and as it was presented by the *couturiers,* the presumed authorities. Her reports revealed much more about the two-way observation and communication between these two groups than what has been usually discussed in fashion and *couture* literature.

Furthermore, Rosenbröijer noted that "Frenchwomen were exceedingly quick in inventing new ways of presenting fashion details in ways that were flattering to them."[187] This type of notes reveal that she was very well aware of the consumers' side of fashion. She noticed the same phenomena as Fred Davis (1992) who wrote about ambiguities, the not-so-fixed meanings of fashion, and individuals' ambivalences which were solved with fashion.

Even if the *couture* clients could not be called "speaking masses," they were consumers of clothes who had—and solved —their ambivalences with fashion and who interpreted the ambiguities of fashion.

One more difference is that Barthes (1983) saw real clothing being burdened with practical considerations, while written clothing had no practical or aesthetic function and was unencumbered by any parasitic function and entails no vague temporality (p.8). Gurli Rosenbröijer was concerned with practical matters of clothing and wrote about them in very different contexts. During the visit of the Queen of England to Paris in 1957, she wrote about various tricks related to Queen Elizabeth's hats. She also explained which practical viewpoints determined the width of her skirts: a narrow, tight-fitting skirt did not drape down properly, whereas a wide skirt was unthinkable because a sudden wind might catch it, and the Queen was not supposed to use her hands in order to arrange her clothes.[188]

Rosenbröijer saw the changing role of women in French society and everyday life. The care of clothes became a concern of women, also among the well-off fashion audience, who had more and more difficulties in finding service people to their homes.[189] The texts also related a lot about working women of France in the 1950s, such as office staff and especially those in fashion production and marketing: dressmakers, *vendeuses*, mannequins and directresses of fashion houses. Even those who could use services in daily life appreciated practicality on holidays and when traveling, and eventually at all times.

Political, economic, social, cultural and scientific achievements and happenings have had an impact on the development of fashion, and early observation of them has helped to forecast fashion (e.g. Nuutinen 2004: 11). Certain films and their iconic figures, such as young James Dean and Audrey Hepburn, have spread fashion, although not actually by creating it, but by drawing from already existing styles (e.g. Craik 2009: 118). Gurli Rosenbröijer rarely discussed cultural or other events as direct triggers of fashion, although they were important in its background. The interaction between films and fashion was her topic several times, but she rather reported about how *couturiers* as costume designers were ahead of time so that the film costumes were quite up-to-date with the fashion of the day when the films came out.[190] And the annual Cannes film festival and the weddings of famous people were described more often as scenes of the splendor of Paris fashion than the scene of styles to be followed.[191] However, there were some examples in which the style or item seen on the Riviera became fashionable in Paris, for example, the gold thread moccasins of a film star and sandals made of the fabric of the dress they were worn with.[192]

Grace Kelly was someone very special among all celebrities of the 1950s, as she combined the glamour of a film star and a duchess. Her wedding with Prince Rainier of Monaco in 1956 was a fashion parade. Although her wedding dress was designed in the USA, there were many other important dresses of hers and guests which came from Paris *couture* houses.[193] The Grace Kelly boom was not only about dresses but the female type. *Couture* houses wanted to employ her look-alikes as mannequins, whom Rosenbröijer recognized at least at the houses of Patou and Lecomte.[194]

The state visit of Queen Elizabeth II in Paris in April 1957 was not only an event of huge public interest, but it also caused several different waves in fashion. Unlike her way of relating to Italians, Rosenbröijer praised the charm of the Queen and her good taste. *Couturiers a*nd jewelers received an exceptional number of orders, of course, but not necessarily influenced by Englishness. The Paris milliners were most grateful as the visit caused an enormous boom of hats. They were ordered in great numbers for official receptions but they also regained their more general fashionability which had been declining.[195] There was an unprecedented interest in English woolen fabrics, and *Parisiennes* expressed their pleasure in sweaters and cardigans in English style. Rose motives became fashionable in fabrics, and blue—the Queen's favorite color—became the most fashionable color. The enthusiasm for Englishness also reached men's fashion, which was seen especially in ties and blazers.[196]

Gurli Rosenbröijer was tired because of the royal visit, which meant much more work than a normal spring season. Yet, she must have been very happy with everything she had experienced herself and what she had heard from her aristocratic friends who participated in the official program. As much as she loved la République française, she was a fervent royalist, too.

12 Conclusions

Gurli Rosenbröijer wrote her fashion newsletters to the recipients whom she knew and who were fashion professionals themselves. Most, if not all, of the readers of her newsletters had been in Paris, and she herself had guided them to the world of *haute couture* and high-quality fabric suppliers.

> I know personally all those few persons who read these [newsletters], and when I am writing I feel as if I were sitting and chatting with them. In such conversations one can tell all sort of things, which cannot be printed.[197]

The rhetoric employed by Rosenbröijer in the description of fashion was rather poor, which in Barthes' (1967/1983) terms meant strong denotation. This corresponded to a socially higher audience who could obtain fashion items, while the opposite, a strong rhetoric would correspond to a more popular audience with less possibilities of obtaining the described items (p. 244).

The fashion magazines analyzed by Barthes were aimed at fashion consumers, end-users. The audience of the fashion newsletters analyzed here was not end-users, and there was no need to consider whether they could or could not obtain the object of the description. They simply wanted to get a concise report in order to be able to form their own view of what was going on. Any further appeal to them would have come across as strange. As for mediating the Paris atmosphere and interesting events in the fashion world, the style was different. The language was more colorful and gave an impression of the writer as a participant rather than as an outside observer.

All through the golden age of *couture*, Rosenbröijer's connection and attitude towards *couture* and French culture remained the same. According to her, fashion changed slowly but did so all the time, while her relationship with it did not change much with the exception of finding new acquaintances. She disliked all vulgarity and commercial tricks as much as the *couturiers* who tried to avoid them. But she understood the necessity of launching branded items for department stores and country towns because they formed an essential part of the financial resources for *haute couture*. She saw the enormous development that took place in the field of fashion production and how the efforts of designers and factory owners aimed for the best of women who wished to be elegant without the money and time that were required

from the *couture* clients. Her attitude towards ready-made clothes changed in the same pace as *confection* itself developed in quality and became more acceptable. Yet, most of the reports concerning ready-made clothes were about *prêt-à-porter des couturiers* or some form of high-end boutique clothes. Dressing the masses remained in the horizon, somewhere coming but not yet really interesting as fashion.

Although the newsletters were basically written in order to relate fashion news, there was a wider and deeper effort to educate the readers and help them to understand French culture. Rosenbröijer knew the Nordic countries as well as she knew France. Gradually Finnish *couturiers* were able to acquire materials from the same suppliers as Paris *couture* (Koskennurmi-Sivonen 1998: 320), but the scale of *couture* and the circumstances of social life were different in the country which let out a sigh of relief when Finland paid the last war indemnities to the Soviet Union in 1952. This may not have had any direct connection with spending on fashion, but definitely it had an impact on the spirits of the country and focusing on people's own consumption instead of the common efforts.

Rosenbröijer's newsletters contained a great deal of information, arguments and opinions of the elegance of Frenchwomen and the superiority of French culture. It was not only a question of her almost fanatic Francophilia. There was a deeper meaning and a clear message to the recipients as *couturiers*. They could enhance the elegance of their clients with their own creations and with the information and ideas retrieved from the cradle of elegance. They used this knowledge in more or less diplomatic ways depending on their personalities and psychological skills. However, their possibilities of changing the style sense of an adult woman were limited if the client had not acquired a proper base of taste and solid self-confidence. Fashion, style and appearance are a matter of a person just as much as clothing:

A woman must carry her clothes; the clothes do not carry a woman. (Chanel 1957)[198]

Data availability statement

Gurli Rosenbröijer's newsletters # 11–100 (1949–1957) to Atelier Aune Paasikivi analyzed for this study are in the possession of the author until the text is published. Thereafter the original letters will be given to the Design Museum Helsinki, Finland. This has been discussed and agreed upon with the museum. The author will keep the scanned copies.

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Endnotes

1 The first Finnish airline company, Aero, later Finnair, had been founded as early as at the end of 1923, but it did not quickly secure a direct flight connection Helsinki–Paris. *The History of Finnair.*

When G. Rosenbröijer informs her readers about her Christmastime visits to Finland and Sweden during the 1950s, she sometimes mentions that she flies to Helsinki on a certain date and then continues from Helsinki to Stockholm on a passenger ship. In the newsletter 42, August 1952, she mentions Le Bourget, the home area of mannequin Praline, and refers to it as a name that those readers recognize who have come to Paris by air.

2 Both of these newsletter collections are currently in my possession. The letters written in Finnish are in their original form, that is, thin silk paper sheets. I have had them scanned in order not to handle the fragile paper. The other collection has been photocopied. I am not aware of the existence or location of the originals.

3 Quite obviously, there have been milliners among the readers as hats and milliners are sometimes described in detail (e.g. newsletter 14, March 1950), although the main focus is on *haute couture* and other forms of female clothing fashion.

4 Newsletter 13, December 1949: Fabienne, Carven's mannequin; Newsletter 23, January 1951: Captain Molyneux, Sophie, a mannequin of Jacques Fath. Newsletters 24, February 1951; 77, October 1955: Jacques Heim. Rosenbröijer was a member of the jury in an international fashion drawing competition in Maison Heim. Newsletter 31, September 1951: Elsa Schiaparelli; Newsletter 36, February 1952: Bettina, the former star model of Fath moved to Givenchy; Newsletters 32, October 1951; 65, September 1954: Germaine Lecomte; Newsletter 41, July 1952: Madame de Vilmorin who owned the short-lived house of Crahay, which merged with Nina Ricci in 1952.; Newsletter 35, January 1952: Dior's *vendeuse* Mademoiselle Maguite. In this context Rosenbröijer explained that French people do not use their titles. Maguite was actually married and a countess, but at work she was Mademoiselle. Newsletter 59, March 1954: Madame Alphandery, the press manager of Chanel.

5 Newsletter 13, December 1949 mentions 50 members; Newsletter 42, August 1952 mentions 80 members. Newsletter 33, November 1951: The importance of constant presence in Paris is most clearly explained in this newsletter but the same message can be read all through the correspondence. Newsletter 49, March 1953: "One cannot give any judgement of fashion if one has not seen the 20 best couture collections."

6 Newsletters 72, May 1955; 74, July 1955; 85, July 1956; 86, August 1956.
7 Newsletter 101, December 1957.
8 Helsinki Evangelical Lutheran Congregation Ref. # NSv 5-1047.

9 Newsletter 40, June 1952; In the newsletter 45, November 1952 GR mentioned that she was a client of Philippe et Gaston, Marcel Boussac's first fashion house after the World War I. Newsletter 34, December 1951: Rosenbröijer had been Patou's client before the World War II.

10 Newsletter 30, August 1951.

11 E.g. Newsletter 15, April 1950: Childhood friend Count de Masclary; Newsletter 30, August 1951: Count André de Fouquieres, a friend for 25 years; Newsletter 100, November 1957: Goddaughter; Only in one newsletter 35, January 1952, Rosenbröijer mentioned her husband's close French friends, when she visited their son in Morocco. This indicates that Mr. Rosenbröijer had his own connection with France just as his wife. In the same letter she mentioned her acquaintance with Prince Marc de Beauvau and his family and another aristocrat, Duke Francois de la Rochefouvauld and his family.

12 Newsletter 27, May 1951.
13 Svensk författarlexikon/ 1. 1900–1940 A–Ö. Project Runeberg. Rosenbröijer-Sevón, Gurli.

14 Diploma of MA degree written to Gurli Sofie Ingeborg Sevón at Section of History and Philosophy of the Faculty of History at the Kejserliga Alexanders-Universitetet i Finland (later the University of Helsinki). The Archive of the University of Helsinki.

15 Helsinki Evangelical Lutheran Congregation Ref. # NSv 5-1047.

16 Helsinki Evangelical Lutheran Congregation Ref. # NSv 5-1047; Suomen sodissa 1939–1945 menehtyneet. (Deceased in the 1939–1945 Wars in Finland)The National Archives of Finland.This document mentions that E. B. Rosenbröijer's native language was Finnish and that the death was not caused by the hostilities of the enemy.

17 Svensk författarlexikon/ 1. 1900–1940 A–Ö. Project Runeberg. Rosenbröijer-Sevón, Gurli.

18 Helsinki Evangelical Lutheran Congregation Ref. # NSv 5-1047. Gurli Sevón-Rosenbröijer's business card in the archive of couturière Riitta Immonen in references of Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2008, also Newsletter 37, March 1952 : all contacts in Finland through Miss Mertoja of *Uusi Suomi*.
Obviously she had a professional contact with the Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet*, as in the Newsletter 13, from December 1949 she mentioned that Elisabeth Falk of that newspaper knows where she will stay on her trip to Sweden.

19 *Muotikuva* appeared only four times a year. Thus the issue number 4 came out at the end of 1946. "Travelers abroard" who had been to France and England were more impressed by Paris itself and the stylish *Parisiennes* than any particular novelty. Dior's first collection was presented only shortly after their visit in February 1947, which might have made more difference than what they saw in 1946.

20 Newsletter 17, June 1950. In this newsletter Rosenbröijer addresses her two male readers. Kaarlo Forsman may have been one of then, although he preferred it not to be known.

21 "Kudottua eleganssia" *Viuhka* 3/1950.

22 As part of the newsletter sets overlap in time and their running numbers, it is possible to compare the Finnish and Swedish texts. They consist of the same information from sentence to sentence.

23 Newsletter 41, July 1952.
24 Newsletter 13, December 1949.

25 Helsinki Evangelical Lutheran Congregation Ref. # NSv 5-1047. This document mentions her as a present member of the Northern Swedish congregation of Helsinki January 30, 1968, and as an absent member January 1, 1956. Newsletter 221, September 1969, gives no hint of being the last one, but it is the last one available.

26 Newsletter 100, November, 1957.
27 Newsletter 60, April 1954.

28 Newsletters 11, October 1949; 31, September 1951; 65, September 1954; 66, October 1954; 79, December 1955; 86, August 1956.

29 Newsletters 11, October 1949; 79, December 1955.
30 Newsletters 66, October 1954; 70, March 1955; 80, February 1956.

31 Newsletters 11, October 1949; 62, June 1954. Newsletters 38, April 1952 and 87, September 1956: Scandals of publishing images too early.).

32 Newsletter 62, June 1954: the schedule in the description of Dior's process.
33 Newsletters 81, March 1956; 82, April 1956; 88, October 1956.
34 Newsletters 31, September 1951; 37, March 1952; 88, October 1956.

35 Newsletter 43, September 1952.
36 Newsletters 31, September 1951; 43, September 1952.
37 Newsletter 44, October 1952.
38 Newsletter 25, March 1951.
39 Newsletter 43, September 1952.
40 Newsletter 61, May 1954.
41 Newsletter 68, December 1954.
42 Newsletter 85, July 1956.
43 Newsletter 92, March 1957.
44 Newsletter 92, March 1957.
45 Newsletter 68, December 1954.

46 Newsletter 77, October 1955; 83, May 1956 (The *haute couture* system was explained again, now with boutiques.)

47 The *haute couture* houses which appear in the newsletters are the same which can be found listed by Madeleine Chapsal (1989: 371–376) and by Delpierre (1997: 11–27). The exact number of houses vary; for example Lelong closed in 1949; Molyneux, Fath, Schiaparelli and Worth closed, and Givenchy and Laroche opened and Chanel reopened in the 1950s.

48 Newsletter 15, April 1950. It is no secret that sketches were bought from freelancers. Before working with Piguet and Lelong, Dior sold his sketches to many *haute couturiers.* According to Palmer, Chambre Syndicale eliminated this practice after the war (Palmer 2009, 12–13), but obviously it continued. Dior's early career is described also in Newsletter 14, March 1950.

49 Newsletter 42, August 1952.
50 Newsletter 51, May 1953.
51 Newsletter 48, February 1953.
52 Newsletter 68, December 1954.
53 Newsletter 100, November 1957.
54 Newsletters 15, April 1950; 42, August 1952. 55 Newsletter 80, February 1956,
56 Newsletter 12, November 1949.
57 Newsletter 38, April 1952.
58 Newsletter 77, October 1955.
59 Newsletters 13, December 1949; 16, May 1950.
60 Newsletters 14, March 1950; 40, June 1952; 65, September 1954. 61 Newsletter 19, August 1950.
62 Newsletter 54, August 1953.
63 Newsletter 44, October 1952. 64 Newsletter 15, April 1950.
65 Newsletter 12, November 1949. 66 Newsletter 13, December 1949. 67 Newsletter 15, April 1950.
68 Newsletter 15, April 1950.
69 Newsletter 26, April 1951.
70 Newsletters 44, October 1952; 53, July 1953.
71 Newsletter 77, October 1955.
72 Newsletter 15, April 1950.
73 Newsletter 17, June 1950.
74 Newsletters 18, July 1950; 61, May 1954.
75 Newsletter 18, July 1950.
76 Newsletter 11, October 1949.
77 Newsletter 62, June 1954.

78 Newsletters 46, December 1952; 49, March 1953; The day after Rosenbröijer had a meeting with Mr. Lempereur, she was in a car accident: unconscious and with a broken arm. The layout of the newsletter 46 is somewhat different from the other ones. Apparently Mrs. de Milleret wrote it according to Rosenbröijer's dictation in hospital.

79 Newsletter 49, March 1953,

80 Newsletter 51, May 1953.
81 Newsletter 51, May 1953; 61, May 1954.
82 Newsletter 69, February 1955.
83 Newsletter 72, May 1955.
84 Newsletters 61, May 1954; 84, June 1956.
85 Newsletter 61, May 1954.
86 Newsletter 94, May 1957.
87 Newsletter 91, February 1957.
88 Newsletter 91, February 1957.
89 Newsletter 77, October 1955.
90 Newsletter 99, October 1957.
91 Newsletter 91, February 1957.
92 Newsletters 60, April 1954; 74, July 1955.
93 Newsletter 72, May 1955.

94 Newsletters 42, August 1952 (Praline's funeral); 80, February 1956 (Bettina and Ali Khan); 83, May 1956 (Brigitte and George Carpentier).

95 Newsletter 77, October 1955.
96 Newsletter 32, October 1951.
97 Newsletter 88, October 1956.
98 Newsletter 86, August 1956.
99 Newsletter 73, June 1955.

100 Newsletters 13, December 1949 and 80, February 1956 (Carven's mannequin Fabienne Borderie); Newsletter 32, October 1951(Angelina); Newsletter 26, April 1951 (Lelong's and Balmain's mannequin Janine Marsay dite Praline); Newsletter 32, October 1951 (Dior's Maria.Thérèse, Fath's Jackie, Rochas's Barbara, Lanvin-Castellos's Catherine, Heim's Teresita; Newsletter 34, December 1951 (Patou's mannequin Claude); Newsletter 36, February 1952 (Sophie); Newsletter 83, May 1956 (Brigitte) and Newsletter 93, April 1957 (Lucky); e.g.50, April 1953: (Simone Bodin dite Bettina worked for Fath, Dior and Givenchy, for whom she was also the press manager), Fabienne, Praline, Lucky and Sophie were personal acquaintances of Rosenbröijer whose lives were often mentioned. Praline also became known as an actress and told her story in a book entitled *Praline. Mannequin de Paris* (1951, Seuil). When she died in a car accident at the age of 31, "all couture world" came to the funeral as reported in the Newsletter 42, August 1952. Freddy wrote about the work of a mannequin in a book entitled *Dans les Coulisses de la Haute Couture Parisienne* (Flammarion), mentioned in the Newsletter 86, August 1956. Lucky was the chairwoman of the association of Paris mannequins and also arranged courses for future mannequins.

101 Newsletter 32, October 1951.
102 Newsletters 23, January 1951; 26, April 1951.
103 Newsletter 93, April 1957.
104 E.g. Newsletter 50, April 1953: Colette Georges's marriage to a millionaire.
105 E.g. Newsletter 42, August 1952: Praline's marriage to a well-earning doctor.
106 Newsletter 26, April 1951.
107 Newsletter 36, February 1952.

108 Newsletter 32, October 1951: (measurements of Angelina, the star of Dior); Newsletter 66, October 1954 (Moune "the flying mannequin"); Newsletter 77, October 1955 (measurements of a mannequin found to reflect Audrey Hepburn ideal).

109 Newsletter 91, February 1957.
110 Newsletter 62, June 1954.
111 Newsletters 28, June 1951; 66, October 1954.
112 Newsletter 22, November 1950.
113 Newsletter 59, March 1954.

114 Newsletters 76, September 1955; 90, December 1956; 95, June 1957.
115 Newsletters 82, April 1956.
116 Newsletter 65, September 1954.
117 Newsletter 65, September 1954.
118 Newsletter 68, December 1954.
119 Newsletter 38, April 1952.
120 Newsletter 91, February 1957 (“information club”).
121 Newsletter 99, October 1957.
122 Newsletter 74, July 1955.
123 Newsletter 49, March 1953.
124 Newsletter 65, September 1954.
125 Newsletter 40, June 1952.
126 Newsletter 18, July 1950.
127 Newsletter 65, September 1954.
128 Newsletter 92, March 1957.
129 Newsletter 87, September 1956.
130 Newsletter 38, April 1952.
131 Newsletter 82, April 1956.
132 Newsletter 14, March 1950.
133 Newsletter 76, September 1955.

134 Newsletter 31, September 1951; 82, April 1956; Newsletter 77, October 1955: Maxime de la Falaise: ”must live in Paris where ideas come flying in.”

135 Newsletter 58, February 1954.

136 Newsletter 21, October 1950. Tristan Maurice was a *couturier* who represented great elegance without being classified as *haute couture*. He created “*hors concours.”*

137 Newsletter 23, January 1951.
138 Newsletter 30, August 1951.
139 Newsletters 15, April 1950; 22, November 1950; 33, November 1951; 36, February 1952.
140 Newsletter 35, January 1952.
141 Newsletter 65, September 1954.
142 Newsletter 70, March 1955.
143 Newsletter 73, June 1955.
144 Newsletter 91, February 1957.
145 Newsletters 38, April 1952; 43, September 1952.
146 Newsletters 65, September 1954; 43, September 1952.
147 Newsletter 31, September 1951.
148 Newsletter 31, September 1951.
149 Newsletter 36, February 1952.
150 Newsletter 76, September 1955.
151 Newsletter 86, August 1956.
152 Newsletters 38, April 1952; 44, October 1952. 153 Newsletter 36, February 1952.
154 Newsletter 36, February 1952.
155 Newsletter 35, January 1952.

156 Newsletter 61, May 1954; The long history of taste through generations also Newsletters 33, November 1951; 86, July 1956.

157 Newsletter 74, July 1955.
158 Newsletter 77, October 1955.
159 Newsletter 68, December 1954. Jacqueline du Pasquier 1954 *Guide de l’Élégance*. Paris: Larousse.
160 Newsletter 44, October 1952.

161 Newsletter 24, February 1951.
162 Newsletter 66, October 1954.
163 Newsletter 77, October 1955.

164 Newsletters 23, January 1951 (Molyneux); Newsletter 30, August 1951; Newsletter 76, September 1955 (Dior); Newsletter 77, October 1955 (Givenchy, Dior and Balenciaga); 87, September 1956 (Dior); 82, April 1956.

165 Newsletter 74, July 1955.
166 Newsletter 23, January 1951. Also 44, October 1952.
167 Newsletter 81, March 1956.
168 Newsletter 12, November 1949.
169 Newsletter 68, December 1954.
170 Newsletter 49, March 1953.
171 Newsletter 55, September 1953.
172 Newsletter 33, November 1951.
173 Newsletter 57, January 1954.
174 Newsletter 37, March 1952,
175 Newsletter 65, September 1954.
176 Newsletter 36, February 1952.
177 Newsletter 16, May 1950.
178 Newsletter 82, April 1956.
179 Newsletter 15, April 1950.
180 Newsletter 77, October 1955.
181 Newsletter 30, August 1951.
182 Newsletter 24, February 1951.
183 Newsletter 12, November 1949.
184 Newsletter 49, March 1953.
185 Newsletter 24, February 1951.
186 Newsletter 82, April 1956.
187 Newsletter 92, March 1957.
188 Newsletter 94, May 1957.
189 Newsletters 79, December 1955; 96, July 1957.
190 Newsletter 71, April 1955.
191 Newsletter 95, June 1957.
192 Newsletter 74 July 1955.

193 Newsletter 84, June 1956 (Maison Lanvin was especially favored which was due to a family connection: Madame Lanvin's daughter was married to Count de Polignac who, in turn, was a relative of Prince Rainier of Monaco.)

194 Newsletter 82, April 1956.
195 Newsletter 72, May 1955.
196 Newsletter 94, May 1957.
197 Newsletter 15, April 1950.
198 Newsletter 100, November 1957.