

**Abstract.** *This paper examines the echoes of Marthe Bibesco's essay collection *Noblesse de Robe* between 1928 and 1929, included in the Princess' notebook of clippings currently found at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas, United States of America. The aim is to compare the book's global influence post-publication with its absence from discussions on fashion and Princess Bibesco's literary works. The *Noblesse de Robe* project began in *Vogue Paris* as a part of the Princess's monthly article series throughout 1927. The essays were gathered into a volume published in 1928 by Bernard Grasset in Paris. The study uses the clippings notebook as the basis for exploring how and why a book written by a prominent author and member of the international social elite was successful for a few years before being mostly overlooked in topical and biographical evaluations. The notebook thus represents the basis of an ever-growing body of primary materials connected to *Noblesse de Robe*, including reviews, mentions, full-text reproductions, and translations. This research analyses interwar primary sources using an interdisciplinary, comparative approach based on cultural studies (fashion, media, gender), cultural and art history, discourse analysis, and semiotics.*

**Keywords:** *elegance, Parisian spirit, Parisienne, nobility, dress, interwar, Romania, France, couture.*

This paper explores the press echoes of *Noblesse de Robe*, a collection of essays on fashion culture, creation and psychology by Marthe Bibesco through press cuttings collected in a notebook now found at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas, United States<sup>2</sup>. The notebook comprises fifty-six clippings from mainly French-language periodicals, of which forty-eight are reviews or descriptions, followed by name mentions and excerpts taken from the book, each with four instances. No clippings were dated before mid-August

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## FASHIONING A DEBATE: FASHION, GENDER AND LITERATURE IN *NOBLESSE DE ROBE* BY MARTHE BIBESCO IN CONTEXT<sup>1</sup>

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1928, although the French-language press had already featured advertisements and announcements of Grasset's new release. The notebook timeline begins on 12 August 1928, reproducing two essays in the *Gazette de Monaco et de Monte-Carlo*<sup>3</sup>. Chronologically, the last clipping coincided with the last day of 1929 from the Swedish weekly *Bonniers veckotidning*. Its presence in the notebook may be a linguistic misunderstanding as the text, albeit penned by Marthe Bibesco and translated by the Princess Swedish translator, Baroness Fulvia Stiernstedt, was about the authors' experience during World War One, around 1917<sup>4</sup>. Thirty-nine clippings were from newspapers, fifteen from magazines, both with two instances of full essay reproduction each, while only two were cut from journals. Most clippings were one page long, mainly from newspapers and magazines. France also dominated with thirty-eight clippings, followed by four from the USA, two each from Britain, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Switzerland, and one each from Cuba, Monaco, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. The cities most represented are Paris, with twenty-eight clippings, and two each from London, Poitiers, Prague, and Bucharest. The dominant language remains

French, but there are also six English texts, followed by one in Spanish, Czech, Romanian, Dutch and Swedish. Based on initial research of reviews, reproductions,

and translations related to *Noblesse de Robe*, the clippings represent around twenty per cent of more than three hundred sources analysed by April 2024.

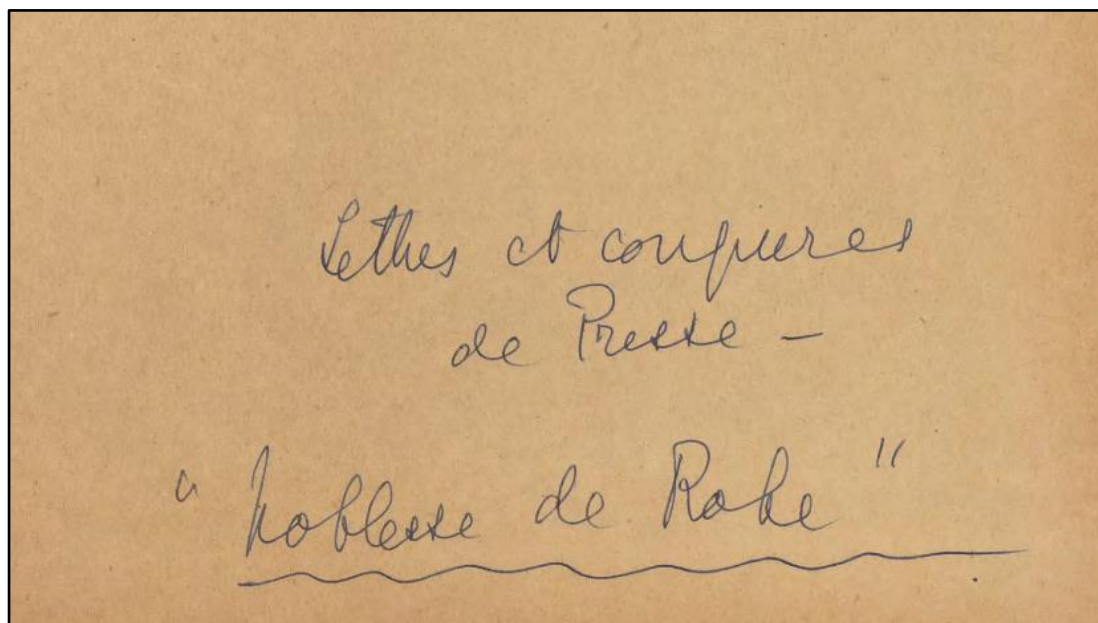


Fig. 1. – Marthe Bibescos note about the contents on the notebooks second page.

This paper highlights Marthe Bibesco's lesser-known writings on fashion and style despite the enthusiastic contemporary, especially French-language press echoes. It aims to clarify the *Noblesse de Robe's* lack of enduring critical attention, unlike the author's other works<sup>5</sup>. But judging from the clippings notebook, she likely cherished the book and its echoes. This research illustrates Marthe Bibesco as *Parisienne*, an icon of Romanian elegance and a potential fashion theorist. It belongs to a more extensive examination of fashion in interwar Bucharest against a European and transatlantic backdrop. *Noblesse de Robe* acquires material and symbolic valences, reflecting fashion's multifaceted structures as a culture and industry, a dynamic cycle of conception, creation, dissemination and consumption. The book's title alludes to the old French expression *noblesse de robe* (nobility of the robe), a pre-French Revolution prominent judicial or administrative position, usually

involving an existing or acquired nobility title. This designation differs from the *noblesse d'épée* (nobility of the sword), a feudal family tradition usually associated with land, goods, and titles for military service. Bibesco added an ingenious connection to fashion. In French, *robes* translate to robe and dress. The use of "nobility" can also acquire multiple valences, from the designation of a privileged social or cultural position to the implications of an excellent reputation intellectually, culturally, and especially for *Noblesse de Robe*, behavioural and aesthetic. The title choice could justify Ulrich Lehmann's conclusion that Marthe Bibesco's feminism entails some snobbery. However, the Princess used her high social position to understand, not separate, social and gender categories, as "*couture* consumption was natural for her class". She did not need academic credit. Her practice of fashion consumption "existed as an

independent aesthetic that is expressive of and expressed by the protagonists within her texts short”<sup>6</sup>. Nevertheless, this very social status hindered the book’s literary, theoretical, sociological and artistic impact, including its marginal recognition among “fashion classics” like Thomas Carlyle and Herbert Spencer in the nineteenth century or later, towards the second half of the 1920s, Thorstein Veblen, Georg Simmel and John Flügel<sup>7</sup>. Flügel’s book *The Psychology of Clothes* specifically mentioned *Noblesse de Robe* among the foundational works for his volume, “which have been largely used by some of the authorities to whom I am myself principally indebted”, even if he admitted a complete lack of “completeness on the historical, medical, or sociological sides”<sup>8</sup>.

This paper is based on an interdisciplinary and comparative approach to discourse in and about *Noblesse de Robe*. It addresses fashion history and theory topics, blended with art, social and literary history relevant to the *Noblesse de Robe* texts and their echoes as represented in the clippings notebook. Detailed analysis of Marthe Bibesco’s project *Noblesse de Robe* at the end of the 1920s completes the works dedicated to Marthe Bibesco from a biographical<sup>9</sup>, diarist and documentary<sup>10</sup> perspective, including her cultural and diplomatic efforts<sup>11</sup>, with references to the biographical, literary and cultural integration of her book to the Romanian cultural and literary aristocracy historical Parisian presence<sup>12</sup>. However, a brief description of the phenomenon is necessary to understand the *Noblesse de Robe* press echoes comprehensively.

### **The *Noblesse de Robe* phenomenon**

The *Noblesse de Robe* project debuted in the American fashion magazine *Vogues* Parisian edition as monthly essays published by Marthe Bibesco (See Annex 1). They belonged to a tradition of yearly collaborations with female literary

personalities, including Anna de Noailles and Colette. The 1928 Grasset book *Noblesse de Robe*<sup>13</sup> also brought some changes from *Vogue* essays, the most obvious being the order of essays and the addition of six new titles (See Annex 2). The interwar decline of ancient nobility created a vacant spot for a new aristocracy influencing women’s fashion, the great Parisian fashion designers with worldwide impact. Marthe Bibesco likely chose the essay *Noblesse de Robe* to symbolise her practical and theoretical conception of fashion. On a material level, the receipts included in Marthe Bibesco Harry Ransom Centre fund revealed that for each article, the Princess received seven hundred francs for the text and three hundred and fifty francs for translation and reproduction rights in American and British *Vogue* editions<sup>14</sup>. Considering these rates, it would be safe to assume that the Princess received at least eight thousand and forty francs<sup>15</sup> for all the twelve essays published in the monthly series.

To add context to Marthe Bibesco’s *Noblesse de Robe* clippings notebook on a timeline scale, the *Noblesse de Robe* story officially begins in 1926 with a *Fabienne* booklet and 1 January 1927 with the first *Vogue* article. It has been mentioned sporadically in research literature, especially in the past decade<sup>16</sup>. After reviewing over three hundred global echoes of *Noblesse de Robe*, the most cited or reproduced essays were *Noblesse de Robe* with frequent mentions of *Mademoiselle*, the French Dolls of Fashion or both with fifty mentions overall, followed by *Cora* and *Fabienne* with nineteen mentions each. The differences between the top three mentioned characters are less dramatic if we focus on the notebook. *Cora* becomes the most mentioned with eight instances, close to the runners-up, *Fabienne* and *Tote*, both with seven. In *Coras* case, the clippings notebook incorporated even a positive review dedicated only to this character, another

avatar of Coco Chanel, published in the Parisian weekly *L'écho du neuvième arrondissement* in late September 1928. The same text appeared a few days later in *L'Éclair de Nice*, likely the reason the Princess placed them on the same page in the notebook<sup>17</sup>.

But these findings are not informed solely by Marthe Bibesco's ideas. The entire project's structure and subject matter were closely tied to *Vogue* publishing standards. A letter from *Vogue* Paris director to the Princess, dated 7 October 1926, included a brief outline of the required tone and outline, enclosing a previous series signed by Colette. As Ortiz explained, each article should have around 1,200 words, with topics "of particularly feminine interest, not that in they relate to fashion more particularly, but on the contrary, to the human side of women's lives". He informed her that texts should be instructional on their respective subjects since *Vogue* was a "bon ton guide for both fashion and thought"<sup>18</sup>. Ortiz also noted that Condé Nast claimed all rights for distribution and reproduction as "exclusive property". The general tone and the twelve *Vogue* articles could then be attributed to the *Vogue Paris* editorial collective as much as to their authors, including, as Ortiz pointed out, Colette and Anna de Noailles, who both accepted the publication contract terms<sup>19</sup>. The Princess had expressed her intention to publish her *Vogue* editorials in a book to Ortiz in early October 1927. In a letter addressed to her, Ortiz advised her to seek an editor with more extended means of distribution than him, like Emile Chamontin, the editor of *Catherine-Paris*<sup>20</sup>. Her choice was, however, Bernard Grasset, whose dissemination and financial power were likely enough to satisfy both the author and Condé Nast copyright claims.

Parisian fashion, embodied through the proverbial *Parisienne*, becomes a leitmotif throughout the project. The supremacy of Paris and implicitly of France in everything involving aesthetics, technique and culture of fashion and female beauty focuses on the

cultural centre of international fashion. Bibesco intuited the idea of transnational fashion<sup>21</sup> and arguably rhizomatic<sup>22</sup> phenomenon globally, with the capital of France as a starting point. She used Fabienne, who could transform a "foreigner" into a *Parisienne* through her talent and imagination and the travelling fashion dolls across enemy territory, or Mademoiselle, whose ideas, once launched, became laws. Marthe Bibesco foreshadowed the central direction of fashion studies to this day. Until recently, before becoming *Vogue France*, *Vogue Paris* maintained its identity as the American magazine's sole subsidiary designating a city, not a country<sup>23</sup>. Paris was approached as a symbolic landmark, transcending the geographical and political boundaries of the material city. Thus, women's fashion is animated by an *esprit parisien* (Parisian spirit), and the *Parisienne* remains its logical embodiment. But before delving into the prevalent themes in Marthe Bibesco's clippings notebook, a brief overview is necessary, with two representative essays for the Condé Nast and Grasset stages: *Fabienne* for the former and *Noblesse de Robe* for the latter.

### **Ambassadors of Nobility: French Dolls of Fashion, Mademoiselle and Fabienne**

The *Noblesse de Robe* story officially began in 1926, in a small volume of luxury printed in only 425 copies and edited by Condé Nast director Philippe Ortiz, *Vogue*'s parent company<sup>24</sup>. By January 1927, *Vogue Paris* welcomed Marthe Bibesco as a regular author throughout the year. An introductory tablet for the first article, *Fabienne*, published in the January issue, informed readers that, following the previous series author, fellow Romanian-Parisian aristocrat writer Anna de Noailles, Marthe Bibesco "kindly accepted" to continue the series of fashion and style reviews<sup>25</sup>.

The fashion house has been identified as Caroline Reboux, and Fabienne was likely Lucienne Rabaté, the director who had taken

over the salon's management in 1920. Back to the interwar era, Marthe Bibesco remained a loyal customer of Caroline Reboux. To connect the two main characters, Mademoiselle and Fabienne, Lucienne Rabaté also guided a young Coco Chanel into the art of millinery. Apart from the obvious Mademoiselle, Chanel appeared in the Princess's essays as Tote or, more visibly, Gabrielle. Other characters repeatedly identified in writings mentioning *Noblesse de Robe* were Madame Mirande of House Worth under the pseudonym Aline and the aristocrat, costume designer and Parisian librettist Etienne de Beaumont as Tiburce. In 1939, the Princess penned a bilingual edition of the essay *Fabienne*, in French and English, attributed to Caroline Reboux as publisher<sup>26</sup>. In the volume *Noblesse de Robe*, the essay lending the

books title<sup>27</sup> was reproduced by the French-language Bucharest daily *L'Indépendance Roumaine*, included in the clippings notebook. The most popular character in the clippings notebook was Cora, mentioned eight times, followed by Fabienne and Tote, with seven mentions each, and Gabrielle, Rose and *the French Dolls of Fashion*. Thus, the six characters mentioned above suggest that the titular essay *Noblesse de Robe* and the one dedicated to Fabienne deserve research attention, being among the most quoted in Marthe Bibescos volume. From the point of view of real characters, this ranking based on the number of mentions in the notebook clippings also justifies the assertion that the most popular real personalities were indeed Coco Chanel (Mademoiselle, Tote and Gabrielle) and Lucienne Rabaté (Fabienne).

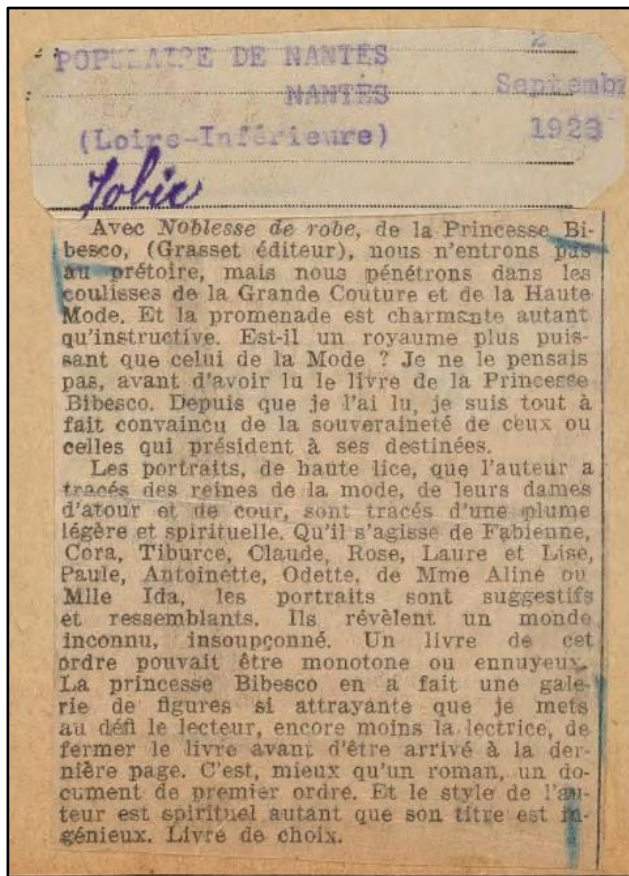


Fig. 2. – Example of a clipping, the review by J. Tallendeau (“*Jolie*”), see Annex 3, 2 September 1928.



But what distinguished the Princess from other great ladies of Parisian high society was her intimate access to the creative process of this “famous person, whose first name the whole civilised universe knows”, Coco Chanel or Mademoiselle. This visit occurred shortly before the essays publication on 1 April 1927 in *Vogue*<sup>28</sup>. Spring was a critical time in the fashion world, when any new idea had to be protected from foreign eyes, from being seen and, in the worst case, copied before the long-awaited launch. Indeed, the

Parisian fashion industry had already seen legislative and technical efforts to prevent models from being copied or pirated<sup>29</sup>. Through her literary talent, Marthe Bibesco introduced a twenty-first-century reader into a privileged space unreachable even in the interwar period. Redefining the commonly used French expression *noblesse de robe* was informed by Marthe Bibesco’s meditation on the power of French fashion to influence the political and military path between two great naval powers, France and England<sup>30</sup>.

S O M M A I R E   D U   I <sup>er</sup> J A N V I E R   1 9 2 7			
Vol. 8			N° 1
Couverture dessinée par Bolin	<i>La petite poupée</i> -----	38-39	<i>Quelques étrangères fidèles à Paris</i> ---
Chronique	<i>Les souliers nouveaux</i> -----	40-41	<i>Comtesse d'Arcangues</i> -----
<i>Francine ou la conscience professionnelle par la Princesse Bibesco</i> - - -	Autour des élégances		Théâtre
29	<i>Linge de table</i> -----	20-21	<i>Sur la scène, par Henry Bidou</i> -----
Les Éléances	<i>Travestis</i> -----	22-25	<i>Lisica Codreano</i> -----
<i>Les créations de demi-saison</i> -----	<i>Un ballet à la cour de Louis XIII</i> -----	26-27	33
<i>Costumes de sport</i> -----	<i>Les sampots</i> -----	42-43	Art et Décoration
<i>Vogue propose</i> -----	<i>Un cadeau toujours apprécié</i> -----	44	
<i>Chacune a son secret, chacune a son mystère</i> -----	Dans le Monde		<i>Maurice Denis</i> -----
17-19	<i>Mme Armand Bernard</i> -----	Frontispice	<i>Les bars privés</i> -----
			34-35
			36-37

Fig. 3. – Table of Contents, *Vogue Paris* where Fabienne is mistakenly referred to as Francine, 1 January 1928, n.p.

As the author explained from the onset, fashioning a Reboux hat needed an understanding from both parties involved, the creator and the client, that she would return to work in the studio whenever needed. Indeed, Fabienne had asked the Princess to return for one last test on 31 December, which the Princess accepted, “postponing other projects for this, friends, a promise, a departure”. Nevertheless, as the author explained, she had no choice because there were “twenty premieres in the two cramped rooms forming the ‘Great House’: there is only one Fabienne”. In the audition scene, Marthe Bibesco played a double role as a character in the creation play and as a mirror observer. This scene could be replicated whenever Fabienne dealt with a client and could be seen from the outside.

This dynamic always brought with it “amusement and profit”. The client styled by Fabienne, holding her “neck like a lamb’s, imposing herself with strong hands knowing what they want”, was a supposed English-woman whose real Russian nationality permeated through, with Fabiennes talent and dexterity: “With an instinct so sure that she is related to creative forces [...] she makes appear between the delicate chin and the excessive cheekbones, this sweet folk harmony which is the Slavic woman”. The following client presented a problematic scene, prompting the Princess to wonder what caused Fabienne to commit “the capital error of *taking her*, as they say around here”. But that “weasel”, as the Princess called her, was the daughter of an older client who was, unlike the young woman in the foreground,

“very beautiful”. The attempt in which Fabienne launched herself was to achieve what her mother could not, “a human figure”. The process combined suffering and praise, “pulling down to the knees the little red felt whose conception must erase that crooked muzzle, make her chin sprout, reanimate that faded look”. Immediately after the “weasel” scene, the Princess emphasised Fabiennes talent for “giving English women what they lack most: mystery”. The author also observed Fabienne “forcing her authority on the forehead of a brilliant politicians wife”, who was “finally casting a shadow over that painting” through a *taupe*<sup>31</sup>. Fabienne could create “a Queen of the North in a midinet” as she “makes and undoes the crowns” by a mere cloche. Like a potter, the creators masterpiece transformed and shaped herself “with a sensitive and scholarly thumb”. Her clients were “women in London, Madrid, Rome, New York and Buenos-Ayres<sup>32</sup>, who are worth something in Paris”.

Fabienne’s vocabulary included the terms proportion, line, volume, profile, inferring mathematical precision: “With scissors in hand, she becomes a mathematician; reduces the ‘hat factor to its simplest expression. I kept seeing her cutting the brim, cutting ever deeper, on the puzzled head of a billionaire, who was getting narrower and narrower under an increasingly insignificant cap”. Although Marthe Bibesco’s observation about the scene in which the creator progressively cut her hat’s brim “to reach chic, to expression” makes no

explicit literary reference, Rose Fortassier found it reminiscent of Paul Valéry correlating poems to rolled cigarettes<sup>33</sup>. The fashion designer’s calendar was also full, with the author telling *Vogue readers* that she was “amused to see so many big and small names” if Fabienne had to consult her weekly agenda in front of them. Marthe Bibesco also had no concrete data about the private life of her main character. Fabienne was noticeably loved and often added a flower with talisman-like beauty to her bodice. When the Princess visited Fabienne’s workshop, “a noise of revolution arrives at us every time the door closes”, the windows were empty, the holders unoccupied, and “all the hats are gone”. That day, the creator was working only with a nurse. The Princess observed her “delicately searching for the defects of her temples” with her hands while her figure was calm, “austere, aged by so much attention”, devoting herself to her work. In addition, unlike the anonymous seamstresses or couturieres, the hat modelled by Fabienne remained in the symbolic possession of its designer. Thus, through her dedication, seriousness and attention to the process, the author posited that “she works neither for me, nor her, nor for the house, whose reputation is made, despite the English week, after the fateful hour, at the dawn of another year”. Instead, she performed her duties aiming to “satisfy her jealous master, the tyrant of Parisian workers”, what the author defined as a “professional conscience”, “the only secret of so great a civilisation”.

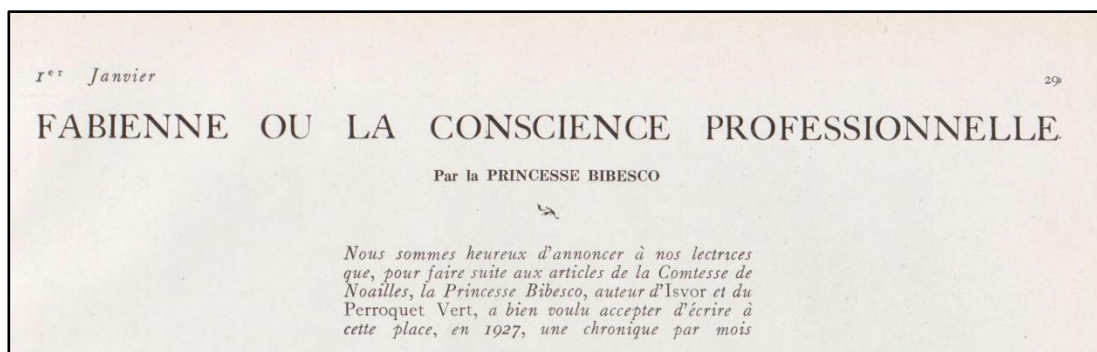


Fig. 4. – *Fabienne* in *Vogue Paris*, including the title and a caption announcing Marthe Bibescos subsequent essays throughout 1927.

The second essay, *Noblesse de Robe*, is the fourth essay in *Vogue*'s series and the book's first "chapter". It is also the most cited by reviewers, perhaps because it explains the general thematic area and the titles linguistically playful suggestions, along with a foray into the general history of fashion and the individual case of a contemporary salon of a dictatorial designer. It was fully reproduced in August 1928 alongside *Tote* in the daily *Gazette de Monaco et de Monte-Carlo*<sup>34</sup>, in September 1928 on the illustrated daily *Excelsior*'s fashion page<sup>35</sup>, the source attributed for its

Romanian full reproduction in *L'Indépendance Roumaine* and translated into German for Swiss daily *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* in 1931<sup>36</sup>. The essay followed three main narrative sections: the French Dolls of Fashion as social and political agents spreading the latest Parisian models, which informed her thoughts on the French worldwide influence over fashion and style, ending with her visit to the above-mentioned well-known couturière. The first section was important for contextualisation and as an anecdote to introduce a more theoretical argument.

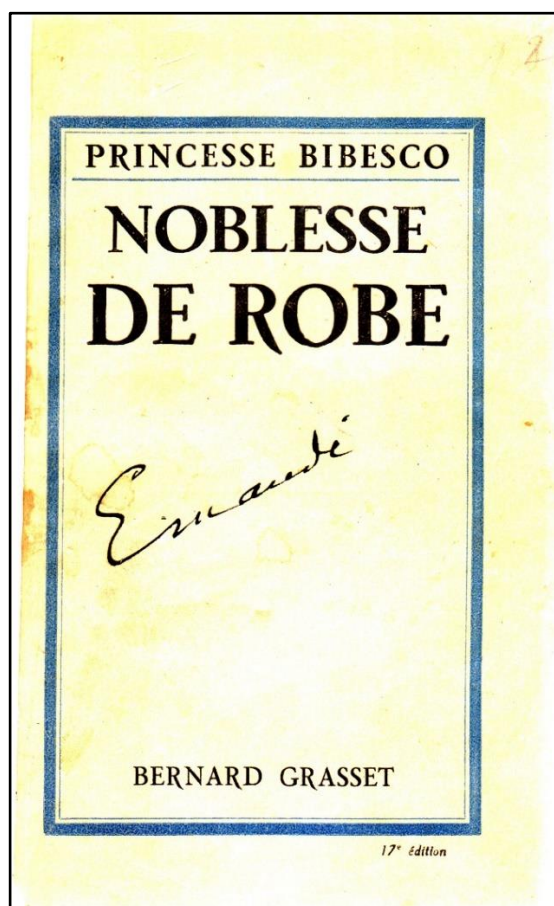


Fig. 5. – *Noblesse de Robe* book cover, 1928.

The idea for "*noblesse de robe*" was born after the Princess visited a museum in London, quite possibly the Victoria & Albert Museum, where she noticed a collection titled French Dolls of Fashion<sup>37</sup> and was

immediately drawn to their "tiny faces" exuding a "mysterious air of irony and triumph". The exhibition catalogue informed that these fashion dolls originated in France in the late seventeenth century, while



Louis XIV and William of Orange engaged in naval conflicts. These “*Dames de Nouveauté*” sailed across the Channel every three months, imposing a cease-fire on the English side. As the Princess explained, local merchants received them enthusiastically and distributed them everywhere across the British Isles. The United Kingdom was then conquered peacefully through the power of Parisian fashion. For the Princess, the makers of these dolls created an “extraordinary collection of impertinent cuckoos, in the exercise of their natural insolence” from a “widespread wood” with “the size of a boot”<sup>38</sup>. Philippe Ortiz offered a potential timeline in his 26 October 1926 letter explaining the publication process. He noted the deadline for the first article was 5 November 1926 and continued with the fifth of the subsequent twelve months. Consequently, Marthe Bibesco’s London museum visit likely occurred in late January or early February 1927. It cannot be ascertained whether the Princess visit to Mademoiselle’s salon was already intended as a potential subject, but it is narratively cohesive in expressing the authors commentary on the nature of Parisian dominance over fashion and, arguably, culture.

In the interwar era, style was still dictated by a small number of female creators, “limited by the singularity of genius itself” and “everything else is imitation”,<sup>39</sup> a theme echoed in the essay *Odette*, also translated into English for the original American of *Vogue*<sup>40</sup>. There is a nuance of female elitism, determined not so much by genetic, professional or social affiliation but by the fashion phenomenon’s deeper understanding, which is based on originality and exclusivity, avoiding opulence and copying other models. Although Bibesco appeared to admonish “fashionable” women, her *Vogue* essays and the *Noblesse de Robe* book were likely the standard-bearers of her fashion philosophy. Consequently, they were created to educate and refine that haute *couture audience*, which was growing. If it had been translated into Romanian, even a

few years later, it would probably have reached the libraries of Bucharest’s elegant *flâneuses* who displayed their charm and style perusing through Calea Victoriei, interwar Romanias fashionable boulevard<sup>41</sup>. Parisian dominance over fashion was still unattainable, as the author pointed out: “I always think of these triumphant dolls when I return to Paris to one of these enchanted houses where fashion was created”. These spaces were inhabited by “women who know what needs to be done, because, unlike most women, they know what they are doing”. Fashion houses provided a multi-dimensional space for all aspects of garment creation: “That is where they work, dream, invent, imagine, these few minds moving machines all over the world, and sometimes stop them. When this designer returns to antique patterns of dresses [...]; When another is seduced by the elasticity of a knitted fabric, other trades are reborn”<sup>42</sup>.

Marthe Bibesco associated the Parisian fashion industry’s upper stratum with its main aristocratic characteristics, “the pride of the name, carried to the point of mania; habit of commandments hardening the eyes; a sense of responsibility, which tightens the jaws; exploitation of inferiors, which hardens the heart; the absolute need to inspire respect, to see complacency, of a large entourage whose custody we have”. In addition, the presence of this considerable number of subordinates, estimated by the author to be eight hundred people at a single fashion house, akin to a similarly-occupied warship. Consequently, a creator like Mademoiselle could easily be equated with a captain<sup>43</sup>. Mademoiselles studio exuded grandeur and solemnity: “A large curtain of light fell from the glass wall and ceiling. A great silence; a large office; a large carpet. Around the empty hall and in its middle, the solemn assembly of some twenty large wooden dolls, immobilised in grand gestures”. As Marthe Bibesco explained, those “schematic women” were the basis on which

Mademoiselle worked and researched, “with cloth, scissors, a few paper clips, and the wonderful will to realise, the solution to the problem of form, which is required of her twice a year”<sup>44</sup>. After the Princess stated the reason for her visit, she handed over some documents, which Mademoiselle promptly signed. She was “facing a person who has governed, without parliament, for longer than any minister; in front of a woman who has to come up with four hundred ideas a year, in the profession she administers, and where stops have the power of her countrys border laws”<sup>45</sup>. Mademoiselle was one of Chanel’s most well-known nicknames. The portrait befitted her image and work ethic at her 18 Place Vendôme atelier, where she also popularised the “little black dress”<sup>46</sup>. While Chanel appeared several times in the *Noblesse de Robe* essays, the main character remained the overarching Paris, as a physical and symbolic space of technical prowess, open creativity, innovative genius and national pride.

#### **And the World Revolves around Paris**

Most echoes to *Noblesse de Robe*, beyond those added by the Princess into her clippings notebook, highlighted the author’s, arguably nurtured, Frenchness and her reverence towards French intellectual and aesthetic cultures. The *esprit Parisien*, or Parisian spirit, describes the city’s unique blend of creativity and change. This spirit is embodied by *la Parisienne*, the quintessential Parisian woman who represents elegance, style, and sophistication. *La Parisienne* is a product of mobility, reflecting a more comprehensive understanding of migration, from expatriates and tourists to migrants. Through her crafted identity and celebrated contributions to French literature and life, Marthe Bibesco thus naturally befitted the *Parisienne* denomination. Similarly, *Noblesse de Robe* is a literary work, a social commentary and a psychological assessment

of Paris at the root of global elegance. Both at its time and in subsequent historical or theoretical interpretations, Bibescos works, particularly *Noblesse de Robe* in the context of this paper, are taken as French, despite the authors national and ethnic Romanian background. This attitude was not endemic to Marthe Bibesco or foreign Parisian-based aristocratic writers, including Anna de Noailles. A relevant example connected to Romania and fashion as an adopted *Parisienne* from Eastern Europe is the painter and designer of Ukrainian and Jewish descent, Sonia Delaunay<sup>47</sup>. But Paris is more than just a fashion city. It has been recognised as a coalescence of ideas, individuals and currents connected to modernity, modernism and the modern<sup>48</sup>. Interwar Paris was at the symbolic and material heart of fashion and a hub for worldwide talent. As foreign talent and creativity were brought in, its global dimension of fashion became even more apparent. This influx of talent materialised a blueprint for Parisian elegance and refinement unburdened by nationality and ethnicity<sup>49</sup>. Anybody can become a *Parisienne* if they embody the Parisian urban values of sophistication, refinement, and elegance. The *esprit* graced all those who embraced the Parisian way of life. From her appearance and behaviour, *la Parisienne* represents a unique cultural identity transcending borders and nationalities<sup>50</sup>. Using the *Vogue* editorship guidelines, *Noblesse de Robe* can be read as a guide for women worldwide, including stylish women from her native Romania, to embody this model. In interwar Bucharest, all respectable beauty salons or fashion houses had *Vogue* as a permanent waiting area fixture<sup>51</sup>. Grassets vast international distribution, including, as Cezar Petrescu noted in the first clipping in Marthe Bibescos notebook, at the French bookshop at the Hotel Splendid’s ground floor on Calea Victoriei.

## NOBLESSE DE ROBE

J'AI vu, l'an dernier, dans un musée de Londres, de petites poupées de bois peint qui portaient des corsages pointus et de grands paniers, avec, au dos, une longue queue, aussi large que celle d'un paon : c'étaient les « French dolls of Fashion ».<sup>1</sup>

1. Les poupées françaises de la Mode.

Fig. 6. – First page of the *Noblesse de Robe* essay in the 1928 book, p. 10.

Paris was a constant in the clippings from Marthe Bibesco's notebook, especially as most texts included were penned by French authors, even if some publications were outside France. In this case, the debates generated occurred around Paris, as its dominance was recognised as an inferred reality of proud belonging, even if the Princess or the topic became subjects of contention. The earliest Paris-centred article included was an anonymous review published in the Parisian weekly *Minerva*, where the author applauded Bibesco's enormous generosity for publishing a book on French elegance<sup>52</sup>. In late September, agronomist and writer Pierre de Trévières followed a similar interpretation, mentioning *Noblesse de Robe* in a laudatory article on French couturiers with Tote,

another name for Chanel, used as the perfect example. Despite mistakenly citing the title as *Noblesse des Robes*, he described it as a "beautiful book" of "new eloquence" and flattering portraits<sup>53</sup>. By early October, the socialist Parisian daily *Le Populaire* included *Noblesse de Robe* among the latest titles. Marthe Bibesco appeared alongside the latest titles from notable authors like Curnonsky, J. Wladimir Bienstock and Sigmund Freud in a text signed as J.-B. S., likely socialist politician Jean-Baptiste Séverac, who immediately noted the book's central theme as the Parisian dominance over women's fashions. While potentially unrelated to Marthe Bibesco's family and ethnic identity, the only mention of her "Princesse" title was in the title and photo caption, thus probably unrelated to the

actual text<sup>54</sup>. Marthe Bibescos notebook also included an editorial mishap on *Le Populaires* part. The above-mentioned reviews associated image was not of Marthe Bibesco, and the correction published fourteen days later<sup>55</sup> also appeared on the same page next to the J.-B. S. clipping. These types of errors were not singular. Beyond the titles numerous reinventions and this instance of incorrect image use, a blatant example of incomplete research and dismissive attitude would be a note published by the International News Service in *The Washington Times* in October 1928. Despite the newspaper's implied exigence, the editors in charge of this text mistook Marthe Bibesco for Elizabeth Bibesco nee Asquith and spared no effort to read and explain what the book was about properly and cited it as *Nobless de Robe*<sup>56</sup>.

Almost concomitantly with the first *Le Populaire* review, radical activist, in a review for the evening daily *Paris-Soir*, journalist and doctor Pierre Dominique deemed the title as the most beautiful in the world, considering the subject of womens elegance as the most accessible means of describing Paris. For Dominique, even if Paris and fashion were commonly put together, only the locals were equipped to enjoy Marthe Bibesco's book. Like other reviewers describing the author's origin, he declared her a true *Parisienne* despite her foreign-sounding name<sup>57</sup>. Reversing the opinion around who knew Paris best, around the same time and writing for *LEurope Nouvelle*, writer and translator Francis de Miomandre asserted that foreigners understood even better than the locals<sup>58</sup>. Several echoes thus applauded the Princess as a Paris connaisseuse. Another example would be a short text from *Vient de paraître*, where the anonymous author, signing as D.P., declared that Marthe Bibescos attachment towards Paris could already be seen from *Catherine-Paris*<sup>59</sup>. A similar description appeared in late August 1928 in an anonymous text from the weekly *Gazette*

*de Monaco et de Monte-Carlo*, including themes like Marthe Bibesco as an "adopted" *Parisienne* and Paris fashion capital, already seen with *Catherine-Paris*<sup>60</sup>. It likely influenced subsequent reviewers, as this was an earlier text. English-language reviews also acknowledged the theme of Parisian dominance. For writer Paul Souday, in his mid-September 1928 review for *The New York Times*, Marthe Bibescos claim that Paris was the capital of womens fashion and elegance was not informed by chauvinism, as she was an "adopted" *Parisienne* herself<sup>61</sup>. The exact text would appear a little over a month later in Havana, Cuba, and was also included in the notebook but signed as P.R. with no mention of its English incarnation<sup>62</sup>.

The Parisian theme was notable enough to be included in the latest published titles in the Catholic magazine *Études* alongside a recent translation of *The New Testament*, signed by Jesuit translator Louis de Mondanon, whose brief text focused on Bibescos "*noblesse de robe*" reinterpretation. He intuited fashion nobility as a small number of creative women who exerted their influence over the world "with the consent of all nations". The same notebook page included a review on a similar tone from the daily *De Nieuwe Courant* in The Hague<sup>63</sup>. Similarly, a brief review of the book published in *La Rumeur* within the fashion section signed by Marianne opined that the title's choice was "judicious" as it precisely described the "special Paristocracy" ruling over everything fashion-related<sup>64</sup>. Literary critic Gonzague Truc also pointed this out in his review later in the month published in the Parisian cultural daily *Comœdia*. For Truc, Bibesco was well known on the French literary scene ever since she began publishing in Paris. She belonged to the cultural and social elite, highlighting Parisian fashion's supremacy over all the world's women<sup>65</sup>. Even reviews critical of the book's style focused on the central

Parisian theme. The daily *Moniteur du Calvados, de l'Orne et de la Manche* from Caen, referred explicitly to *Parisiennes* as the central characters in a homage to the universal appeal of Parisian elegance<sup>66</sup>. Some reviewers intuited the text's instructional character even without the *Vogue* context. For instance, author and journalist Jacques-Napoléon Faure-Biguet, in the Women's International League for Peace & Freedom bulletin *Pax*, applauded *Noblesse de Robe* as a relevant text for Parisian fashion philosophy<sup>67</sup>.

Another means of addressing the book's national and ethnic dimensions was a more overt colonialist perspective, Bibesco's Romanian origin. For instance, the Parisian evening Republican daily *Bonsoir* included a text only signed as L.D., whose intent was from the start to unabashedly contrast Marthe Bibesco's recent "notoriety" and "sober and sensitive talent" with another notable Parisian Romanian, Anna de Noailles, already recognised for her "glory" and "genius". For the reviewer, even the two author's names posed an "interesting" issue ethnographically and culturally<sup>68</sup>. Further research identified L.D. as writer André Billy, who published the same text as part of a three-part book review article for the Parisian daily *L'Œuvre* alongside Jeanne Ramel-Cals and Marcelle Vioux<sup>69</sup>. Even if this was an earlier publication, the citation in this paper uses the L.D. as the only version in the notebook. From an outwardly positive angle, a review signed Le Hérisson (The Hedgehog) for the illustrated satirical bi-monthly *Fantasio* described the book's author as a Romania princess with an unmistakable Parisian voice drawing the portrait of French fashion as a national phenomenon imbued with grandeur and glory for the "oldest among all arts"<sup>70</sup>. However, covering Parisian fashion seemed a courageous feat even for French writers. A reviewer signing as M.M. for the Franco-Belgian

magazine *La revue franco-belge*. M.M. applauded Bibesco's overt interest and depiction of Parisian world-famous fashion houses<sup>71</sup>. In the Poitiers republican daily *L'Avenir de la Vienne et de l'Ouest*, a reporter signing as Froufrou considered Marthe Bibesco's focus on the importance of French fashion in the context of couturières as "merchants of the future", with a gendered refashion of national identity and fashion industry implications. Froufrou asserted that *Noblesse de Robe* was a timely, important text for anybody exploring the Parisian dominance over worldwide culture and fashion. On closer reading, Froufrou appears to mention only one essay from an unnamed French magazine as a reference, likely *Noblesse de Robe*<sup>72</sup>. This review was thus more connected to the *Noblesse de Robe* project's Condé Nast incarnation, even if the mentioned publication was not *Vogue* per se. Still, it was included in the notebook, and its publishing is congruous with the ensuing book's reviews.

While not explicitly dismissive, *Noblesse de Robe* was also used as a simple device in justifying the extended glorification of French colonialism, as seen in an October mention in *Dépêche Coloniale et Maritime*<sup>73</sup>. There were also cases where the book's dismissal originated from a geographically-based sense of superiority. The notebook included a curious interpretation from left-leaning feminist and dadaist author and anarchist Renée Dunan in her *Noblesse de Robe* review for the Parisian daily *Le Soir*. For Dunan, Bibesco was unlike "other" non-Western nobles, as her talent was genuine and not based on the archaic notion of family fortune earned through the number of sheep. She also reprimanded the Princess for attempting a "weak" play on words, something Dunan, as a French woman by origin, would have naturally avoided. After berating Paul Souday's perceived critical benevolence,



Dunan believed the “correct” title for the book should have been *Noblesse de Robes* because “robe” in the singular only referred to the judiciary, echoing Pierre de Trévières’ title confusion. Even more, Dunan added the unproven claim that Marthe Bibesco could not have possibly authored any of the essays alone, despite admitting her writing skill<sup>74</sup>. On a less bellicose but haughty tone, Ch. Becker, described in the notebook as a “high school teacher” in Echternach, Switzerland, claimed for the bilingual daily *Luxemburger Zeitung* or *Journal de Luxembourg* that, as *haute couture* tour guide of Paris and with Gabrielle as the primary example, *Noblesse de Robe* was an efficient tool for women to follow the so-called “Parisian chic”, which Luxembourgers expertly imitated<sup>75</sup>.

With notable exceptions, most French-language periodical echoes celebrated Marthe Bibesco as an arguably adopted French writer’s take on one of the country’s proudest global exports, its fashion culture. But the book’s topic ensured a mixed reception. Cezar Petrescu’s remark about the book was sold at the French books store on Calea Victoriei in Bucharest at least since mid-August 1928, in his review for *Noblesse de Robe* from *Curentul*, could also be deemed as necessary in the worldwide influence of Paris. He also acknowledged this phenomenon explicitly in the text, with French-language positive press reviews as selling points<sup>76</sup>. But fashion was deemed a women’s interest subject, thus unimportant and even frivolous. It generated enough antagonistic responses to appear in the brief timespan covered in the Princess’ clippings notebook.

### **Fashion, between Frivolity and Creative Genius**

The dismissal of fashion as an art form, especially if connected to women’s work and passion, continues to be witnessed in

the twenty-first century. As seen with the critical and problematic reception from a fashion and gender studies perspective review of John Singer Sargent and Fashion exhibition at the Tate Museum in London, published in *The Guardian* in February 2024, the final phrase could as well have been said about *Noblesse de Robe* in 1928–1929: “If you love historic millinery, this may be for you. If you love great art, stay home and read *The Portrait of a Lady*”<sup>77</sup>. As disquieting as the insufficient change of mainstream mass-media rhetoric around fashion and other so-called “womens subjects” may be, the similarity also provides a chance to better understand the reasoning behind the mildly unsympathetic or downright condescending and disparaging reviews of *Noblesse de Robe*. A considerable number of reviews in the notebook may seem to applaud the book at first glance, but the dismissal of fashion, womens interests or the author herself becomes evident in epithets like *light, feminine, delicate, small or little, sensitive*. Even overly critical accounts, like the review signed by L.D. in *Bonsoir*, acknowledged the common idea in all the otherwise unrelated essays: “exalting French fashion and, most of all, paying homage to its artists and workers”. While admitting a lack of knowledge and understanding of the topic, L.D. still posed three questions to the authors in an arguably condescending tone. The first was about how “exactly” he comprehended that a regular “couturière” would only descend from her workshop on rare occasions, equating to a “coup detat”. Secondly, L.D. inquired whether the sleeves were not always “notched” on the clients. The last question was whether a fashion house worker should be allowed to assist a clients fitting wearing an apron and not only her satchet. While claiming the review did not suggest “a slightly ingenuous enthusiasm” from the author, L.D. claimed that the main message was that the life of a couturière was more attractive than being a princess<sup>78</sup>. A few days later, in Clermont-Ferrand, the daily *L’Avenir du Plateau Central* editor-in-chief wrote an ambivalent

review describing the book as a “pretty (*jolie*) book about the glory of French fashion”. For Vallet, a designer dress implied “intelligence, invention, delicate art” in all its stages from creation to wearing. From his numerous references to fashion as aristocratic and military, Vallet seemingly only remembered the *Noblesse de Robe* essay. In his opinion, the book centred around luxury and urged his readers to consider the many careers that drew their essence from the foreign women’s desire to purchase the latest Parisian models when directing their assumptions towards frivolity<sup>79</sup>. Newspaper readers in Poitiers were also made aware of Marthe Bibesco’s new book. The two mentions, both from dailies published in mid-September 1928, belonged to an anonymous review from *Le Journal de l’Ouest et du Centre* and Froufrou’s article about women merchants from *L’Avenir de la Vienne et de l’Ouest*. The former first clarified the title’s meaning and referred to fashion creators who displayed “a certain type of genius” working in tandem with the client’s artistic sense. The unnamed author, however, deplored that only a few could understand fashion’s true art<sup>80</sup>. On the other hand, Froufrou, whose pseudonym hinted towards an ornate appearance, mentioned *Noblesse de Robe* in the context of women’s work and creative emancipation and believed the book was a genuine social study<sup>81</sup>.

A brief chronicle by Jean Blaize in late September 1928 for the daily *La Dépêche de Toulouse* extended the scope towards a metaphysical interpretation, titled simply *Élégance*. For Blaize, fashion was a spiritual and aesthetic pursuit for women, noting the Princess’s enjoyment in drafting this book. Blaize applauded Bibesco’s charm, originality and lyricism<sup>82</sup>. In his *Pax* article, Jacques-Napoléon Faure-Bigué also described the book as a way for a “great lady” like Marthe Bibesco to teach women that their mission was elegance, their tool for power<sup>83</sup>. Cezar Petrescu’s article was the only Romanian review included in the notebook apart from the *Noblesse de Robe* essay published in *L’Indépendance*

*Roumaine*. The reproduction specifically cited the Parisian daily *Excelsior*<sup>84</sup>. Despite the considerable length, Petrescu reiterated *Noblesse de Robe* review archetypes, with the obligatory references to the nobility of dress and judiciary, the gallery of “characters”, which he also listed and briefly described, adding to the intuition of the book as a guide for stylish *Parisiennes*<sup>85</sup>. On a less commendatory note, in his review for *Journal de Luxembourg*, Ch. Becker reduced the book to a high fashion shopping guide on par with Lucie Delarue-Mardrus 1926 essay *Embellissez-vous (Beautify Yourself)*. Becker further bemoaned the lack of recognition for men in the trade and as interested clients<sup>86</sup>.

The Princess also collected even more scathing reviews in her notebook. For instance, in an article from 22 September 1928, in the weekly *La Lumière*, the author signing as M.M., likely Maurice Martin, unreservedly deemed any book about “elegance” and “*grande couture*” as “very false and generally tedious”. Even if he opined that not even the authors talent could have saved *Noblesse de Robe*, a few pages could be read as exceptions. For M.M., the only worthy “chapter” contained a scene where the “worker” called her, likely referring to the Princess, to her salon and told her dress was beautiful<sup>87</sup>. In a more neutral tone, but still suspicious of the subject and oblivious to the *Vogue* context, writer François Montel understood the book as an apology for fashion in the Parisian daily *La Presse*. Even if the overarching theme he identified as novelty, the book appeared melancholic due to the subtlety and constant movement involved in the art of fashion. For Montel, fashion’s implied sadness and perishable nature connected sartorial practices with psychology and romanticism, including, in the case of *Noblesse de Robe*, the psychological profiles of couturières and their clients<sup>88</sup>. With less overt hostility and, like Montel, mentioning psychology and philosophy, journalist Nicolas Ségur’s October 1928 article in the monthly *La Revue Mondiale* placed the book alongside the latest works by Stefan Zweig, Albert Erlande and André Metz. Ségur’s text focused on the nobility of couturières in a

world informed by women's tastes, coquetry and vanity. While noting the book was "very beautiful", its contents were of overtly fashion-related but subtle "little sketches" as timely as they were moderate in scepticism and irony. Ségur ended his review by directing readers towards a "little pamphlet" also written by Bibesco, titled *La Turquoise*. In his opinion, Marthe Bibesco's works so far announced a culmination of "plants in bloom and of masterpieces"<sup>89</sup>.

Anarchist Édouard Rothen's review for the magazine *L'École émancipée* was an even more extreme example. Rothen only referred to "a book" by Marthe Bibesco, in which she claimed that sowing was more rewarding than wearing the sown piece itself<sup>90</sup>. In her review for *Le Soir*, despite describing fashion nobility as a sartorial Gotha with visible contempt towards Marthe Bibesco, Renée Dunan still recommended the book for the feeling of comfort and delicate memories it generated<sup>91</sup>. On a less contentious tone, D.P. stated in the *Vient de paraître* short text that the psychological and literary "intelligent and sensible" essays could have been more technical and broader in their scope, again disregarding their *Vogue* background<sup>92</sup>. The most extreme dismissal came from the United States, at the University of Oklahoma, where a Clark Gallaher warned *Books Abroad* readers that it was merely a "light", "feminine" book, despite a title drawing romantic readers. He ironically lauded the Princess for writing "two hundred pages on practically nothing"<sup>93</sup>. Conversely, this short text was filled with misogynistic stereotypes worthy of the *Guardian* John Singer-Sargent and fashion exhibition review roughly a century later.

Reviews included in the notebook also hinged on the connection between journalism and fashion. For instance, *L'Information financière, économique et politique* published a review where the author, signing as L.W., stated that despite their overarching topic, the essays were not investigations, as Bibesco's keenly-drawn portraits blending imagination and reason

proved she was a genuine poet<sup>94</sup>. Author and literary critic Albert Thibaudet analogously noted that the book was not a journalistic text, despite being about fashion, before an extended *foiree* through religion and mythology on the precariousness of time<sup>95</sup>. Jacques-Napoléon Faure-Biguet followed a similar path in his *Pax* review but chose a more philosophical, Hellenic route<sup>96</sup>. Paul Souday, in his text for *The New York Times*, similarly played upon these themes, angling towards politics, citing the "virile" fashions informed by The Great War and deeming Bibesco's notion of *noblesse de robe* as anathema to Bolshevism. Souday believed familiarity was deleterious for women, and men only maintained interest if they kept abreast with the latest styles, regardless of age<sup>97</sup>.

Towards the other end of the spectrum, the genuinely positive reviews, including the above-mentioned anonymous one from *Minerva*, celebrated the vivid, artistically painted portraits<sup>98</sup>. The otherwise appreciative review signed by J.-B. S. also included a comment on "Mme" Bibesco's talent to always find a way to add nobility and majesty to the most trivial items<sup>99</sup>. On the other hand, Pierre Dominique understood the importance of fashion and the author's ability to paint dynamic, cutting yet fleeting images accessorised with profound observations on women's work and professional pride. He stated that only a woman could faithfully portray the fashion world in delicate feminine high-heels, as male reporters failed to breach it with their large men's boots<sup>100</sup>. Louis de Mondanon, in his short article for *Études*, mentioned the world inaccessible to the profane, likely referring to male visitors. Apart from the portraits betraying her literary prowess and keen eye, he believed the book would also be of interest to so-called "moralists" and "investigators" with its bountiful array of "just and piquant characters". On the same notebook page as Mondanon, M.M. echoed the moralist designation, describing the text as observational, reminiscent of "the long

century” literature<sup>101</sup>. The anonymous reviewer from the *Moniteur du Calvados* in Caen also commented on fashions impermanence, the book’s unique moralising approach, keen observation, “characters”, and La Bruyère<sup>102</sup>. But as with the Paris and fashion references, the review published in *Gazette de Monaco et de Monte-Carlo* may be the earlier inspiration for using moralisation, direct observation, “characters”, and the intelligent depiction of mundane realities<sup>103</sup>.

*Noblesse de Robe* also swayed French literary journalists on fashion. One example in the notebook was a short text by J. Tallendeau from the daily *Le Populaire de Nantes*. For the author, the book was as enchanting as it was educational. He admitted that he had not seriously considered fashions influence previously. Like other reviewers, Tallendeau focused on the titular essay’s monarchic symbology and possibly *Tote*. He commended Bibesco for having avoided penning the “usual” dull and irritating tone for “a book of this type”<sup>104</sup>. In his *L’Europe Nouvelle* review, Francis de Miomandre was equally enthralled with this notion. He believed Marthe Bibesco was the first writer after Colette to illustrate the exceptional couturières with “sympathy and fine intelligence”. He even went as far as to deem fashionable women heroic in their struggle with the ever-changing nature of style<sup>105</sup>. Interpreting *Noblesse de Robe* in congruous terms with the chosen pseudonym, in the half-page *Fantasio* review, Le Hérisson was a dainty yet acute portrayal of fashion as art. Because of this, Bibesco was herself an artist illustrating a gallery of “characters” which would be enchanting for the ladies and instructing for the gentlemen. Overall, Le Hérisson intuited the multilayered nature of fashion creation, production, dissemination, and consumption as a pursuit of blending art, psychology, and commercial profit<sup>106</sup>.

In his review for *Comœdia*, Gonzague Truc expressly referred to the assumption

that fashion as a discipline was inherently frivolous, a surface understanding of the world inhabited by couturières, who dominated the world through their art and intelligence. A supposedly superficial topic was conducive to what he termed as “profound thought” through its “relaxed documentation”. He focused on the French Dolls of Fashion, proof that the active pursuit of fashionability held more weight than politics<sup>107</sup>. Another mention of psychology was from an outlier, the Parisian German-language daily *Neue Pariser Zeitung*, where the author, signing as Globetrotter, quipped that the book demonstrated the intrinsic link between a so-called “womens psychology” and their fashion. Unlike other reviewers mentioning the “characters” in *Noblesse de Robe*, Globetrotter also indicated several real-life fashion personalities behind their pseudonyms: Chanel (Mademoiselle, Tote), the first saleswoman on Rue de la Paix at the House of Worth (Aline), the House of Reboux (Fabienne)<sup>108</sup>. Despite the transparent display of knowledge about the Parisian fashion scene, Globetrotter too failed to mention the *Vogue* connection. Despite fashion’s treatment as a valid interest in sociological or psychological research, as seen above with the so-called “classics” like Carlyle, Spencer, Veblen, Simmel or Flügel, the idea’s connection to frivolity played a crucial role in disregarding *Noblesse de Robe* as serious writing on the topic. If read from a twenty-first perspective, with less rigid identity, gender or topic categorisations, *Noblesse de Robe* can be reinterpreted as a text relevant to fashion theory and history.

### ***Noblesse de Robe*, Fashion Theory in the Making**

Before discussing the echoes in the clippings notebook touching on the potential academic interest, it must be restated that the tone, perspective and structure must be attributed to *Vogue* editorial guidelines. As seen with the 7 October 1926 letter from Philippe Ortiz to Marthe Bibesco in which he outlined the nature of the collaboration between the Princess and *Vogue Paris*<sup>109</sup>, the

essays collected into the *Noblesse de Robe* book (See Annex 1) published by Grasset were conceived to fit the framework dictated by *Vogue*. The requirements clearly outlined the mandatory structure, public, topics, tone, and length, which were also kept for the six new titles in the book (See Annex 2). Any judgement on these aspects directed to the author reveals a flawed comprehension of the publishing process, including *Vogues* standards and rigorousness. Also, as Ortiz pointed out in the same letter, the essays in their forms published in *Vogue Paris* were effectively the property of Condé Nast, who held the copyright and managed reproductions and translations in the English-language editions of *Vogue*. Marthe Bibesco expressed her desire to gather the essays into a book towards the end of this collaboration<sup>110</sup>, which implied a technical and legal contract between Condé Nast and Bernard Grasset, with the latter now owning the copyright for the texts<sup>111</sup>. The articles were intended to serve as advice literature<sup>112</sup> for the *Vogue* readership across its American and international editions. Critiques often mistakenly blamed the author alone, omitting its publishing context. If *Noblesse de Robe* can be construed as a theoretical text focusing on fashion, the *Vogue* context must become the basis of analysis. The reviews in the notebook touched upon the book's literary, sociological or psychological nuances. However, they treated it like a standalone text informed only by the author's skill (or lack thereof), intent, and ideas. If Marthe Bibesco had decided to expand upon the *Noblesse de Robe* essays into a cohesive narrative addressing a larger audience and including the fashion worlds broader aspects, literary criticism focusing on the author and the nature of the texts would indeed be warranted. But comparing *Noblesse de Robe* with Bibesco's previous literary works without adding the *Vogue* variable to the equation may imply insufficient research or understanding by the reviewers.

The most critical reviews included in the notebook did not even consider the

instructional purpose behind the *Noblesse de Robe* essays. One relevant example could be L.D.'s review in *Bonsoir*. Despite falling into the pitfalls of deus-ex-machina comparisons with Anna de Noailles and Bibesco's previous works, L.D. at least intuited a potential connected to the fashion press. Still, in the end, L.D. admitted that the books "supple and thrilling style" coupled with "intelligence, tact and fine sensitivity" assured its "first rank" placement "in our feminine literature"<sup>113</sup>. Similarly, the review published in *La Lumière* and signed by M.M. only referred to Marthe Bibesco's existing oeuvre, urging the magazines readers to peruse *Noblesse de Robe* quickly, if at all, and instead concentrate on her other works<sup>114</sup>. Like most reviews critiquing the book's literary style, the unsigned *Moniteur du Calvados* article specifically pointed towards *Catherine-Paris*, hoping that Marthe Bibesco would publish a proper novel she owed to her readers<sup>115</sup>. Cezar Petrescu's *Curentul* review equalled these claims, including critiquing the book's style and focus<sup>116</sup>.

Positive echoes included the 26 August 1928 *Minerva* review tacitly recognised Bibesco's insights as bridging "subtle and delicate poetry" with psychology, directed towards the proverbial "elegant woman" as a homage to "profound and spiritual choice" and a "precious breviary" of "the soul of eternal feminine coquetry"<sup>117</sup>. *L'Œuvre* seemed to change its attitude towards *Noblesse de Robe* by late 1928. In a chronicle exploring the relationship between fashion and cinema in an age of evolving, moving and still visual arts and technologies, film critic Lucien Wahl used the last essay in *Noblesse de Robe*, *La mode à l'écran* as a relevant source and example<sup>118</sup>. Wahl's text would not be expected to comment on its literary or theoretical merits as this was only a brief mention as a notable illustration for an argument on a theoretical interpretation of cinema and photography in connection with fashion. Clippings also included insights explicitly delineating its theoretical value. For instance, an extended article authored by Comédie Française actress and another notable Parisian of Romanian descent, Élisabeth Nizan, for *Revue française politique*



*et littéraire* highlighted the connection between fashion and politics. This link was most visible in the fashion systems monarchic structure, using, as well as other echoes regarding both fashion and Parisian dominance, the French Dolls of Fashion example<sup>119</sup>. Overlooking the *Vogue* connection, Tallendeaus text in *Le Populaire de Nantes* also described the book as a “spiritual” “first order document” superior to novels, boasting an ingenious title<sup>120</sup>. Like with the three aspects mentioned in this paper, namely, Paris as global fashion hub, fashion between genius and frivolity and proto-fashion theory, the source of most ideas and descriptive terminology may have been the 26 August 1928 *Gazette de Monaco et de Monte-Carlo* utilising the book’s juxtaposition between reason and emotion its instructional valence<sup>121</sup>. The only critique of the books gendered focus remained Ch. Becker’s review for *Journal de Luxembourg*, noting that one does not have to be a woman to find enjoyment and interest in fashion<sup>122</sup>.

### Conclusion

The fifty-six article clippings Marthe Bibesco included in her notebook remain a valuable material collection in themselves, especially as part of little-known and analysed primary sources related to interwar Romania. However, as the research on echoes connected to *Noblesse de Robe* continues, their percentage gradually lessens in sheer numbers and overall periods. Indeed, by April 2024, with over three hundred items found across periodical or research publications worldwide, the clippings account for around twenty-one per cent. The total span is around a year, from August 1928 to December 1929. Despite the reviews addressing only the author, Marthe Bibesco’s essays in *Noblesse de Robe* should be understood as original texts written on a specific blueprint and with a particular tone and intent. Critique must thus acknowledge the entire process and the individuals involved, from conception to creation,

editing, dissemination, and echoes. While most “chapters” followed the *Vogue Paris* publishing route, Marthe Bibesco deemed them important enough to warrant a distinct clippings notebook dedicated solely to *Noblesse de Robe*. Beyond these technical considerations, *Noblesse de Robe* as a book and each of its essays remain largely unexplored in detail and thus become a treasure trove for fashion, gender, literature, art researchers and historians interested in the eras symbolic and material, social, cultural, artistic and economic undercurrents. Taking the perspective a step further, the clippings notebook as an initial snapshot of the book’s worldwide distribution, alongside the entire publication process from Condé Nast to Grasset, are valuable investigative streams. *Noblesse de Robe* focuses on the late-1920s elite Parisian fashion industry and cultures. Its brief or tangential appearances in relevant theoretical works make it an original addition to fashion studies as a research topic and valuable addition to the curriculum. The clippings notebook becomes the starting point for a journey in territories yet to be explored about Marthe Bibesco, fashion theory, Romania and Bucharest, modernity in Europe and beyond and the connection between seemingly disparate personalities, fields, spaces and interests. The three themes explored in this paper offer an enormous potential for development as primary research topics and starting points for future research. Paris as centre of fashion and Marthe Bibesco as *Parisienne* connect Romania, Paris and the world through fashion. Fashion between frivolity and genius denoting the stereotypes about womens work and interests provides further understanding of the gender realities of the twentieth century and beyond. With the added understanding of the *Vogue* editing and content requirements, the literary and theoretical value of *Noblesse de Robe* can add Marthe Bibesco to the group of early fashion theorists, thus expanding the scope of art history and cultural studies.

## Annexes

### Annex 1: All Articles in the 1927 *Vogue* Paris Marthe Bibesco Editorial Series

1. *Fabienne, ou la conscience professionnelle (Fabienne, or the Professional Conscience)*, p. 29.
2. *Cora ou la diversité (Cora, or the Diversity)*, p. 27.
3. *Tiburce ou la passion du costume (Tiburce or the Passion for Costume)*, p. 27.
4. *Noblesse de Robe (Nobility of Dress)*, p. 29.
5. *Claude qui se connaît (Claude who Knows Herself)*, p. 27.
6. *Rose qui se devine (Rose who can be Sensed)*, p. 29.
7. *Laure et Lise, ou l'être et le paraître (Laure și Lise, or the Being and Seeming)*, p. 29.
8. *La Mode pensée: selon Sylvie (Fashion Thought: According to Sylvie)*, p. 33.
9. *La Mode combattue selon Paule (Combatted Fashion, according to Paule)*, p. 39.
10. *Odette ou la robe d'autrui ne désireras (Odette or not Desiring Another's Dress)*, October, p. 33.
11. *Madame Aline, vendeuse, ou lécole des ambassadrices (Madame Aline, Seller, or the School for Ambassadors)*, p. 29.
12. *Gabrielle ou le génie de l'accessoire (Gabrielle or the Accessory Genius)*, p. 29.

### Annex 2: *Noblesse de Robe* 1928 Grasset Book Essay Order

1. *Noblesse de Robe*
2. *Fabienne...*
3. *Cora...*
4. *Tiburce...*
5. *Claude...*
6. *Rose...*
7. *Laure et Lise...*

8. *La Mode pensée... (Antoinette)*
9. *La Mode combattue...*
10. *Odette...*
11. *Madame Aline...*
12. *Gabrielle...*
13. *Une mode qui ne passera pas (A Fashion that will not Pass)*
14. *Votre robe, Marguerite (Your Dress, Marguerite)*
15. *Cerise à la mode ou le serment de ne pas changer (Cherry colour in Fashion or the Oath Not to Change)*
16. *Mademoiselle Ida*
17. *Tote, illustre couturière (Tote, the Illustrious Couturiere)*
18. *La mode à l'écran (Fashion on the Screen)*

### Annex 3: Clippings Notebook Chronology (Source, City, Author, Page)

- 17–24 August 1928
  - *La Semaine à Paris* (Paris), C.S.C., p. 31.
- 19 August 1928
  - *Curentul* (Bucharest), C. Petrescu, p. 35.
- 20 August 1928
  - *Journal de Geneve* (Geneva), n.a., p. 37.
- 26 August 1928
  - *Minerva* (Paris), p. 33.
  - *Gazette de Monte-Carlo* (Monte-Carlo), n.a., p. 39.
- 2 September 1928
  - *Populaire de Nantes* (Nantes), J. Tallendeau, p. 39.
- 5 September 1928
  - *Bonsoir* (Paris), L.D., p. 39.
- 8 September 1928
  - *L'Indépendance Roumaine* (Bucharest), M. Bibesco, p. 41.
- 9 September 1928
  - *The Observer* (London), p. 45.
- 13 September 1928
  - *L'Avenir du Plateau Central* (Clermont-Ferrand), M. Vallet, p. 43.

- 15 September 1928
  - *Neue Pariser Zeitung* (Paris), Globetrotter, p. 43.
  - *Le Soir* (Paris), R. Dunan, p. 67.
- 16 September 1928
  - *Le Journal de l'Ouest et du Centre* (Poitiers), p. 45.
  - *The New York Times* (New York), P Souday, p. 53
- 17 September 1928
  - *L'Avenir de la Vienne et de l'Ouest*, Froufrou, p. 47.
- 20 September 1928
  - *Dépêche de Toulouse* (Toulouse), J. Blaize, p. 45.
- 20-22 September 1928
  - *L'écho du IX<sup>e</sup> arrondissement* (Paris), p. 45.
- 22 September 1928
  - *Éclairer de Nice* (Nice), p. 45.
  - *La Lumière* (Paris), M. Martin, p. 47.
  - *L'Art et la Mode* (Paris), P. de Trévières, p. 49
- 23 September 1928
  - *La Presse* (Paris), F. Montel, p. 47
- 26 September 1928
  - *Pax* (Geneva), J.-N. Faure-Biguet, p. 51.
  - 29 September 1928
  - *L'Europe Centrale* (Prague), F.B., p. 55.
- October 1928
  - *Vient de Paraître* (Paris), D.P., p. 63.
- 1 October 1928
  - *La Revue Mondiale* (Paris), N. Ségur, p. 55
  - ...*Times* (*Washington Times*), International News Service, p. 67.
- 4 October 1928
  - *Bordeaux Nocturne* (Bordeaux), M. Bibesco, p. 65.
- 6 October 1928
  - *Moniteur de Calvados* (Caen), p. 57.
  - *De Nieuwe Courant* (The Hague), p. 57.
- 10 October 1928
  - *Le Populaire* (Paris), J.-B.S., p. 69.
  - *Paris-Soir* (Paris), P. Dominique, p. 75.
- 13 October 1928
  - *L'Europe Nouvelle* (Paris), F. de Miomandre, p. 59.
  - *Dépêche Coloniale* (Paris), M.-A. Leblond, p. 61.
- 15 October 1928
  - *Fantasio* (Paris), Le Hérisson, p. 63.
  - *Journal Syracuse* (Syracuse, NY), p. 69.
- 17 October 1928
  - *La Rumeur* (Paris), Marianne, p. 63.
- 22 October 1928
  - *Diario de la Marina* (Havana), P.R., p. 71.
- 24 October 1928
  - *Le Populaire* (Paris), p. 69.
- 30 October 1928
  - *Comœdia* (Paris), G. Truc, p. 73.
- 4 November 1928
  - *L'Information* (Paris), L.W., p. 55.
- 9 November 1928
  - *L'Ami du Peuple* (Paris), G. Charles, p. 75.
- 19 November 1928
  - *Journal de Luxembourg* (Luxembourg), bilingual, Ch. Becker, p. 77.
- December 1928
  - *Résister* (Châteauroux), p. 79.
- 2 December 1928
  - *L'Ami du Peuple* (Angiers), p. 79.
- 9 December 1928
  - *L'Œuvre* (Paris), L. Wahl, p. 81.
- 1928–1929
  - *Rozpravy Aventina* (Prague), E. Jurčinová, p. 81.

- March 1929
  - *La revue Franco-Belge (Paris)*, M.M., p. 83.
- 15 March 1929
  - *L'École Émancipée (Paris)*, p. 81.
- 20 March 1929
  - *Les Études (Paris)*, L. de Mondanon, p. 83.
  - *La Gazette de Grande Bretagne (London)*, p. 83.
- 3 April 1929
  - *Vu (Paris)*, M. Bibesco, p. 85.
- 3 July 1929
  - *Books Abroad (Oklahoma)*, C. Gallaher, p. 89.
- 19 August 1929
  - *Le Temps (Paris)*, E.H., p. 81.
- 1 September 1929
  - *Revue française (Paris)*, É. Nizan, p. 89.
- 18 October 1929
  - *Eve Record*, p. 55.
- Unknown date (probably 1929)
  - *Bonniers veckotidning (Stockholm)*, M. Bibesco (F. Stiernstedt), p. 87.

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Lettres et coupures de presse. «Noblesse de Robe»*, Princess Marthe Bibesco: An Inventory of Her Papers Collection at the Harry Ransom Center, Boxes 348–349: Clippings, including bound volume of articles relating to Noblesse de robe, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin USA, <https://norman.hrc.utexas.edu/fasearch/findingAid.cfm?eadid=00372>, accessed 25 December 2023. The notebook will also serve as reference for articles that have not been specifically identified by April 2024.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*, “Noblesse de Robe. Tote, lillustre couturière”, *Gazette de Monaco et de Monte-Carlo*, 12 August 1928, Monte Carlo, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*, *Lettres et coupures...*, p. 87.

<sup>5</sup> For an analysis *Noblesse de Robe* starting from this essay and Marthe Bibesco’s literary and fashion connections, beyond her much-documented relationship with Coco Chanel, see Sonia D. Andraș, “Perfection and Good Taste: Redefining Female Identity in Interwar Bucharest through Fashion and Beauty”, in *Between tradition and modernity: Romanias elites in the “short century” (1918–1989)* (editor: Cornel Sigmirean), Cluj-Napoca, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Ulrich Lehmann, ‘Introduction to Excerpts from “Noblesse de Robe”’, *Art in Translation*, vol. 7, no. 2, 4 May 2015, DOI 10.1080/17561310.2015.1038906, p. 245.

<sup>7</sup> For details on fashion-related theoretical texts up to and including Roland Barthes, see Michael Carter, *Fashion Classics from Carlyle to Barthes*, Oxford and New York, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> John Carl Flügel, *Psychology of Clothes*, Hogarth Press, London, 1930, p. 239.

<sup>9</sup> Christine Sutherland, *Enchantress: Marthe Bibesco and Her World*, London, 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Marthe Bibesco and the voices of Europe: correspondence and CNSAS file 1941–1945*, (translator: Alina Pavelescu and Corina Petrescu, editor: Alina Pavelescu), Bucharest, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Radu Albu-Comănescu, “Marthe Bibesco, cultural diplomat: a great European”, *Synergies Romania*, no. 10, 2015, p. 91–101.

<sup>12</sup> Mihai Dimitrie Sturdza, *Romanian aristocrats in Proust’s world: Anton Bibescu, Marthe Bibesco, Anna de Noailles, Elena Bibescu*, Bucharest, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*, *Noblesse de Robe*.

<sup>14</sup> Around 516.72 Euros per *Vogue* article and 258.36 Euros reproduction rights, in 2024. For details see Confidential letter to Edna Woolman Chase, 14 January 1927, Clippings..., Box 239–3, *loc.cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Around 9,284.92 Euros in 2024.

<sup>16</sup> For the latest three recorded mentions of *Noblesse de Robe* by April 2024, see Antoaneta Taneva, ““Hen Literature: Genders in Conflict (Bulgarian and Romanian Women Writers in the Period between Two World Wars),” in *Semiotics around the World: Synthesis in Diversity*, ed. Irmengard Rauch and Gerald F. Carr The Hague, 1996, 485–488, DOI 10.1515/9783110820065-097; Nina Goldt, *Portrait à la mode: weibliche Figurenbilder der École de Paris zwischen Belle Époque und Années folles*, Berlin and Boston, 2022, DOI 10.1515/9783110766554 and Sonia D. Andraș, “*Garçonne*, but Make Her Flapper. Using American Femininity Models to Re-Fashion the Romanian ‘Modern Girl’”, in *Creative Negotiations. Romania – America 1920–1940*, ed. Sonia D. Andraș and Roxana Mihaly, Cluj-Napoca, 2023, 138–165, <http://www.editura.ubbcluj.ro/bd/ebooks/pdf/3914.pdf>, accessed 25 March 2023.

<sup>17</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Lettres et coupures...*, p. 45.

<sup>18</sup> Philippe Ortiz, “Letter to Marthe Bibesco”, 7 October 1926, Clippings, including bound volume of articles relating to Noblesse de robe, Box 239–236,

Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin, USA, <https://norman.hrc.utexas.edu/fasearch/findingAid.cfm?eadid=00372>, p. 1. All translations that are not specifically attributed in this paper are by me.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1–2.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*, “Letter to Marthe Bibesco”, 14 October 14, 1927, *loc. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Djurdja Bartlett, *Can Fashion Be Defended?*, în *Fashion and Politics* (coord. Djurdja Bartlett), New Haven și Londra, 2019, p. 32.

<sup>22</sup> See Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi, London and New York, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Almost a century after the moment of *Noblesse de Robe*, the management of the magazine decided to change *Vogue Paris* to *Vogue France*, motivating the need to favour inclusivity over exclusivity. Tessa Swantek, *Vogue Paris Becomes Vogue France: How Fashion Print's Newest Change Reflects Industry Trends*, in *Fashion Reverie*, 2021, <https://fashionreverie.com/?p=33611>, accessed June 29, 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Fabienne, ou la conscience professionnelle*, edited by Philippe Ortiz, Condé Nast, Paris, 1926.

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*, “Fabienne...”, *op. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*, *La mode et la tradition par la Princesse Bibesco*, Caroline Reboux, Paris, 1939.

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*, *Noblesse de robe...*, p. 21–30.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13–14.

<sup>29</sup> See Véronique Pouillard, “Design Piracy in the Fashion Industries of Paris and New York in the Interwar Years”, *The Business History Review*, vol. 85, no. 2, Summer 2011, p. 319–344.

<sup>30</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Noblesse de Robe*, 18.

<sup>31</sup> Likely referring to the *taupe* felt.

<sup>32</sup> Both city names retain the author’s spelling.

<sup>33</sup> Rose Fortassier, *Les écrivains français et la mode: de Balzac à nos jours*, Paris, 1988, p. 211.

<sup>34</sup> Marthe Bibesco, “Noblesse de Robe. Tote, lillustre couturière”, *Gazette de Monaco et de Monte-Carlo*, 12 August 1928, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> *Id.*, “Noblesse de Robe”, *Excelsior*, 4 September 1928), p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*, “Noblesse de Robe”, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 29 July 1931, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*, *Noblesse de Robe, op.cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

<sup>40</sup> See for a detailed analysis of the English text *Odette* in the context of fashion and beauty models in Romania in the American edition of *Vogue*, Sonia D. Andraș, *Interwar Romanian Fashion and Beauty in American Vogue*, in *Romanian-American Negotiations in Education, Science, Culture, and Arts* (editors: Corneli Sigmirean, Sonia D. Andras, Roxana Mihaly), Cluj-Napoca, 2023, <http://www.editura.ubbcluj.ro/www/ro/ebook.php?id=3854>, accessed 25 March 2024.

<sup>41</sup> For the connection between fashion, women and ideology as negotiation in the spectrum represented by oppression (Monitorul Oficial) and emancipation (Calea Victoriei), see *Id.*, *From Monitorul Oficial to Calea Victoriei: Decoding 1930s Bucharest through Womens Fashion*, in *Journal of Romanian Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, 25 April 2023, p. 27–54, DOI 10.3828/jrns.2023.3.

<sup>42</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Noblesse de Robe*, p. 11–12.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.

<sup>46</sup> Ulrich Lehmann, “Introduction...”, p. 245.

<sup>47</sup> For a conceptual exercise in “simultaneous migrations” connecting Sonia Delaunay, Tristan Tzara, Constantin Brâncuși and Lizica Codreanu, See Sonia D. Andraș, “Fashioning Simultaneous Migrations: Sonia Delaunay and Inter-War Romanian Connections”, *Critical Studies in Fashion & Beauty*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1 December 2022, p. 229–253.

<sup>48</sup> Valerie Steele, “Paris, Capital of Fashion”, in *Paris, Capital of Fashion* (editor: Valerie Steele), London and New York, 2019, p. (10–49) 10.

<sup>49</sup> Sophie Kurkdjian, “Paris as the Capital of Fashion, 1858–1939: An Inquiry”, *Fashion Theory*, vol. 24, no. 3, 15 April 2020, p. (371–391) 377–380, DOI 10.1080/1362704X.2020.1732022.

<sup>50</sup> Valerie Steele, “Paris, Capital of Fashion”, p. 48–50.

<sup>51</sup> Migri, ‘Ultima modă, *Rampa*, 2 January 1928, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> “Princesse Bibesco. *Noblesse de Robe*”, *Minerva*, 26 August 1928, p. 10.

<sup>53</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Lettres et coupures...*, p. 49.

<sup>54</sup> J.-B. S., “Princesse Bibesco. Noblesse de Robe”, *Le Populaire*, 10 October 1928, p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Marthe Bibesco Image Correction, *Le Populaire*, 24 October 1928, p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> International News Service, “Princess Book Gives Talks on Styles”, *The Washington Times*, 1 October 1928, p. 26.

<sup>57</sup> Pierre Dominique, “Nouvelles des Lettres”, *Paris-Soir*, 10 October 1928, p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Francis de Miomandre, “«Noblesse de Robe» par la princesse Bibesco”, *L’Europe Nouvelle*, vol. 11, no. 557, 13 October 1928, p. 1376–1377.

<sup>59</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Lettres et coupures...*, p. 63.

<sup>60</sup> “Noblesse de Robe. *Princesse Bibesco*. (Grasset, éditeur)”, *Gazette de Monaco et de Monte-Carlo*, 26 August 1928), p. 4.

<sup>61</sup> Paul Souday, “Princess Bibesco on The Art of Dress”, *The New York Times*, 16 September 1928, p. 64.

<sup>62</sup> P.R., “El arte del buen vestir. Carta de Paris”, *Diario de la Marina*, 22 October 1928, p. 14.

<sup>63</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Lettres et coupures...*, p. 83.

<sup>64</sup> Marianne, “Noblesse de Robe”, *La Rumeur*, 17 October 1928, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Gonzague Truc, “Caractères et Idées”, *Comœdia*, 30 October 1928, p. 3.



- <sup>66</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Lettres et coupures...*, p. 57.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- <sup>68</sup> L.D., ‘Livres et Revues’, *Bonsoir*, 5 September 1928, p. 3.
- <sup>69</sup> André Billy, ‘Livres de femmes’, *L’Œuvre*, 4 September 1928, p. 4.
- <sup>70</sup> Le Hérisson, ‘Noblesse de Robe’, *Fantasio*, vol. 23, no. 521, 15 October 1928, p. 148.
- <sup>71</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Lettres et coupures...*, p. 83.
- <sup>72</sup> Froufrou, ‘Les Marchandes d’avenir’, *L’Avenir de la Vienne et de l’Ouest*, 17 September 1928, p. 4.
- <sup>73</sup> Marius-Ary Leblond, ‘La mode et nos colonies’, *Dépêche Coloniale et Maritime*, 13 October 1928, p. 2.
- <sup>74</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Lettres et coupures...*, p. 67.
- <sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- <sup>77</sup> Jonathan Jones, ‘Sargent and Fashion Review – Tragicomic Travesty Is a Frock Horror’, *The Guardian*, 20 February 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2024/feb/20/sargent-and-fashion-review-tate-britain-london>, Accessed 5 April 2024.
- <sup>78</sup> L.D., ‘Livres et Revues...’
- <sup>79</sup> Maurice Vallet, ‘Feuilleton Littéraire’, *L’Avenir du Plateau Central*, 13 September 1928, p. 4.
- <sup>80</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Lettres et coupures...*, p. 45.
- <sup>81</sup> Froufrou, ‘Les Marchandes d’avenir’.
- <sup>82</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Lettres et coupures...*, p. 45.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- <sup>84</sup> *Id.*, ‘Noblesse de Robe’, *Excelsior*, 4 September 1928, p. 4.
- <sup>85</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Lettres et coupures...*, p. 31.
- <sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- <sup>87</sup> M.M., ‘Noblesse de robe. Par la princesse Bibesco’, *La Lumière*, 22 September 1928, p. 15.
- <sup>88</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Lettres et coupures...*, p. 47.
- <sup>89</sup> Nicolas Ségur, ‘La vie littéraire’, *La Revue Mondiale*, vol. 9, no. 19, 1 October 1928, p. (284–288) 288.
- <sup>90</sup> Edouard Rothen, ‘Échos des lettres et des arts’, *L’École émancipée*, vol. 19, no. 24, 10 March 1929, p. 391.
- <sup>91</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Lettres et coupures...*, p. 67.
- <sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.
- <sup>93</sup> Clark Gallaher, ‘Noblesse de Robe Book Review, ed. by Princesse Bibesco’, *Books Abroad*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1929, p. 207.
- <sup>94</sup> L.W., ‘«Noblesse de robe» par la princesse Bibesco’, *L’information financière, économique et politique*, 4 November 1928, p. 7.
- <sup>95</sup> Albert Thibaudet, ‘«Noblesse de Robe»’, *Journal de Genève*, 29 August 1928, p. (1–2) 1.
- <sup>96</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Lettres et coupures...*, p. 51.
- <sup>97</sup> Souday, ‘Princesse Bibesco’.
- <sup>98</sup> ‘Princesse Bibesco’, *Minerva*.
- <sup>99</sup> J.-B. S., ‘Princesse Bibesco’.
- <sup>100</sup> Pierre Dominique, ‘Nouvelles des Lettres’.
- <sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.
- <sup>103</sup> ‘Noblesse de Robe...’ *Gazette de Monaco...*
- <sup>104</sup> J. Tallendeau, ‘Chronique Littéraire’, *Le Populaire de Nantes*, 2 September 1928, p. 4.
- <sup>105</sup> Francis de Miomandre, ‘Noblesse de Robe’.
- <sup>106</sup> Le Hérisson, ‘Noblesse de Robe’.
- <sup>107</sup> Truc, *Caractères et Idées*.
- <sup>108</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Lettres et coupures...*, p. 43.
- <sup>109</sup> Philippe Ortiz, ‘Letter to Marthe Bibesco’, 7 October 1926.
- <sup>110</sup> *Id.*, ‘Letter to Marthe Bibesco’, 14 October 1927.
- <sup>111</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Noblesse de Robe*, p. 6.
- <sup>112</sup> See Grace Lees-Maffei, ‘From Service to Self-Service: Advice Literature as Design Discourse, 1920–1970’, *Journal of Design History*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2001, p. 187–206.
- <sup>113</sup> L.D., ‘Livres et Revues’.
- <sup>114</sup> M.M., ‘Noblesse de Robe’.
- <sup>115</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Lettres et coupures...*, p. 57.
- <sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- <sup>117</sup> ‘Princesse Bibesco’, *Minerva*.
- <sup>118</sup> Lucien Wahl, ‘La vie et la survie par le cinéma muet et bavard’, *L’Œuvre*, 9 December 1928, p. 1.
- <sup>119</sup> Élisabeth Nizan, ‘Conférence sur la Mode’, *Revue française politique et littéraire*, vol. 24, no. 35, 1 September 1929, p. (201–207) 205.
- <sup>120</sup> J. Tallendeau, ‘Chronique Littéraire’, *Le Populaire de Nantes*, 2 September 1928, p. 4.
- <sup>121</sup> ‘Noblesse de Robe...’ *Gazette de Monaco...*
- <sup>122</sup> Marthe Bibesco, *Lettres et coupures...*, p. 77.