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Front Cover Image:

Green Silk Dress, Callot Soeurs, 1925, Goldstein Museum of Design, St. Paul, Minnesota, United States, 1990.003.005a-b, © Regents of the University of Minnesota.

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From Colonial Traditions to Modern Values: Eufrásia Teixeira Leite's Shoes and Brazilian Footwear, 1808-1930

Cecília Soares¹

Abstract

This article explores features of Brazilian shoemaking and footwear over the course of the nineteenth century by analysing and contextualizing six pairs that belonged to businesswoman Eufrásia Teixeira Leite. Today, they are kept at the Museu Casa da Hera, in her hometown of Vassouras, 120 km from the city of Rio de Janeiro. The research was based upon digital methodologies. The shoes were seen on site and compared to pictures and descriptions of other pairs, which were available on online international exhibitions and catalogues. Primary and secondary sources were also consulted. This study concludes that the shoes seem to have been carefully kept as memory items and at least one pair could have been someone else's and not Eufrásia's.

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Introduction

The Museu Casa da Hera (Figure 1), the “Ivy House Museum,” is an historic house museum – the former home of a specific family or person who somehow “distinguished themselves from their contemporaries.”² The space aims to “preserve the surroundings as close as possible to what they first were, including the original shape of the house, the objects, and the context where the person first lived.”³ The Casa da Hera was named after the ivy (“hera” in Portuguese) on its façade, a feature strongly tied to the history of its main inhabitants: the Teixeira Leite family in general, and Eufrásia Teixeira Leite (Figure 2) in particular.



Figure 1:
The façade of the Museu Casa da Hera, Vassouras, Brazil.⁴

Eufrásia Leite’s life trajectory, unusual even for a woman who belonged to a distinguished and wealthy family, can be seen depicted today in the museum’s dress items. Seen among the 44 pieces available are walking, riding, and party dresses, sleeping gowns, umbrellas, fans, hats, and shoes. Fifteen of the pieces of

² Antonio Ponte, *Casas-museu em Portugal: Teoria e Prática*, master’s thesis, Faculdade de Letras, Universidade do Porto, 2007, p. 5.

³ Idem, *ibidem*.

⁴ Available at: <https://www.guiadasartes.com.br/rio-de-janeiro/museu-casa-da-hera>. Accessed 13 February, 2021.

clothing carry formal brand tags and can be attributed to some of the biggest fashion names of her time - including Felix Brevet , Rouff, Mourin & Blossier, and Charles Worth (Figures 3-6).⁵ The six pairs of shoes therefore make up a very particular sample and leave nothing to be desired if compared to her outfits from luxury stores in Paris, the centre of the fashion world at the time. These are the only pieces that outlived Leite, who died in 1930.



Figure 2:
Portrait of Euf rsia Teixeira Leite, Carolus-Duran, 1887, oil on canvas, Paris.
Museu Casa da Hera, Vassouras, Brazil.

⁵ See Ana Freitas Umbelino, *O acervo de indument ria do Museu Casa da Hera: Proposta de Cat logo*, master's thesis, Programa de P s-Gradua o em Hist ria, Pol tica e Bens Culturais, Funda o Get lio Vargas, 2016 and Fl vio Oscar Nunes Bragan a & Priscila Faulhaber Barbosa, *Etiqueta-documento: o acervo do Museu Casa da Hera*, *XIX Encontro Nacional de Pesquisa em Ci ncia da Informa o*, 2018, pp. 5690-5708.



Figure 3:
Riding costume by Charles Worth, owned by Eufrásia Teixeira Leite. Purple velvet and details in pink with silk lining. Museu Casa da Hera, Vassouras, Brazil. T1155.



Figure 4:
Coat by Charles Worth, owned by Eufrásia Teixeira Leite. Ivory wool with silk lining. Museu Casa da Hera, Vassouras, Brazil. T1141.



Figure 5:
Evening dress owned by Eufrásia
Teixeira Leite. Silk satin.
Museu Casa da Hera, Vassouras,
Brazil. T1146.



Figure 6:
Long skirt by Rouff, owned by
Eufrásia Teixeira. Beige silk with
floral painting and lace. Circa 1880s.
Museu Casa da Hera, Vassouras,
Brazil. T1153.

Few clues exist as to what the origins of the shoes may have been and why these are the only pairs left. Cecília Bonfim, her maid, once stated that Eufrásia, who died a millionaire, used to sew diamonds into her clothing and tie them to her hair on special occasions.⁶ A woman with so many possessions – who owned clothes by the finest Parisian names until her late 70s – would probably have more than six pairs of shoes in her collection, but all others have left no traces.

By analysing the pairs that have come down to us, in addition to catching a more detailed glimpse of the wardrobe choices of a very wealthy woman, making educated guesses about her taste and influences and even speculating on Leite's

⁶ See Magda Sayão Capute, *A dama dos diamantes negros e a educação em Vassouras: um estudo sobre o Instituto Profissional Feminino e Masculino Doutor Joaquim José Teixeira Leite (1930–1959)*, master's thesis, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 2011, p. 11.

memories and feelings, we can begin to reimagine a complex production chain and gain a better understanding of Rio de Janeiro's place in global trade back then. These shoes are the key to accessing the rich and complex scenery of the second half of the nineteenth century as a whole, particularly because there are very few pairs in Brazilian museums. Almost none other can be directly linked to a specific owner, so their context can hardly be reconstituted in any way.

The methodology adopted in this study consists in a comparative strategy to analyse the shoes, their time, and the meaning they held to their owner. Since the research began in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, most sources, both in text and image, are digital. The six pairs, however, were seen on site and their pictures taken by the author. However, since she lacks formal training as curator or dressmaker, two experts were consulted remotely regarding the shoes' features as seen in the pictures.⁷ Some variation must therefore be considered, as the pairs might be slightly younger or older than estimated, but this bears no significant relevance to the main conclusion.

Eufrásia Teixeira Leite: an Intriguing Personage

Even though the Casa da Hera could be spotted on the city map from as soon as 1836, as is usually believed, the property is not likely to have been bought by then newly-weds Ana Esméria Pontes França and Joaquim José Teixeira Leite (Figure 7), Eufrásia's parents, until 1843.⁸ Several renovations and expansions followed the acquisition.⁹ The ivy was planted in 1887, by initiative of housekeeper and former slave Manoel da Silva Rebello.¹⁰

Joaquim José, who graduated from Law School at the Faculdade de Direito of São Paulo, was a coffee commissioner or trader, i.e. a businessman with a focus on coffee, the dark gold of the time. Coffee traders did not own the plantations themselves; instead, they negotiated with rural owners and foreign buyers, and

⁷ Their contribution was very enriching, but all mistakes are mine.

⁸ See Eneida Queiroz, Daniele de Sá Alves and Cinthia Rocha, *Museu Casa da Hera*. Brasília: IBRAM, 2014, p. 5.

⁹ *Chácaras* differed from farms by being closer to town and also usually not having large fields, as plantations did; however, several had exquisite gardens.

¹⁰ Queiroz, de Sá Alves & Rocha, op. cit., p. 5.

lent money to those looking to start their own farms.¹¹ Ana Esméria herself descended from the Corrêa e Castro, a family of coffee farmers or “coffee barons,” as they were known. Both belonged to a large and powerful network of plantations and businesses.



Figure 7:
Joaquim José Teixeira Leite and Ana Esméria Teixeira Leite.
Queiroz, de Sá Alves & Rocha, 2014, p. 38.

Coffee was to become Brazil’s great exported item of the nineteenth century, with 65% of the country’s total export revenues stemming from coffee at the end of the century.¹²

Eufrásia was born in Vassouras on April 15, 1850, to one of the richest families in town. A fine lady of her time was expected to marry a man worthy of her position and was often tasked with entertaining guests. Even in rich families, women were not usually taught to run businesses. Some could not even read or write. They were seen as the main authorities of the domestic space and were expected to dedicate themselves to child upbringing and individual chores (singing, playing the piano, embroidery, dealing with religious festivities, et cetera), while hard labour (like cooking, cleaning, mending clothes, gardening) was left to domestic

¹¹ Coffee is quite an expensive crop, as its plants take several years before yielding beans. Therefore, one must have large sums invested and be willing to wait for returns.

¹² Queiroz, de Sá Alves & Rocha, op. cit, p. 24.

slaves. Beautiful brides were expected to become skilled wives and mothers, but they remained confined within domestic boundaries.



Figure 8

Seller of toasted coffee, Jean-Baptiste Debret.

The white woman is kept at home and the black women are slaves.¹³

The Teixeira Leite family were far from following the main recipe on how to raise daughters and have them fit into the small and tightly knitted society, eventually to be seen as suitable brides, especially in the absence of a male heir to keep the family business running. Usually, a father who only had daughters had no option but to rely on his son-in-law, which casts light on how important marrying was in the pursuit of financial strategies and even in guaranteeing the survival of the family. This was clearly not the vision of the Teixeira Leite family, who, instead of seeking suitable bachelors, decided to recognize their two daughters as their main heirs and teach them how to administer the wealth that would be theirs someday.¹⁴

Joaquim José boasted one of the largest book collections in town, with almost a thousand volumes, and the solid content taught to his daughters might indicate he wanted them to be as analytical and well-informed as he was, even though their

¹³ Available at: <https://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra1197/caffe-sic-torrado>. Accessed February 2, 2021.

¹⁴ Joaquim José used part of his legal knowledge to establish several conditions on the heritage. In case of marriage, the husband of each daughter would be able to manage only one third of his wife's total wealth, thus avoiding complete bankruptcy.

skills as professionals were unlikely to be further developed once they held good marriage negotiations. But their future took unexpected directions. First, Eufrásia's older sister, Francisca (born in 1845), suffered from an undiagnosed infirmity, and the whole family spent almost two years, between 1857 and 1859, in Europe seeking treatment.¹⁵ Once back in Brazil, the two sisters were given a thorough education, comprising business, finance, and mathematics, plus every subject seen as central to female education, such as good manners, piano, and French. Then, suddenly, their mother, father, and grandmother died a few months apart from each other, from 1870 to 1873.

In 1873, Eufrásia was 23-year-old and received her full heritage. She also became a wealthy woman with full powers to use her money as she saw fit.¹⁶ She moved back to Paris with Francisca and spent the rest of her lifetime in the French capital, excepting some short visits to Brazil. Nonetheless, not only did she never sell her Vassouras home, she also gave strict orders to Manoel Rebello to keep everything as it was when she left, which he followed diligently.

Eufrásia was a keen businesswoman and her wealth flourished year after year as she invested in different economic sectors (railroads, goldmines, among others), although exactly what kind of trade she plied, and how, remains a mystery. She made successful investments both in Europe and in Brazil, and even entered the Paris stock exchange.

¹⁵ *Correio Mercantil*, August 8, 1858, p. 1. Francisca was Ana Esméria's second child. The first child, a boy named Francisco, died shortly after birth. Apparently, Francisca's infirmities included a hip disability, and she was unable to lead an independent life. She lived with Eufrásia and died in 1899.

¹⁶ The very fact that Eufrásia and Francisca inherited money, be it in cash or as stocks, is unusual when we consider their context. Typically, an inheritance came in the form of land, plantations, or slaves. This made it difficult for the beneficiary to use it as they wished, as there was no cash, just property; the most viable solution often consisted in staying on the farm and making it as profitable as possible. The Teixeira Leite sisters were given the very rare position of being free to choose how to live and that almost immediately after inheriting their share of the family wealth. Joaquim José Teixeira Leite's inheritance was the equivalent of 5% of Brazil's total amount raised in national exportation taxes in 1872. But the testament included only 12 slaves – some farms could use up to 150 slaves. Curiously enough, at the time of their parents' death, both sisters were older than the average age at which local girls married, but they were still single.

Between 1884 and 1927, the three women lived in a five-story *hotel particulier* at 40, Rue Bassano (8th *arrondissement*). Despite being engaged to Brazilian writer and congressman Joaquim Nabuco for 14 years in an on-and-off relationship, the wedding was finally called off and neither she nor Francisca had any offspring. She came back to Rio de Janeiro in 1926 and spent her last years quietly. After her death in 1930, her testament dictated how to deal with every possession – most should be sold and the final value donated to charity, on condition that schools and hospitals were built. The Teixeira Leite house, however, was to be maintained.¹⁷

Eufrásia's Shoes

Compared to today's standards, Eufrásia's shoes are quite small (Brazilian 33, European 35, US 6), which corroborates previous observations about how shoes were smaller in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁸ Their main materials are silk and leather, with most displaying fine embroidery. The main theory about why there are so few items remaining in such a luxury wardrobe is based on speculations that Eufrásia's personal goods were likely sold after her death to increase her immediate cash wealth and liquidity and to distribute their entirety as donations and improvements to the city of Vassouras.¹⁹ These six pairs may have been left behind due to their low final value. That being the case, and given their very well conserved state, one would expect these pairs were bought between 1925 and 1930, Eufrásia's last years, further assuming that their owner did not develop ties with them, apart from their possibly being surrounded with good taste. One could also expect to find major French models since Eufrásia had been a long-time Paris resident. As we will see, the shoes might inform us otherwise and even suggest unexpected alternatives.

The first pair is the only one with enough clues to be easily connected to a shop: Hellstern shoemakers, in Paris. Founded by Louis Hellstern in the 1870s,

¹⁷ The house eventually became the Casa da Hera museum.

¹⁸ See Alison Fairhurst, *Women's Shoes of the Eighteenth Century: Style, Use, and Evolution*. *The Journal of Dress History*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2017, pp. 25–43.

¹⁹ Personal communication with Aline Bougleux, chief museologist at Museu Casa da Hera.

Hellstern reached its peak between 1920 and 1925. Hellstern's sons, Henri, Charles (Figure 9), and Maurice, worked together to improve shoe production and retail, and their factory had around a hundred workers at its peak.

Their shop was first located at Rue du 29 Juillet, then, in 1902, it moved to 23, Place Vendôme (Figure 10), a major luxury address in Paris. The brand lasted until the 1970s, and even had branches in Brussels, Cannes, and London, but the success was never the same after the Second World War.



Figure 9:
Charles and wife Eugénie Hellstern. Eugénie would later be mayor of the city of Médan, France.²⁰

²⁰ Available at:
<http://medandhieretdaujourdhui.unblog.fr/author/medandhieretdaujourdhui/page/3/>. Accessed 14 February, 2021.



Figure 10:
Client trying shoes at Bootmakers Hellstern. Place Vendôme, Paris, May, 1950.
Photo by Walter Carone/Paris Match via Getty Images.²¹

Hellstern clients, from artists to Russian countesses, were regular customers and some ordered up to three pairs a week. Payments were done weekly, monthly or even once a year.²² Hellstern also liked to develop one-of-a-kind models such as the Renault boot (Figure 11), thus doing “collabs” *avant la lettre*.

²¹ Available at: <https://www.gettyimages.de/detail/nachrichtenfoto/250th-anniversary-of-the-place-in-paris-vendome-nachrichtenfoto/160678564>. Accessed 15 February, 2021.

²² See Henri Hellstern, *Um demi-siècle de splendeur*, Paris, no editor, no date.



Figure 11:

A boot created by Renault founder Louis Renault in partnership with heritage French shoe label Hellstern & Sons.²³

Most Hellstern heels are in the Louis shape (Figures 13 and 14) and measure from five to eight centimetres high. They are in wood, covered in leather or celluloid with rhinestones or coloured glass.²⁴ Eufrásia's model (Figure 12), in a light-green colour and with rhinestone buckles, presents the classic heels and is similar to models available at the Musée International de la Chaussure.

²³ Available at: <https://footwearnews.com/2020/focus/sneakers/renault-le-coq-sportif-sneaker-collaboration-1202921901/>. Accessed 14 February, 2021.

²⁴ See Marie-Josèphe Bossan, *L'art de la chaussure*. New York: Parkstone International, 2012, p. 79.



Figure 12:

Green shoe with rhinestone buckle, owned by Eufrásia Teixeira Leite. Kidskin with lining in white kidskin. The interior reads “Hellstern & Sons, Breveté Paris” with a crown illustration.

Museu Casa da Hera, Vassouras, Brazil. MCH 92.12.06.

Figures 13, 14, and 15 show a satin escarpin with a rhinestone buckle and a red leather day model called Duc de Guise. Despite the absence of a buckle in figure 14, the model was meant to have one. Indeed, the night version of the pair comes with a metal buckle and heels higher than those of the day model. By combining these influences, one may consider that Hellstern did not rely on selling standard models alone but also worked heavily with customized pairs with different materials. This model was particularly successful between 1920 and 1928.



Figure 13:
Ceremony shoe for women from Hellstern & Sons, Brevetés, Paris.
Escarpin in white satin. Large rhinestone buckle. Leather soles and Louis heels.
Musée International de la Chaussure, Romans-sur-Isère, France. 1983.13.225.1.



Figure 14:
Duc de Guise de ville pour femme, Hellstern & Sons, Brevetés, Paris.
Red kidskin and leather soles with Louis heels. Missing buckles.
Musée International de la Chaussure, Romans-sur-Isère, France. 1983.13.132.2.



Figure 15 :

Duc de Guise de ville du soir pour femme, Hellstern & Sons, Brevetés, Paris.
Bordeaux kidskin and reptile green leather. Large metal buckle with a golden
colour. Louis heels covered in celluloid and rhinestones.
Musée International de la Chaussure, Romans-sur-Isère, France. 1983.13.122.2.

A similar pair can be seen at Victoria & Albert Museum (Figure 16). Belle Époque icons, such as actress Lily Langtry, were among the first people to wear this kind of style. The Duc de Guise was therefore not a real novelty when it became a successful model at Hellstern's, 10 years later, but it is not impossible that Eufrásia customized her pair with Brazilian gems. Further analysis with a gemologist could give us more information about the buckle, since the rhinestone could be made of Brazilian topaz stones, among other options.



Figure 16:

Women's mauve suede court shoe with a Louis heel and self-covered squared
buckle. The tongue of the shoe extends up the ankle. Stamped inside in gold is
the saying "Alan McAfee / 68 & 66 Duke Street / Grosvenor Square / London
/W" with a circle.

Victoria & Albert Museum, London, England. T.149-1960.

During the 1920s, the Hellstern brothers invested heavily in marketing and publicity, and we can spot a model very similar to the Duc de Guise in a 1921 ad (Figure 17).

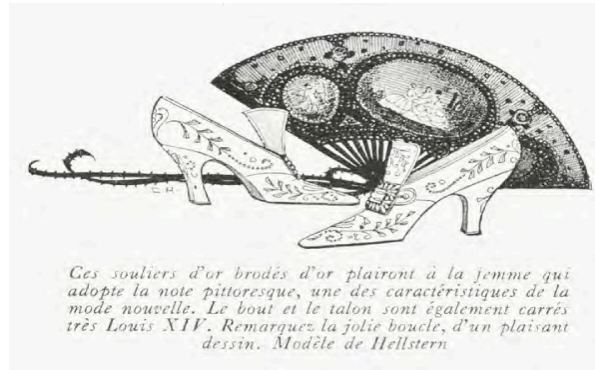


Figure 17:
Hellstern ad in France Vogue from 1921.²⁵

Eufrásia's model is close enough to a day model, i.e. a practical pair that would allow her to walk comfortably through the streets of Paris. As its soles are quite pristine, the pair was hardly, if ever, used. This is what allowed the main Hellstern mentions to withstand time and remain visible today.

The second pair (Figure 18) is creamy pink with a silk ribbon that serves as the shoe's laces. There is a partial illustration on the sole, possibly the remains of a formal seal of the shop where the pair was bought in the first place. These shoes are similar to evening boots from the Victoria & Albert Museum collection (Figure 19) and also to the Derby model from Hellstern (Figure 20).

According to the description of the barette, or sandal boots, this model "daringly revealed coloured stocking through the bands or cutouts on the leg and instep. This was not always approved of. The contemporary boots create the same effect,

²⁵ Available at: <http://www.thehistorialist.com/2018/10/1921-hellstern-in-vogue-part-1.html>. Accessed 14 February, 2021.

framing the flesh of the leg.”²⁶ This model was therefore quite bold for its time – circa 1870–1890s.



Figure 18:
Cream shoes with silk ribbon, owned by Eufrásia Teixeira Leite. Kidskin with leather sole.
Museu Casa da Hera, Vassouras, Brazil. MCH 90.12.04.



Figure 19:
Evening boots, circa 1870. Victoria & Albert Museum, London, England. T551&A-1913.²⁷



Figure 20:
Chaussure de ville pour femme, Hellstern & Sons, Brevetés, Paris. Derby model in kidskin and satin, both cream. Large silk ribbon of the same colour. Leather sole and Louis heels.
Musée International de la Chaussure, Romans-sur-Isère, France. 1983.13.183.1.

²⁶ As seen at <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O139999/pair-of-evening-unknown/>. Accessed 12 February, 2021.

²⁷ Available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O139999/pair-of-evening-unknown/>. Accessed 14 February, 2021.

The Hellstern model indicates “chaussure de ville” and it is less bold than Eufrásia’s, but the satin ribbon is similar. Could this be a customized pair ordered by her? It seems to have been worn, though just a little, since the sole references can no longer be retrieved. However, there is no reference to any shoemaker in the interior of the shoe.

The third model (Figure 21) shows green and mauve colours and detailed sequin embroidery forming a flower motif on the vamp. It also features straps and a Louis heel. This might indicate that this model was produced sometime during the 1920s, but the embroidery motifs could have absorbed Indian references, bringing the pair to the 1880s. A lamé model (Figure 22) was made by Hellstern circa 1925.

The fourth pair (Figure 23) is a red silk embroidered mule slipper, also with flower motifs, probably with metal thread. Usually worn indoors, the model was fairly common during the 1860s, but Eufrásia’s could be from circa 1875, because of the particular knock on the heel. A very similar model is available at the Museu Histórico Nacional (Figure 24) and belonged to Maria Eugênia Corrêa de Oliveira, a Recife native (Figure 25).

The similarity between the two items is remarkable because Eufrásia’s fiancé, Joaquim Nabuco, came from Recife himself. These mules might have held a special significance and may have been a particular regional memory that Eufrásia wished to keep over the years.

The fifth pair (Figure 26) is black and green, once again with floral embroidery and a bordeaux ribbon. Similar pairs (Figures 27 and 28) can be found at the Alexander Vassiliev Foundation, especially one from House of Dufossée (Figure 28). Coincidentally, Gérald Richard enchères possesses another pair of the same model (Figure 29). Based in Paris, at 20, Rue de la Paix, these shoemakers had another shop at 25 Old Bond Street, London. They replaced Melnotte as suppliers for several foreign courts and were most active between the 1850s and



Figure 21:
Green and mauve shoe owned by Eufr asia Teixeira Leite. Lam e and velvet with
lam e rhinestone and embroidery. Fading stamp on the leather sole indicates
“12014”. Nineteenth century.
Museu Casa da Hera, Vassouras, Brazil. MCH 92.12.03.



Figure 22:

“Salomé du soir” pair, Hellstern & Sons, circa 1925. Printed lamé with flower painting. Ribbons in golden lamé, metal and rhinestone buckle. Heel is covered in golden lamé. Ivory leather lining.
Musée Galliera, Paris, France.²⁸



Figure 23:

Mule slippers owned by Eufrásia Teixeira Leite. Red silk with red silk lining and embroidery in metal thread. Nineteenth century.
Museu Casa da Hera, Vassouras, Brazil. T1158.

²⁸ Available at: https://www.carnavalet.paris.fr/sites/default/files/dp_roman_dune_garde-robe_0.pdf. Accessed 15 February, 2021.



Figure 24:
Slippers owned by Maria Eugênia Rego, Mrs. João Alfredo C. de Oliveira. Silk,
wood, and metal. Paraíba, Brazil. Nineteenth century.
Museu Histórico Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



Figure 25:
Maria Eugênia Corrêa de Oliveira, wife of politician João Oliveira and owner of
the silk mules above.²⁹

²⁹ Available at: <http://www.dominiopublico.gov.br/download/imagem/jn003785.jpg>. Accessed 14 February, 2021.



Figure 26:

Shoe owned by Eufr asia Teixeira Leite. Black kidskin with bordeaux grosgrain ribbon. Floral embroidery in cotton thread. Nineteenth century.

Museu Casa da Hera, Vassouras, Brazil. MCH 92.12.05.



Figure 27:

“Soul Satin Cardinal” model of brand Grands Magasins du Louvre, worn by Madame Cheron.

Pair of prom shoes decorated with a cockade bow. France, circa 1875.

Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation, Vilnius, Lithuania.

2015.3.9.1ab.AC.SH.C1875.FR.



Figure 28:

Pair of black silk satin ball gown shoes for a young girl. Eighteenth-century inspiration with a spool heel and a bubbled lace bow with a mini steel oval buckle. The toe is embroidered with white flowers and jet beads. Cream kid leather interior and sole. House of Dufossée, France, circa 1875. Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation, Vilnius, Lithuania. 2020.9.25.6ab.AC.SH.C1875.FR.³⁰

³⁰ Available at: <https://ns3103723.ip-145-239-9.eu/pawtucket/index.php/Detail/objects/8104>. Accessed 20 February, 2021.



Figure 29:

Silk satin ball gown shoes from Dufossée. Circa 1870–1885. Eighteenth-century inspiration with bobine heels and a “faveur en noeud bouillonné” in lace with a mini steel buckle. Embroidered with white flowers and fleurs blanches and jet pearls. Interior and sole in creamy kidskin.

Gérald Richard enchères, Labrosse collection.³¹

the 1880s. As the three pairs are close enough in style, Eufrásia’s could perhaps be dated from circa 1875.

Last but not least, the sixth pair (Figure 30) is very similar to present-day slippers. The interior indicates “P.A. Guilherme / de Paris, Rua da Quitanda, 5x”. This is one of the most interesting pairs of the sample, starting with the format, which is quite different from that of all previous items. This model, often called Albert, after British Prince Albert, may be located in a wider time period, roughly from the 1850s to the 1900s, and could be an evolution of the very common ballerinas (Figures 31–35), which raged between 1810 and 1830, as observed by French illustrator Jean-Baptiste Debret, who lived in Rio de Janeiro at the time.³²

³¹ Available at: <https://www.lotsearch.net/lot/ravissantes-paire-de-chaussures-de-bal-de-50358724?perPage=50>. Accessed 20 February, 2021.

³² See Cecília Elisabeth Barbosa Soares and Olga Carolina Bon Velozo, Modas, calos e cetins: os sapatos como símbolos distintivos no Rio de Janeiro do século XIX. *Diálogo com a Economia Criativa*, Rio de Janeiro, vol. 5, no. 13, 2020, pp. 104–123.



Figure 30:

Slipper owned by Eufrásia Teixeira Leite. Velvet with floral embroidery in golden, plum and green colours. Interior border in black satin. Interior reads “P.A. Guilherme / de Paris, Rua da Quitanda, 5x”. Nineteenth century. Museu Casa da Hera, Vassouras, Brazil. T883.



Figure 31:
Silk ballerinas. Meier, 15, Rue Tronchet, Paris, circa 1830.
Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France.³³



Figure 32:
Silk ballerinas with leather sole. Interior reads “5 PASSAGE DE L'OPERA /
CERTOST / FOURNISSEUR DE SSMM LA REINE / DES FRANÇAIS ET
DE LA REINE DES BELGES / ET DE SSAARRMM LES PRINCESSES /
ADELAIDE ET CLEMENTINE D'ORLEANS / PARIS”. France, no date.
Owned by relatives of Henri d'Orléans, duc d'Aumale.
Musée International de la Chaussure, Romans-sur-Isère, France.

³³ Available at: <https://madparis.fr/IMG/pdf/depliant-marche-et-demarche.pdf>. Accessed 2 July, 2020.



Figure 33:

Pair of ladies' leather shoes with square toes. Cream silk stalk, tied sliders on the vamp braided with sky blue taffeta on the blue silk lining, same as on the heels. The body is covered with ivory silk and lined with blue silk, same as on the heels.

On the inside left sole a paper label reads "Viault-Esté / Breveté de S.M.

L'IMPERATRICE / 17 rue de la Paix Paris". France, circa 1860.

Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation, Vilnius, Lithuania.

2018.8.6.3ab.AC.SH.C1860.FR.³⁴



Figure 34:

Ivory colour silk satin women's court shoes with rounded square toe, short heel and bow decoration at throat with round pearl covered with white and silver glass beads. Side seams between vamp and quarters at waist, heel covered in fabric with edges bound, on tan leather sole. Cream leather insole inside and cream cotton lining on the sides. France, circa 1860.

Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation, Vilnius, Lithuania.

2021.1.21.11ab.AC.SH.C1860.FR.³⁵

³⁴ Available at: <https://ns3103723.ip-145-239-9.eu/pawtucket/index.php/Detail/objects/1259>. Accessed 20 February, 2021.



Figure 35:
Shoes and reticule in crochet (vegetable fibre) with application of blue satins ribbons.

Gérald Richard enchères, Labrosse collection.³⁶

As we can see, ballerinas were mostly plain. At a certain point, they reached a sharp polarization and were preferred in black or white. By 1850–1860s there seems to be an evolution in ballerinas, with some featuring short heels and some decoration, but keeping the plain colours. Some other models reveal that decoration was also present (Figures 36-41), so Eufrásia's pair looks like a hybrid version of the main trends, with no heels but not plain either.

The only shoe store that belonged to Mr. Alexandre Guilherme, in Rio de Janeiro, opened in 1836 and closed in 1838. During these years, the owner actively published illustrated ads in local newspapers. Shoes were not only locally made, but also imported from Paris and sold in retail, and, in 1838, also wholesale. The mentioned address, Rua da Quitanda, is very near to the core of luxury commerce in downtown Rio at the time – the Rua do Ouvidor.

³⁵ Available at: <https://ns3103723.ip-145-239-9.eu/pawtucket/index.php/Detail/objects/8909>. Accessed 20 February, 2021.

³⁶ Available at: <https://www.lotsearch.net/lot/paire-de-chaussures-et-reticule-en-maille-50358706?perPage=50>. Accessed 20 February, 2021.



Figure 36:

A pair of wool work slippers with floral pattern and leather sole stitched on. These men's shoes were worked on canvas in a petit-point stitch with colourful wools. United Kingdom, circa 1850. Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation, Vilnius, Lithuania. 2019.5.22.34ab.AC.SH.C1850.GB.



Figure 37:

Pair of ladies' shoes in kilim with red and green floral ornaments mounted on kidskin and lined with a gold yarn fringe, square toe and small reel heels. France, circa 1855.

Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation, Vilnius, Lithuania.
2020.1.14.9ab.AC.SH.C1855.FR.



Figure 38:

Pair of shoes in turquoise and cream wool felt embroidered in chain stitch with a butterfly, friezes and foliage. Eighteenth century-inspired, with teal blue leather spool heel and pink tinted chamois leather interior. France, circa 1860.

Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation, Vilnius, Lithuania.

2020.9.25.7ab.AC.SH.C1860.FR.³⁷



Figure 39:

Bal shoes in “ramoneur” satin with embroidered bouquet and polychrome stitches on the heels. Circa 1820. Passepoils and ruché in creamy soie, lining in yellow taffetas (auréoles). Initials “FP” on the sole.

Gérald Richard enchères, Labrosse collection.³⁸

³⁷ The same model is available at Gérald Richard enchères and is described as “paire de chaussures en feutre de laine turquoise et crème brodée au point de chaînette d’une libellule, frises et feuillage. Second Empire Circa 1860. Inspiration XVIIIe siècle avec talon bobine de cuir bleu canard et intérieur en chamois teinté rose.” Available at:

<https://www.lotsearch.net/lot/paire-de-chaussures-en-feutre-de-laine-turquoise-50358717?perPage=50>. Accessed 20 February, 2021.

³⁸ Available at: <https://www.lotsearch.net/lot/belle-paire-de-chaussure-de-bal-en-satin-50358707?perPage=50>. Accessed 20 February, 2021.



Figure 40:

Shoe pair from Maison Baudran, 318, Rue Saint Honoré. Circa 1840. Left and right feet are indicated and have a pleated ruche made of pink taffetas. Flower vase embroidery in point de Beauvais. Lining in creamy chamois.

Gérald Richard enchères, Labrosse collection.³⁹



Figure 41:

Male pantoufles. Embroidery in petit-point with a wool thread. Vineyard motif. Leather sole and nailed heels. Circa 1860.

Gérald Richard enchères, Labrosse collection.⁴⁰

The ads disappear from 1839 on. However, in May 1856, *Jornal do Commercio* and other newspapers announce in several issues the definitive departure of Alexandre Guilherme, whose destination is vaguely mentioned as “Europe.”

³⁹ Available at: <https://www.lotsearch.net/lot/paire-de-chaussures-periode-romantique-en-50358709?perPage=50>. Accessed 20 February, 2021.

⁴⁰ Available at: <https://www.lotsearch.net/lot/paire-de-pantoufles-masculine-brodee-au-petit-50358719?perPage=50>. Accessed 20 February, 2021.

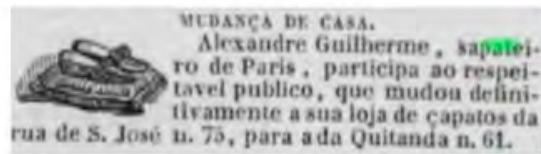


Figure 42:
Alexandre Guilherme, “shoemaker from Paris,” announces his new address in downtown Rio de Janeiro.
Jornal do Commercio, November 17, 1837.

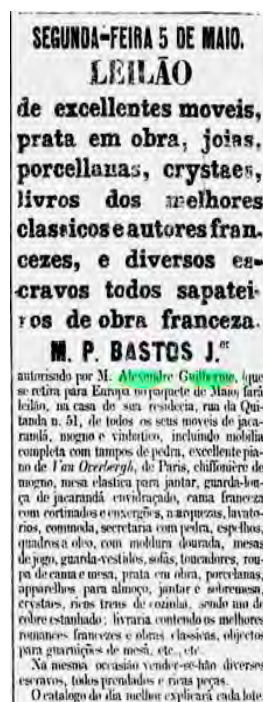


Figure 43:
Newspaper announcement on the final auction of Alexandre Guillherme’s personal goods, including slaves “capable of making French shoes.”
Jornal do Commercio, 5 May, 1856.⁴¹

Through a final auction, Alexandre Guilherme sells his fine belongings, including several slaves “capable of making French shoes.” His personal address is Rua da Quitanda, 51. This matches perfectly the address mentioned on Eufrásia’s pair

⁴¹ Available at:

http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=364568_04&Pesq=%22Alexandre%20Guilherme%22&pagfis=9828. Accessed 15 February, 2021.

and there is no other reference whatsoever to any other shoemaker by the same name during Eufrásia's life span. As the shoe shop address and Guilherme's personal address were only 10 numbers apart, Guilherme might have rented a space just by his home and built a shoe business there, at once atelier and shop. After closing the store, he might have continued to produce specific pairs on demand or maybe placed ads.

Eufrásia cannot have bought these shoes herself, as she was born 12 years after the closing of the store. When Alexandre Guilherme quit Rio de Janeiro definitively, apparently leaving everything material behind, Eufrásia was only six years old. Moreover, the pair is 24.5 cm long, local size 36 (EU 38 or US 7.5) – considerably bigger than the others. This pair must have belonged to another Teixeira Leite, perhaps a man, since, as shown in the figures, male pantoufles and slippers were usually colourful and decorated. Ballerinas were mostly plain, and locals preferred delicate colours, such as white, baby pink, and baby blue. This slipper is much more richly decorated and is made of velvet, not plain silk satin. As most colourful pairs are from the 1850s–1860s, these were maybe ordered after the closing of the store and followed trends from just before Alexandre Guilherme left.

It is interesting to notice that Guillaume Alexander Sulzer, a German born in Leipzig in 1815, was a well-known shoemaker in Paris from the 1840s through the 1880s and the official supplier of the Queen of Saxe (Figure 44). His workshop was located at 7, Rue du 29 Juillet, in Paris. He married Josephine Louise Hipp (1826–1906) on October 15, 1852, in Montmartre. Could Sulzer have had a Brazilian adventure, and then, after 1838, have left someone on his behalf in Rio?

Footwear and the Brazilian Context during the Nineteenth Century

Eufrásia Teixeira Leite was born a free woman in a country where freedom was scarce. This meant, among other things, that, unlike Brazilian slaves, Eufrásia was allowed to wear shoes.



Figure 44:

Bright yellow silk satin women's court shoes with rounded pointed toe, semi-Louis heel, and bow decoration at throat. Side seams between vamp and quarters at waist, heel covered in fabric with edges bound, on tan leather sole. Cream leather insole inside and lining at quarters, cream cotton lining at quarters in the front. Guillaume Alexandre Sulzer, circa 1875.

Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation, Vilnius, Lithuania.

2021.1.21.9ab.AC.SH.C1875.FR.

Brazil was one of the last countries in South America to give up colonial solutions like building empires and relying on slavery. This contrasted sharply with increasingly conspicuous modern values of free labour, citizenship for all, and the reduced power of religious institutions. Slavery was not abolished in Brazil until 1888, under stark resistance of local businessmen and less preparation than expected by society as a whole.⁴² Once free, former slaves had no real support, and transition was far from seamless. They were often on their own and had to endure work competition with the increasing flow of immigrants, especially from Italy and Japan.

Thus, one of the central questions of the century is how Brazil adapted to inevitable modern values. Portuguese colonization imposed very rigid norms on

⁴² See Maria Wissenbach, *Da escravidão à liberdade: dimensões de uma privacidade possível*, in Fernando Novais (org), *História da Vida Privada no Brasil* (Vol. 3). São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1998.

the colony. Brazil was banned from developing its own production in central sectors. As history is full of plot twists, the country also witnessed a unique situation when the Portuguese Royal Family and the court moved to Rio de Janeiro in 1808, in part intending to flee economic and political impositions from France and England. Rio de Janeiro became the capital of the empire, and several rules and laws were devised, introducing both key decisions on new themes and replacing older legislation. The crossing of the Royal Family also had strong consequences in Portugal, and they moved back to Europe in 1821, fearing to be overthrown by the Porto revolution. This 13-year span saw substantial change in society, with new kinds of production and commerce, and establishing schools and even central democratic institutions and references, such as libraries and ministries.⁴³

The Brazilian population was meant to comply with imperial sumptuary laws that described in detail what free people and slaves were allowed and were not allowed to wear, in addition to the consequences of breaking such rules. Travellers noted that these laws were often disregarded and not really controlled by officers and inspectors. On the other hand, slaves were forbidden to wear shoes (Figures 45-47), and, although it cannot be found in the form of an actual metropolitan sumptuary law, the norm was present in everyday life. In nineteenth Brazilian society, therefore, shoes occupy a central position in material culture, and dialogue directly with the constitution of citizenship, belonging, and freedom.

As happened to many other sectors, shoemakers were not allowed to work in Brazil before 1808. However, they were very present and usually organized in brotherhoods, a catholic equivalent of guilds which could be traced back at least to the Middle Ages and were most likely imported to the colony. They were usually named after the saints of a particular work - in the case of shoemakers, Saint Crispin and Saint Crispinian (Figure 48).⁴⁴

⁴³ See Lilia Schwarcz, *A longa viagem da biblioteca dos reis. Do terremoto de Lisboa à Independência do Brasil*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2002.

⁴⁴ See Mariana Siqueira, *Aqueles que querem viver segundo o seu compromisso: permanência e transformação em meio ao conflito entre os sapateiros e a Câmara, Rio de Janeiro, circa 1764 - circa 1821*, *Revista do Arquivo Geral da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro*, vol. 7, 2013, pp. 45-61.



Figure 45:
The Master and his slaves, Militão Augusto de Azevedo, 1874.⁴⁵



Figure 46:
Barefoot slave, Christiano Jr., 1860.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Available at: <http://www.historia.seed.pr.gov.br/modules/galeria/detalhe.php?foto=14&evento=1>. Accessed 3 March, 2021.

⁴⁶ Available at: http://www.cedac.org.br/almanaquedevassouras/infooficinas_anexo3.htm. Accessed 3 March, 2021.

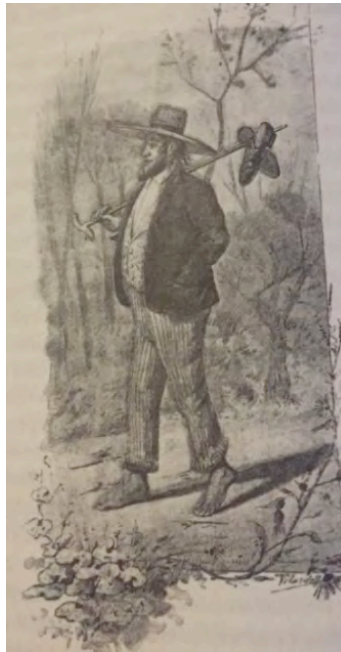


Figure 47:
A symbol of freedom. Flumen Junius. Nineteenth century.⁴⁷



Figure 48:
Saint Crispin and Saint Crispinian.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Figura-8-Ilustracao-Flumen-Junius-sem-titulo-sd_fig4_343353575. Accessed 3 March, 2021.

⁴⁸ Available at: <http://arqrio.org/agenda/detalhes/1018/irmandade-dos-martires-sao-crispim-e-sao-crispiniano-celebram-seus-padroeiros>. Accessed 27 June, 2020.

After the arrival of the Royal Family, liberal workers were allowed to exist, and, as happened with the large majority of manual activities, slaves were an important part of labour force (Figure 49). Slavery was so instrumental to the local dynamics that even slaves who managed to buy their freedom (called *forros*) bought their own slaves, thus preserving the chain of dependency.

If the labour force was local, aesthetic influences were mostly imported, especially from France. Debret was particularly impressed that a place where five sixths of the people walked barefoot – i.e. slaves – had more than a hundred shoe shops around.⁴⁹



Figure 49:
Shoemaker, Jean-Baptiste Debret, 1835.⁵⁰

As time passed, industrial activities increased. If, at first, small ateliers and factories were basically the workplace of slaves, free work was the rule from 1870 on.

Also, consumption and production grew apart, and the workspace of the artisans no longer served as shop. For centuries, street sellers had been a core dynamic of the city, dealing with traditional conceptions according to which women

⁴⁹ Soares & Bon, op. cit, p. 110.

⁵⁰ Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Figura-8-Ilustracao-Flumen-Junius-sem-titulo-sd_fig4_343353575. Accessed 3 March, 2021.

(especially married) should be kept at home, away from undesirable looks and companies, and that goods should come to people, instead of people looking after goods. By adopting modern perspectives, shoe shops started seeking new addresses in downtown Rio, where a bustling shopping perimeter was built. *Grands magasins* and several kinds of stores became the local equivalent of Bond Street in London or Rue Vivienne in Paris, including a strong presence of Europeans as business owners or importers of foreign goods. Local women acquired the right to walk and do errands on their own, and goods underwent considerable standardization.

Just as slaves were forbidden to wear shoes, the feminine dress at the time was designed to convey the notion of a modest woman. Female feet were a strong symbol of independence and sexuality and should be always kept away from vision. One of the most well-known writers at the time, José de Alencar, went as far as to write *Pata da Gazela* (“The Antelope’s Paw”), a novel where the main character falls in love with an anonymous female ankle he spotted while its owner was getting on a carriage. The title refers to female feet as a symbol of delicacy and smoothness. All references to large, brutal feet are used to describe a woman that fail to live up to the expected levels of grace, modesty, domestic skills, hygiene, and even virginity, a necessary condition if the girl aspired to be seen as a correct bride.

In pictures, the main female pose took dresses with long skirts for granted. Legs, feet and shoes should be entirely concealed by the clothing. By comparing pictures of former slaves and free women, one may notice the subtle negotiations between sitters and photographers, as the covered feet were often visible – just enough to indicate they wore shoes, and thus were free, but not enough to defy the main concept of dignity they aspired to attain. The umbrella lady from Ceará (Figure 51) is the only one who seems comfortable enough to expose her shoes plainly; both the black lady (Figure 50) and the public teachers (Figure 52) show their pairs in a defiant way, just the right amount to pass their message but making sure they are still respectful women.



Figure 50:
Black lady in studio pose in Rio de Janeiro. Klumb, circa 1862.
Ruy Souza e Silva Collection. Ermakoff, 2004, p. 50.



Figure 51:
Lady from Ceará. Unknown author, circa 1880-1889.
Campos, 1985, p. 141.



Figure 52:
Teachers from Kindergaten Marechal Hermes. Unknown author, circa 1910.
Costa, 2008, p. 50.

Eufrásia left no pictures of herself. The two portraits she ever kept, both oil on canvas, focus on her face and pose. Even if she is pictured in fine dressing, they do not intend to capture the person from head to feet, as do the pictures above. We can only wonder what she would look like standing on her feet and looking at the camera.

Conclusion

Eufrásia Teixeira Leite was not an ordinary woman of her time. Her belongings become somewhat more fascinating considering she comes from a very asymmetrical position in the society in which she was born, where she was expected to be powerful, but not independent; rich, but not a citizen of the world.

Brazilian people grew keen on consuming key fashion influences, especially those from France. These main references were seen as good taste per se and local workers tried their best to keep up the pace with the inventions from Paris, be it by further training skilled people or simply by importing goods and selling it on the other side of the ocean. This does not mean that the many influences in the Brazilian melting pot were totally ignored or not integrated into local goods, or that workers were unable to produce something different. It does mean, however, that European standards affected the population so strongly that many efforts were made to follow them thoroughly.

Eufrásia's shoes do not exactly tell these stories, since their owner supposedly lived most of her lifetime very far from Brazil and its contradictions. However, by being exactly as they are, they provide us with important clues on how strong Brazilian culture and its material reflections were. When it comes to sartorial aspects, Eufrásia seems to have been a regular at Paris's most prestigious *maisons*. Her clothes make this clear, and Hellstern can be seen as an equivalent of Worth and other brands, in the shoe sector. If, in many ways, she defied the expected position of a woman at the time, she did comply to the main taste and fashion references, seeming to be inclined towards classic and well-established shops and ateliers. In this sense, Eufrásia apparently did not hesitate to regard these famous addresses among the best ones to find what she looked for, and she took her looks as seriously as her financial investments.

The absence of boots is noteworthy since these were the standard reference in Parisian fashion, and it is nearly impossible to argue that Eufrásia did not wear boots at some point in her life. Also, the fairly good state of the soles indicate that the six shoes were seldom used. Although her everyday activities took place chiefly indoors, negotiating at the Stock Exchange through letters and phone calls, Eufrásia probably did take walks and even rode horses, since she had specific outfits and accessories for these activities. These shoes do not entirely match Eufrásia's clothes, at least not the ones that have survived the passing of time. Although some were definitely worn, they were well taken care of and probably were used only indoors.

Conversely, some pairs can be associated with much earlier times than the expected 1920s and do not seem to be the pairs Eufrásia actually wore in her last years. Some seem to have been made in the 1860s–1880s, or as soon as the late 1830s. The last pair, in particular, probably comes from Alexandre Guilherme's shoe store that closed years before Eufrásia was even born; also, the shoes are way too long to fit her feet and might be a man's pair.

Eufrásia's pairs are different from what most travellers would describe when they spent time in Rio de Janeiro. On the other hand, Eufrásia certainly showed strong ties to her native references and the value she assigned to her childhood and

youth memories as she decided, at age 23, to keep her home just as it had been before her parting to France.

She seems to have cherished memories and to be very organized. It is unlikely that these shoes were kept together by chance alone - they seem to be material memory for their owner, as were the Casa da Hera and everything in it. The embroidered mule and the embroidered slipper may symbolize close ties to local references of loved ones, be it her on-again-off-again fiancé, or a close relative.

In her own way, Eufrásia, just as her native Brazil, managed to overcome colonial values and develop modern ones. It is particularly interesting to find a pair made in Rio de Janeiro at a time when the city's shoemakers were so eager to emulate Parisian fashion. More than a mere souvenir, this pair may have symbolized life in Rio and a reminder of how fast things can change, and loved ones can leave us.

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