# Summary

Dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of fashion from an academic perspective, the quarterly journal Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture views fashion as a cultural phenomenon, offering the reader a wide range of articles by leading Western and Russian specialists, as well as classical texts on fashion theory. From the history of dress and design to body practices; from the work of well-known designers to issues around consumption in fashion; from beauty and the fashionable figure through the ages to fashion journalism, fashion and PR, fashion and city life, art and fashion, fashion and photography — Fashion Theory covers it all.

This special issue is devoted to the botanical imagination of fashion and opens with **Peter McNeil**'s paper *Fashion and Botanical Knowledge: the flower in fashion and textiles* which examines the enduring yet often trivialized presence of floral motifs in fashion and textile history, arguing for their reclamation as complex carriers of cultural, social, and symbolic meaning. Tracing the motif from ancient civilizations to contemporary design, the analysis highlights its role in cross-cultural exchange — notably between Eastern and Western textile traditions — and its function

in articulating themes of status, gender, botany, and power. The essay explores how technical innovations in weaving, printing, and embroidery transformed the depiction of flowers, democratizing their use while embedding them within discourses of art, science, and consumption. From medieval tapestries and Renaissance silks to eighteenth-century "bizarre" designs and modern couture, the floral motif is revealed as a dynamic and versatile medium through which societies have expressed identity, nostalgia, and artistic ambition. Ultimately, the article contends that the flower in fashion and textiles must be re-imagined to retain its historical depth and symbolic resonance in the face of its ubiquitous, and often superficial, contemporary appropriation.

**Susan Marshall** contributes *Nature Wrought in Silk and Verse: Shakespeare, Floral Textiles and Botanical Knowledge in Elizabethan England*. Shakespeare frequently refers to plants and flowers, both literally and metaphorically, demonstrating a remarkable knowledge of the natural world. This sensitivity to nature stemmed not only from his rural upbringing but also from the cultural environment of his era. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, floral symbolism formed a shared visual and linguistic vocabulary in England, where rosemary signified remembrance, rue repentance and columbine betrayal. Interest in botany increased as voyages of discovery and expanding international trade introduced new plants, fruits, textiles, pigments and decorative motifs from different parts of the world. These developments fostered enthusiasm for floral decoration, particularly among the wealthy, whose garments and accessories were frequently embroidered with flowers and plants. This article explores Elizabethan floral textiles alongside the botanical imagery in Shakespeare's works, situating both within the broader cultural context of the period.

**Amy de la Haye's** *The evolution and defining features of the fashion flower making trades in Paris, London and New York c. 1850–1914* documents and critically evaluates the evolution of the three-dimensional fashion flower making industries, from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, the period when they were most fashionable and the international flower-making trades flourished. It compares and contrasts flower making in Paris, London and New York, the dominant fashion cities at this time and explores all levels of production. And, it touches upon black mourning flowers that were primarily made in Manchester (UK). The focus is upon flowers made from fabrics and paper, not those modelled in wax — such as orange blossom which was popular for brides — or other materials, such as beads or shells. Threaded throughout is a brief exploration of how flowers interface with fashionable dress, the body and broader culture of flowers.

In *Illusion — Beauty — Merchandise: Artificial Flowers, Fashion and Women's Labour in Pre-revolutionary Russia*, **Maria Terekhova** looks at the interconnections between fake flowers, fashion, women's labour and the broader cultural, socio-economic, political and historical context of pre-revolutionary Russia. From a semantic perspective, artificial flowers are a borderline phenomenon filled with contradictory cultural meanings and associations, from fakery, substitution and illusion to symbols of female vanity, seduction and urban capitalist consumer culture. At the same time, an artificial flower is materially concrete, being the product of manual labour. The labour was almost exclusively female, thus defining the gender semantics of this object. On the one hand, flowers, like embroidery, were in the nineteenth century overwhelmingly seen as female attributes. On the other hand, the making of artificial flowers was not unlikely to give women a push towards emancipation. Besides identifying with a profession, women could begin to earn money in an environment where career opportunities for them were extremely limited. Terekhova's study is based on printed sources such as newspapers, memorial literature, works of fiction, historical documents and archive material, as well as analysis of museum collections and visual fashion practices from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

**Alexander Markov** and **Oksana Stein** offer *The Floral Motor: Vegetative Ontology and Factory Mimicry in the Global Fashion System*. The authors reassess the role of botanical imagination in fashion, looking beyond the purely decorative. Flowers are seen not as objects of mimesis, but as principles for structuring the fashion system. The paper analyses the dialectic of the natural (vegetative) and the industrial (factory) in fashion production, and introduces the concept of the floral motor as the driving force behind fashion cycles. The study also looks at fashion's mimicry to emulate factory production logic. The authors go beyond the usual cultural localisation by examining five cultural worlds. Drawing on works of literature, art and cinema, they describe the particular traits of botanical imagination in each region. The paper formulates a new ontology of fashion, in which flowers and factories coexist to a single production rhythm.

*Exploring Symbolism and Myth in the Motifs of Pashmina Shawls: A Semiotic Analysis* by **Taskeen Bhat.** The motifs adorning the pashmina shawl serve as a visual testimony to its association with Persian art, which significantly influenced the region. The advent of Islam in Kashmir during the 14th century ushered in a new era of artistic expression, wherein Muslim artists incorporated floral and arboreal motifs to enhance the esthetic appeal of textiles, architecture, and other facets of material culture. The main objective of this study is to examine the myth and narrative included in motifs found on Kashmiri pashmina shawls in light of Barthes's mythological framework. The study reevaluates the paisley motif, attributing

its creativity to Kashmiri artisans, and contributes significantly to documenting and conserving Kashmiri textile heritage. Through primary data analysis, it offers fresh insights into the motifs' meanings and challenges conventional narratives. This study looked into the significance of floral motifs that are frequently used on pashmina shawls. This study depends upon the conclusions derived from the firsthand information collected from Kashmiri academicians, artisans, and secondary sources.

**Yulia Demidenko's** *Liana Embroidered a Bright Red Cactus Flower* takes a closer look at the well-known, yet little studied Berlin woolwork patterns. A popular pastime, these drew on a wide range of sources including botanical illustrations, widespread in the nineteenth century. Demidenko explains how choices of floral and plant motifs were influenced by the fashion for flowers and domestic plants which, in turn, followed the latest discoveries in the plant world and the work of taxonomists.

In *Magic and Technology: Fabric Production in Early Soviet Popular Science Literature for Children*, **Elena Kazakova** examines early Soviet children's popular science books describing fabric production from plant raw materials such as flax, hemp, and cotton. Kazakova draws on literature from 1920–1932 which, as part of an educational drive, aimed to develop children's practical worldview and knowledge of science. The paper focuses on the interplay of two discourses in descriptions of the manufacturing process: the technological, and the magical. The first involves rational descriptions of technological operations, with the use of technical terms and an industrial lens which sees plants as a resource. The second is based on folkloric models and metaphors evoking travel, life stories and rebirth, the animation of plants, and the symbolisation of labour. Far from being in binary opposition, the study shows that these two modes coexist, forming together a hybrid discourse where industrial modernity is studied through the cultural codes of tradition. The technological stages of raw material processing are interpreted as suffering and transfiguration. The factory itself is portrayed as a space of 'manufacturing magic'. Thus, popular science texts become mediums between mythological and rationalistic thinking, integrating elements of agricultural symbolism into descriptions of mechanical manufacturing, and helping young readers form a practical approach to the world.

**Asya Aladzhalova's** *Vintage Style, Nostalgia, Fine Needlework and the Role of Women: What Vintage Style Items Remind Us Of* traces the links between the role of women in nineteenth and twentieth-century society, fine needlework (a mandatory discipline in all women's educational institutions), floral patterns, and the aesthetic behind contemporary vintage style clothing. The author sees the

vintage style trend as part of a broader process of formation of a new feminine image. This new feminine includes ideals from both pre-revolutionary and Soviet female discourse.

*Hats in Bloom* by **Clair Hughes** traces the evolving symbolism and fashion of flowered hats in Western women's headwear from early modern Europe to the 21st century. It argues that the cultural meaning of floral decoration has oscillated between connotations of romance and chic, influenced by social context and historical events. The analysis begins with the 18th-century adoption of the flower-decorated *bergère* by the aristocracy, linking it to a romanticized pastoral ideal. It then follows the style's proliferation and exaggeration in the Romantic period, its subsequent association with vulgarity in the late 19th century, and its peak as dramatic spectacle in early 20th-century theatre. The article identifies the World Wars as a period of decline for extravagant floral millinery, followed by decades of minimalism. It concludes by examining the late reign of Queen Elizabeth II as a sustaining force for the tradition, whose consistent patronage facilitated a modern, sophisticated revival of the flowered hat, reconciling its romantic heritage with contemporary chic.

**Ksenia Gusarova** offers *Tracing the Ivy: Neogothic Fashion and Anachronism*. The starting point for this study of selected botanical motifs in nineteenth-century fashion is an anachronistic detail in Leo Tolstoy's description of Hélène Kuragina's dress in *War and Peace*: the dress is trimmed with ivy and moss. Hardly typical of Empire fashion, this decoration was, it seems, inspired by the writer's recent impressions. Around the time that Tolstoy began work on his novel, the popular women's magazine *Modny magazin (Fashion Shop)* first wrote about ivy and moss being used to decorate ballgowns. Gusarova offers a detailed account of mentions of these plants in relation to 1860s fashion: from ways of combining them with other decorative elements, to debates on their appropriateness in different situations and to wearers of different ages, social and matrimonial status. Ivy and moss were elements of the neogothic trend in fashion and popular culture in general, a feature of which was the aestheticisation of ruins. If ivy tended to bring up associations with literature and the arts, the interest in moss was also linked to advances in bryology, the branch of botany that studies mosses. At that time, bryologists were actively seeking to make the world more aware of the particular beauty of moss, sometimes, by comparing it with materials commonly used in the manufacture of fashionable clothing and jewellery. The study shows how ivy and moss brought together science, literature, visual and material culture, and the images and interpretations of nature created in all these areas.

**Maria Markova** contributes *Weaving Words, Embroidering Flowers: The Structure of 'The Lord of the Rings' and Botanical Imagination in J.R.R. Tolkien Film*

*Adaptations*. In this paper, Markova examines clothing with botanical motifs worn by inhabitants of Middle-earth in Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001–2003) and *The Rings of Power* series (2022 onwards). While paying attention to plants in his works, Tolkien did not offer detailed descriptions of his characters' dress. Thus, for the film adaptations, costume artists are forced not merely to visualise appropriate attire, but to create it out of nothing. Markova suggests that this re-creation and development of Middle-earth sartorial practices represents a complex dialogue with Tolkien's poetics, which covers the main themes of his work.

**Natalia Povalyayeva** offers her paper *'Flowers of His Mystery': Floral Motifs in Almodovar Girls' Dress*. Renowned Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar is known for his interest in fashion and collaboration with top designers and costume artists such as Jean-Paul Gautier, Tatiana Hernández, Paco Delgado, Armani, Prada, Chanel, Dior, Versace, Gucci and Max Mara. The outfits worn by Almodóvar's characters represent a complex visual language, in which prints — spotted, checked, leopard, floral — are an important element. Povalyayeva starts by investigating the factors behind Almodóvar's interest in fashion and design, and his love of garish and kitschy prints and colour combinations. The paper discusses Almodóvar's biography, the timing of his career, which began around the time of Franco's death and continued in the ensuing years, which brought greater democratic freedom and new openings in the arts. The author looks at the Movida cultural movement and the birth of a new era in Spanish fashion design. Povalyayeva then turns to the types and functions of floral motifs in the costumes worn by 'las chicas Almodóvar', the so-called 'Almodóvar girls' — Carmen Maura, Cristina Sánchez Pascual, Victoria Abril, Penélope Cruz, Verónica Forqué, and others. Povalyayeva focuses on twelve films, in which floral prints play a significant role in certain episodes, or in the entire picture. She concludes that floral motifs constitute an important element in the visual aesthetic of Almodóvar's films, fulfilling a number of semantic functions. Besides offering an effective tool for characterisation and indicating social status, they may constitute narrative elements serving to advance the plot. Floral patterns can help create a particular atmosphere, or serve as markers highlighting the situation of a given character.

**Barbara Baert** with the collaboration of **Hannah Iterbeke** contribute *Revisiting the Enclosed Gardens of the Low Countries (Fifteenth Century Onwards). Gender, Textile, and the Intimate Space as Horticulture.* The early sixteenth-century Enclosed Gardens or Horti Conclusi of the Augustinian Hospital Sisters of Mechelen in Belgium, form an exceptional world heritage collection from the late medieval period. Most Enclosed Gardens have been lost to the ravages of time, with this loss exacerbated by lack of both understanding and interest. No fewer than seven Enclosed Gardens, however, were preserved until the late twentieth century in their

original context: the small community of Augustinian nuns in Mechelen. Like sleeping beauties, they remained secluded in the sisters' rooms as aids to devotion. Their centuries-long slumber has recently given way to a new phase of lively debate and active scholarship, as these popular retables are now considered unique testimonies of female spirituality in the sixteenth century. Their remarkable pictorial vernacular provides new insights into life, thought and devotion in female convent communities. They testify to a cultural identity connected with strong mystical traditions; they are a gateway to a lost world, an essential part of the rich material and immaterial culture of the Southern Netherlands in the early sixteenth century.

The article by **Hans J. Rindisbacher** *The Woman in the Garden: Scent, Power, Beauty, Inspiration* examines the role of botanical imagination — specifically horticultural spaces and practices — in shaping the atmospheric and embodied dimensions of fashion, with a focused lens on perfumery. It argues that gardens function as complex systems where nature is edited, hybridized, and aestheticized, producing not only visual but also olfactory raw materials. Perfumery, as the "atmospheric-auratic" branch of fashion, transfers these natural qualities into cultural aesthetics, operating as a practice of identity formation. This dynamic is explored through a literary analysis of two tales where scented gardens become arenas for the patriarchal fashioning of women, linking olfaction to pleasure, peril, and power. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Rappaccini's Daughter* (1844), set in Renaissance Padua, allegorizes the emergence of modern scientific epistemology, where experimental manipulation of nature renders scent a dangerous by-product and the female body a fashioned, toxic object. Fyodor Sologub's *The Poison Garden* (1908), a Symbolist-decadent narrative, presents a more eroticized and transactional olfactory world, where scent is weaponized in a conscious performance of fatal femininity. By comparing these narratives, the essay illuminates how the horticultural origins of perfumery underpin broader cultural tensions between nature and artifice, inspiration and intoxication, and aesthetic indulgence and ethical responsibility, revealing scent as a potent medium for projecting and controlling gender identities across different historical moments.

In *The Mistress of Lotusland: The Gardens and Dresses of Ganna Walska*, **Olga Vainshtein** looks at the links between fashion and horticulture in the life and art of the well-known Polish opera singer Ganna Walska (1887–1984). Particular attention is paid to Walska's views on fashion, her own wardrobe, and her opera costumes, many of which were designed by Erté. Vainshtein also introduces us to Walska's jewellery collection. The study concludes that the singer was indeed the inspiration for the character of Susan Alexander in Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941). Vainshtein then delves into the history of the unique Lotusland, considered among the top ten gardens of the world. The author analyses

Lotusland's layout and strategies for obtaining rare plants. Finally, Vainshtein suggests a connection between Walska's attitude towards fashion, and her horticultural aesthetics.

**Renata Devityarova** contributes *Roses and Weeds. The Floral Motif as a Figure of Deconstruction in the Work of Dries Van Noten*. The article is devoted to the analysis of floral motifs in the work of the Belgian designer Dries Van Noten. A hypothesis is put forward that his use of these motifs represents a methodological technique reflecting the specific implementation of the analytical procedure of deconstruction in the designer's work. The aim of the paper is to identify the peculiarities of using floral motifs in the women's collections of the Dries Van Noten brand and to determine the extent of their correspondence with the phenomenon of deconstructivism in fashion. The study has established that floral patterns create an effect of a Derridean "reading into", which problematizes both various narratives associated with the "logocentric" use of floral patterns in European culture (colonial heritage, Orientalism and the exoticization of the Other, Victorian control of female corporeality, the category of good taste) and the very mechanisms of fashion obsolescence.

**Ekaterina Zhiritskaya's** *'Iris Proletaria': What's Behind the Red in 'Red Moscow'* turns to the most famous scent of the Soviet era, Krasnaya Moskva (Red Moscow). A crucial olfactory attribute of Soviet civilisation, this perfume was created in 1925. A warm, flowery scent with iris notes, it immediately found itself embroiled in a struggle of ideas. The bridge to reconcile the post-revolutionary narrative with the 'bourgeois' practice of wearing scent was found in colour: red, with all its political connotations, was included in the name. The paper looks at the various meanings attached to red. Important material for this study was unexpectedly found by the author in the works of the so-called 'proletarian poets'.

**Maria Skivko's** *The Floral Fashion Code: From Romantic Blooms to the Global Flower Industry* investigates the relationship between the floral code and the fashion phenomenon. The author looks at how flowers can become co-creators of fashionable looks, fashion statements and trend-setters in the service market. The study considers floral statements in fashionable dress, interiors, and well-known films. Skivko also turns to gardening practices, which may be seen as a result of the floral theme manifesting in trendy hobbies. The study looks at today's flower subscription and delivery services that reflect current consumer demand. Analysing these processes, the author concludes that from innocent floral patterns on dress, flowers have moved into the fashion industry, meeting consumer demand not only for fashionable looks, but for fashionable services and practices, also.

We conclude the issue with an interview with an Israeli hat-maker and costume designer **Maor Zabar**.