

# 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.

In this issue's **Dress** section, we present the second part of selected papers from the international conference “Fashion Cultures, Identities and Crisis: Making, Wearing, Caring”, held by *Fashion Theory* in Yerevan on 1–2 June 2023.

**Hilary Davidson** opens the section with her paper *The Past is the Future: Dress History and Conservation as Sustainability Expertise*. Sustainability has been an increasingly fashionable watchword in

fashion, although with little real change occurring. Over-making, over-buying, and other unsustainable, environmentally destructive practices have become normal, with efforts to curtail them often resulting in more production under the guise of 'sustainable' clothing. From the perspective of deep dress history, however, the glut of clothing overproduction which accompanied the twenty-first century's entrance is a blip in consumption time.

Fashion historians and curators, and textile conservators, have been involved with and have a longer perspective on how clothing can be made effectively and thriftily, treating textiles as the precious resource they were and could be again. Those who work with clothing from the past are engaged in sustainability practices but not identifying them as such, instead focusing on the view backwards. This long view is particularly useful considering current human crises but needs to shift forward as well. Dress history is a way to engage with a diverse range of making techniques, from Western fashion past and global traditional clothing practices generally, including practices of anti-fashion. For example, the 'zero waste cutting' movement could learn a lot from ancient and medieval clothing construction techniques. The value, skill and longevity embodied in traditional clothing can be models for future approaches to production and preservation. Accessing the extensive knowledge of conservators can tell designers now how to make their clothes last not five or ten, but 50 or 500 years into the future.

The past is an underutilised resource. Looking back can give ways to look forward, and experts in the dressed past need to start emphasising and sharing their skills to enhance fashion resistance and genuine sustainability as an imperative civilisational technique.

**Morna Laing** contributes *Sustainability and the Fashion Media: Micro-Utopia, Social Dreaming and Hope in the Margins*.

In the current media landscape, communication about sustainable fashion is so pervasive that it risks becoming background noise: a sea of "studium" that fails to "prick" the reader, despite the enormity of the stakes (Barthes 2000). This article asks how we might tell better stories when it comes to sustainability in the fashion media, drawing upon insights from fashion studies and environmental communication. The practices of fashion and dreaming are closely connected but this alliance does not always marry well with discourses on sustainability, which can elicit feelings of "green fatigue". In light of this, the following article asks how fashion media might be used as a vehicle for social dreaming, rather than consumerist dreaming, in order to make sustainable fashion more desirable. Fashion media is about storytelling and so, too, is utopia, with this article theorizing independent media as a micro-utopian network through which radical narratives can be explored (building on Wood 2007). The focus here is on English-language content

produced by independent magazines, not-for-profit organizations and academics. Taken collectively, these marginal forms of media represent a space where social dreaming is already taking place, with reference to discourses on utopia, slow fashion, and green consciousness.

In *Fragrance and Decay: Perfume in French Literature in the Third Quarter of the Twentieth Century*, **Ksenia Gusarova** examines references to real perfumes in three literary works written in French after the Second World War: Taos Amrouche's *Loneliness, My Mother*, Claude Simon's *The Grass*, and Charlotte Delbo's *Auschwitz and After*. In all three, costly scents are presented as refined, exquisite, contrasting sharply with shocking images of bodily degradation. Furthermore, in these works, perfumes play a number of roles, from signs of French colonial superiority with its symbolic and physical violence, to invisible talismans that can help one survive in a concentration camp. At first glance, the names of perfumes in these texts may appear insignificant, small details. Focusing on them, however, allows the reader not only to learn more about trends in fragrance in the 1910s to 1940s, but also to gain a deeper understanding of the author's vision, and to separate truth from fiction in the autobiographical prose.

**Culture** section is focused on the topic of fashion and nature and their stormy relationship, it opens with **Beverly Lemire's** *Domesticating the Exotic: Floral Culture and the East India Calico Trade with England, c. 1600–1800*. Europe's burgeoning trade in the seventeenth century brought exciting new textiles from Asia to the west, at the same time as newly imported flora caused a frenzy among botanists, collectors, gardeners and speculators. Between 1600 and 1800, gardens were reconceived; at the same time, interior domestic spaces were also being redesigned. Imagined landscapes of exotic locales became the inspiration for a redesign of personal settings using the painted, printed textiles from India. The fervor tied to the romance, mystery and alien landscapes of Asia unleashed a decorative torrent in thread, silk and linen, to bedeck the walls and furnish the homes of elite and common citizens. Asian-inspired dress also held a particular fascination for men from the middling to elite ranks, who were beguiled by the decorative banyans or dressing gowns made of printed and painted silks and cottons. They chose to wear these loose flowered robes as they socialized with their most intimate friends and family. Over two centuries, calicos became domesticated, a permanent feature of English domestic furnishings and personal adornment, a symbol of genteel repose, of male informality and intimacy, evolving to become a constant component of western material culture and thereby refashioning the domestic world.

**Karen Diadick Casselman's** *Praxis and Paradox: The Culture of Natural Dyes in Britain, 1750–1900* offers an analysis of natural dyes as a means to

explicate inherent paradoxes within the subject. One is that natural dyes are not entirely “natural.” The reverse is actually the case, for natural dyes were often added to chemical colors by nineteenth-century industrial dyers. Another paradox is the blurred distinction between natural and chemical dyes which are actually not separate but aligned technologies. Furthermore, textile historians have long regarded dyeing as a stage in finishing, which is neither appropriate nor accurate. This article presents a revised concept of the cultural and technological characteristics of both categories of dyes, a reassessment that engages persistent myths as it also interrogates aspects of gender and production.

**Maria Cristina Volpi** presents *The Exotic West: The Circuit of Carioca Featherwork in the Nineteenth Century*. Taking a feather fan belonging to the Jerônimo Ferreira das Neves Collection at the D. João VI Museum in Rio de Janeiro as a starting point, this article examines a type of featherwork that was produced for export during the nineteenth century in Brazil. The nineteenth-century fashion for adornments made from feathers and stuffed animals invaded major fashion-producing centers such as Paris and London at the time when bourgeois imperialism was helping to multiply intercontinental trade links. For middle-class women, these objects introduced the exotic as a distinct aesthetic, corresponding to a desire for innovation driven by the growing standardization in food, housing and clothing. Rigid feather fans produced in Rio de Janeiro were internationally known from 1830 onwards. However, even taking into account existing studies, little is known about this Rio-based rigid feather fan industry, which reached its peak between 1870 and 1890. In reflecting on the production, circulation and consumption of rigid fans, this paper aims to identify the symbolic meanings attributed to the products of this industry by Brazilian and European markets.

**Linda Welters** presents *The Natural Look: American Style in the 1970s*. The natural look was a trend of the 1970s that emphasized a natural appearance in hair, clothing, makeup, and accessories. The natural look arose from antagonisms in several oppositional cultures at different times, each involving a rejection of mainstream fashion. The natural look is divided into six categories: Natural Body, Natural Hair and Cosmetics, Natural Materials, Hand-crafted Clothing and Accessories, and “Nature” Sells Fashion. This article examines the sites of opposition that led to the natural look, the manifestation of “natural” in fashion, and its lasting effect on fashion and appearance into the twenty-first century.

**Yeong-Hyeon Choi** and **Saram Han** contribute *The Moral Dilemma in Fashion: Using the Prisoner’s Dilemma Game on Animals and the Environment*. This study aims to determine the optimal solution to the dilemma arising from vegan fashion materials by identifying current vegan or

cruelty-free fashion brands that advocate “animal-friendly” and revealing how animal ethics should be expressed so that consumers more effectively accept it. This research applies the “prisoner’s dilemma,” a situation that is often used in game theory. First, the solution to the dilemma of vegan fashion materials using Pareto efficiency is more ideal and rational than that of the Nash equilibrium point. Second, this study finds that many vegan fashion brands use a blend of synthetic materials rather than animal-derived materials. While all cruelty-free fashion brands have been cooperative with the environment, some are treacherous to animals by allowing the manufacture of animal materials. Additionally, animal-friendly brands are being developed mainly in the United States and Canada.

**Rachel Lamarche-Beauchesne** offers *Reviving the Silenced; Defining Vegan Fashion and Classifying Materials of Animal Origin*. The ongoing growth of clothing, footwear, and accessories marketed as vegan requires the development of a usable definition for the segment, as well as a review of the classification system which has permeated the use of materials of animal origin within fashion. Guided by literature on fashion, veganism, and animal agriculture, this conceptual article discusses the tangible enactment of ideological values when applied in the context of fashion products and materials. A vegan fashion or textile product, the author claims, should be defined as one devoid, throughout the supply chain, and in the fibers, materials and chemicals used to manufacture the end-product, of any forms of animal involvement through the avoidance of animal products, co-products, and by-products. Also suggested is that definitions of materials of animal origin should be reframed to acknowledge the level of involvement required from animals and insects in obtaining materials, namely their death, labour, or secretions. While traditional relationships between humans and animals are rarely questioned, this article, by recentring the animals as unwilling participants in the commercialization of their bodies, offers new ways to reflect upon the fashion industry’s use of animals as resources.

**Catherine Kovesi & Lynn Johnson’s** paper *Mammoth Tusk Beads and Vintage Elephant Skin Bags: Wildlife, Conservation, and Rethinking Ethical Fashion*. Recent years have seen marked consciousness-raising in the arena of ethical fashion. Despite inherent difficulties in tracing a complete ethical supply chain back to source, sustainable fashion movements have helped to highlight the need for prominent fashion industry role models on the one hand, and awareness of those who produce what we consume on the other. Yet, repeatedly in such discussions, one of the most fragile components of the luxury fashion business is left out of the conversation — wildlife and endangered species. To date there have been parallel discourses in ethical fashion and in wildlife conservation that rarely intersect, and are indeed often in unintended

opposition to each other. Even those who attempt to promote an ethical path, or who buy vintage rather than new fashion items of wildlife products, often unwittingly contribute to the accelerated demand for wildlife fashion products from present-day endangered species. The desire to be ethical can, in some instances, even contribute to illegal poaching activity. This article unravels for the first time some of the complexities of the conservation dilemmas involved in the wearing of ancient, vintage, and present-day wildlife products. In doing so it argues we should place wildlife center stage, as an equally important element, in rethinking what it is that we wear.

*Life Writing as an Ecological Research Method* by **Kate Fletcher** examines life writing as a research method to uncover new insights about the interrelationships between beings and place including with fashion and clothing. In it, the practice of using oneself as a site of enquiry is presented as a route to ecological understanding where finite, direct experience builds towards rooted, embodied, plural and relational knowing about how we live and how we respond to the ecological crisis. Throughout, the paper is supplemented with reflections from the practice of nature-clothing life writing.

In **Focus** column we present **Liudmila Aliabieva's** interview with a textile artist and fashion designer **Nina Veresova** who talks about her experience with natural dyes and the role they play in her artistic practice, research and pedagogical work.

In this issue's **Events** section, **Lacey Minot** contributes her review of 'Iris van Herpen. Sculpting the Senses' at Musée des Arts Décoratifs (MAD), Paris (November 29, 2023–April 28, 2024).

**Jo Pilcher** offers her thoughts on 'Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art' at The Barbican Centre, London (February 13—May 26, 2024).

In this issue's **Books** section, **Christine Boydell** presents her review of *Everyday Fashion: Interpreting British Clothing Since 1600* / Ed. Bethan Bide, Jade Halbert, and Liz Tregenza. London: Bloomsbury, 2023, while Rachel Lamarche-Beauchesne contributes her review of *Fashioning Politics and Protests: New Visual Cultures of Feminism in the United States* by Emily L. Newman. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023.