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EDITORIAL

MARCO PEDRONI

University of Ferrara, Italy

The evolution of a discipline: A transformative chapter in fashion studies

ABSTRACT

This editorial reflects on the transformative trajectory of fashion studies, highlighting key developments over the past decade. Initially dismissed as a trivial field, fashion studies has evolved into a critical interdisciplinary domain, interrogating fashion's intersections with social, cultural and economic structures. Through the lens of the International Journal of Fashion Studies, this evolution is examined across thematic trends such as decolonization, sustainability, digitalization and intersectionality. Decolonial approaches have critiqued Eurocentric frameworks, amplifying pluralistic narratives and interrogating power dynamics in global fashion systems. Digitalization, meanwhile, has reshaped the methodologies and paradigms of the discipline, examining its impact on production, consumption and representation. Sustainability remains a central concern, urging the field to navigate its complexities beyond neo-liberal framings. This editorial also reflects on interdisciplinarity as a cornerstone of fashion studies, embracing methodologies from sociology, anthropology, digital humanities and material culture studies. Fashion is no longer perceived as mere 'surface' but as an autonomous object of inquiry, essential for understanding identity, power and modernity. The Journal's future lies in sustaining these critical engagements, enriching fashion's place in global academia.

KEYWORDS

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After five intense and fulfilling years as co-editor-in-chief, and having had the privilege of contributing to the Journal since its inception, I write this farewell editorial with a mix of deep gratitude and critical reflection. As I step down from my editorial role, this moment serves as a meaningful opportunity to reflect on our shared journey, the milestones we have reached together and the significant transformations in the dynamic field of fashion studies that the Journal has documented throughout the 2010s and 2020s.

When the Journal was founded, its mission was both ambitious and subversive: to establish an inclusive platform for rigorous, interdisciplinary scholarship that not only challenged hegemonic narratives in fashion but also confronted structural inequities in academic publishing. In contrast to many journals confined to anglophone perspectives, we sought to bridge linguistic and cultural divides by amplifying voices from non-English-speaking regions. By allowing scholars to submit in their native languages and implementing a unique peer-review and translation process, the Journal has tried to ensure that diverse research gains visibility, preserving the richness and specificity of local perspectives against the homogenizing tendencies of global academia.

This vision was shaped by the shared positionality of the founding editors Emanuela Mora, Paolo Volonté and Agnès Rocamora and me as European fashion scholars from nations (Italy and France) hosting some of the world's most influential fashion capitals (see Godart 2014 on the geography of fashion). While we benefited from a position of relative dominance in global debates, as non-native English speakers we simultaneously experienced linguistic subordination. This dual positioning compelled us to conceptualize and articulate our scholarship in English – a process akin to a double translation, encompassing both ideas and cultural specificities.

This ambivalent stance profoundly shaped the Journal's ethos, even in the majority of cases where submissions and the peer-review process took place in English, despite it not being the contributors' native language. It reinforced our commitment to creating spaces for scholarship often excluded from global discourses – not due to a lack of rigour or originality but because of systemic and cultural barriers imposed upon non-anglophone scholars. In doing so, we actively sought to resist the epistemic violence of linguistic imperialism, striving to foster an inclusive and equitable intellectual environment.

Over the years, the Journal has become a cornerstone for interdisciplinary discourse, traversing fields such as sociology, cultural studies, digital humanities, visual arts and performance studies. Contributors have critically examined the aesthetics, politics and socio-economic dimensions of fashion with unwavering dedication, securing the Journal's position at the forefront of academic inquiry.

Throughout its twelve volumes, the *International Journal of Fashion Studies* has emerged as a critical forum for interrogating fashion's social, cultural, political and economic dimensions. Its diverse range of articles embodies our commitment to interdisciplinarity, critical engagement and global inclusivity, as envisioned by the founders. Key thematic trends addressed include (but are not limited to) decolonization and global perspectives, digitalization and media practices, sustainability and ethical fashion, intersectionality and identity, methodological innovations, heritage and theoretical contributions.

UNSTITCHING EMPIRE'S SEAMS

Over the past decades, fashion scholarship has confronted its long-standing Eurocentrism and the marginalization of non-western attire, which was once

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treated as an exotic anomaly situated on the periphery of western fashion histories (Patchett and Williams 2021). As the field has embraced decolonial methodologies, the focus has shifted towards more inclusive and interconnected frameworks. Recent scholarship interrogates entrenched hierarchies, foregrounding pluralistic narratives of modernity and recognizing trans-global cultural dialogues that transcend previously fixed binaries. Rabine (2024) underscores the increasing prominence of mutual exchanges between diverse cultural practices, illustrated by the interplay of Indian textile traditions with African fashion systems. These developments challenge the notion of a singular western modernity, instead proposing a dynamic reconfiguration of knowledge production.

Within this broader transformation, several contributions have critiqued numerous epistemologies and proposed more open-ended and iterative processes of decolonization. Cheang et al. (2022) conceptualize these efforts not as definitive or terminal but as ongoing interventions that require continuous interrogation of hegemonic power structures. The Special Issue 'Decolonizing Fashion [Studies] as Process' (Cheang et al. 2022) underscores the imperative of dismantling inherited Eurocentric frameworks. This issue includes discussions such as Sandhu's (2022) examination of Indian minimalism, which highlights how local traditions challenge global discourses. In parallel, the Special Issue '*Moda Negra*, Past and Present' (Square 2023) focuses on African Brazilian traditions and their intersections with fashion. Oliveira de Araújo's (2023) work, featured in the same issue, explores African Brazilian fashion as a site of resistance and cultural expression, while Medrado's (2023) 'Before yesterday' method introduces ethnographic tools to recover neglected histories. Similarly, studies such as Maples's (2022) research on Senegalese histories illustrate broader applications of these decolonial approaches.

This intellectual shift has important implications for institutional practices. Decoloniality is not simply a rhetorical gesture but emerges through collaborative research and pedagogy. At Stockholm University's Centre for Fashion Studies (Wallenberg 2018), for example, the diversification of curricula and emphasis on global fashion histories, rather than western-centric canons, exemplify such institutional reorientations. Similarly, from a Global South perspective, South African scholarship, as highlighted by de Greef (2024), no longer exists at the margins but has assumed a central role in global academic exchange. De Greef argues that positionality – the situatedness of knowledge production – illuminates how local contexts shape understandings of material flows, labour relations and social formations that have been overlooked or trivialized by mainstream narratives. These critical insights resonate with Patchett and Williams's (2021) emphasis on scrutinizing labour practices and historical trajectories, and with Rabine's (2024) call for collective methodologies that amplify culturally specific viewpoints.

The theoretical stakes of decolonization are underscored by Lusty's (2021) work in critical fashion studies, which situates the process within broader critiques of exploitative labour, sustainability discourses and global power asymmetries. Lusty warns against simplistic interpretations of sustainability that fail to consider postcolonial economic complexities. Interdisciplinary frameworks offer a possible response, as exemplified by Skov and Melchior's (2008) advocacy for hybrid methodologies rooted in anthropology, sociology and material culture studies. Such integrated approaches challenge entrenched hierarchies and provide conceptual tools to advance decolonized scholarship.

Practical initiatives highlight these theoretical commitments. The Research Collective for Decoloniality and Fashion (Cheang et al. 2022), for instance, adopts open-ended methodologies that resist commodifying decolonial perspectives. Their work examines layered histories of fashion objects, from colonial-era textiles to contemporary digital activism, revealing both persistent tensions and emergent opportunities. Material turn approaches further illustrate the utility of these strategies. In Iris van Herpen's designs, as analysed by Smelik (2018), the interplay of technology and craft contests anthropocentric assumptions, foregrounding ecological concerns and exposing the agency of materials. Such practices exemplify the innovative possibilities arising from decolonized methodologies.

Nevertheless, as decolonial discourses become more visible within academic and institutional contexts, complexities remain. Cheang et al. (2022) caution that mainstreaming this agenda can reproduce the very hierarchies it seeks to dismantle. Instances of epistemic appropriation, in which western institutions assimilate non-western theories or knowledge without substantive engagement, risk marginalizing the scholars and communities who originally developed these insights. These challenges underscore the necessity of sustained critical reflection and localized collaborations, ensuring that the evolution of fashion studies embodies the inclusivity it advocates.

The future of the field depends on embracing diverse epistemologies, methods and voices that have historically been excluded. As emphasized by Rabine (2024) and de Greef (2024), collective endeavours to dismantle systemic inequities can foster a discipline that is more attentive to the complexities of global fashion systems. Such a transformation requires continuous commitments to rethinking history, emphasizing multiple modernities and engaging with broader social inequalities. In doing so, fashion studies can continue to develop as an inclusive field, responsive to the urgent intellectual challenges of our interconnected social world.

FASHION MEDIA STUDIES

Over the past two decades, digitalization has fundamentally reshaped fashion's production, consumption and communication. From wearable technologies and virtual catwalks to the expansion of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube, these developments have not only transformed industry practices but have also influenced scholarly approaches to fashion studies. This reconfiguration fosters creativity and inclusivity, yet simultaneously introduces novel hierarchies and reinforces existing inequalities. Indeed, platforms have disrupted traditional industry structures by elevating peripheral actors – such as influencers and micro-entrepreneurs – while intensifying questions about agency, labour and technological mediation.

Recent scholarship extends these considerations by interrogating how digital media recast power relations and subjectivities. Halliday's (2022) investigation into Cambridge Analytica's entanglement with fashion ethics and Park and Chun's (2022) analysis of YouTube fashion channels reveal that digital platforms frequently mediate identity, representation and consumer behaviour in ways that may perpetuate hegemonic norms. Similarly, Halliday's (2024) emphasis on Instagram and TikTok as sites of creative expression, activism and interaction aligns with Rocamora's (2017) analysis of mediatization, in which digitalization reconfigures interplay across virtual and physical domains. Marie-Aude Baronian (2024) also underscores the theoretical

importance of digital fashion objects, which reflect broader cultural and technological shifts, while Smelik's (2018) analysis of wearable technologies and 'hybrid assemblages' suggests that materiality and digitality now intersect in unprecedented ways.

Scholars have recognized the tensions arising from digitalization's ambivalent promise of democratization. Although platforms initially appeared to expand access, enabling marginalized voices to enter the fashion discourse and encouraging alternative narratives around identity, race and gender, a complex dynamic of reintermediation has emerged. Exclusivity within influencer economies and algorithmic biases often reproduce inequalities. Further complexities surface in the intersection of digitalization and sustainability. Lusty (2021) warns against the commodification of ethical activism in digital arenas, where mediated outrage may oversimplify structural issues. This concern resonates with Skov and Melchior's (2008) contention that digital platforms facilitate exploitative labour conditions and environmental harm. At the same time, inquiries such as Hanlon et al.'s (2024) study of DIY digital archives foreground the perspectives of garment workers, critiquing entrenched academic hierarchies and exposing the hidden dimensions of these digital transformations.

Innovative methodologies are essential to understanding these evolving landscapes. Ornati et al.'s (2022) examination of virtual fit technologies exemplifies the methodological ingenuity required to address emerging digital practices. Baronian (2024) advocates combining digital ethnography with critical analyses of virtual fashion objects to reveal the social and political stakes underlying these environments. Patchett and Williams (2021) propose a relational framework that recognizes the interplay between digital and physical spaces, highlighting their micro-political potential. Such methodological experimentation is necessary as technological change accelerates, demanding continuous theoretical and empirical adaptation.

This evolving field benefits from interdisciplinary approaches that question established assumptions. While some media scholars have distanced themselves from fashion, concepts such as platformization demonstrate the value of bridging disciplinary divides. D'Aloia and Pedroni's (2022) proposal for a hybrid domain of 'fashion media studies' encourages critical scrutiny of the digital infrastructures shaping contemporary fashion. By doing so, scholars can confront entrenched power relations, challenge inequitable systems and contribute to a more equitable and sustainable industry. This entails carefully balancing the innovative potential of digitalization with its capacity to reproduce injustices. In the end, fashion studies stand at crossroads, poised to deepen the understanding of how digital media reshape fashion's contours, while critically examining the interplay between innovation, inequality and agency.

THE UNSUSTAINABILITY OF THE EMPHASIS ON SUSTAINABILITY

Since the Journal's foundation, sustainability has repeatedly surfaced as a central concern, foregrounding the systemic contradictions shaping production and consumption. From Payne's (2014) exploration of eco-fashion narratives in Australia and Lunghi's (2014) examination of prison fashion as a form of social inclusion to Ashmore's (2018) account of Bangladeshi handcrafts, scholarly efforts have underscored the need to consider diverse cultural and material frameworks. Niessen's (2022) manifesto for degrowth, 'Defining defashion',

further attests to the necessity of radically rethinking consumption patterns, while Patchett and Williams (2021) address the entanglement of sustainability and labour rights – particularly in the Global South, where garment workers remain marginalized beneath ostensibly sustainable supply chains.

This broadening scope reveals how environmental and cultural dimensions of sustainability intersect with questions of social justice, historical legacies and geopolitical imbalances. De Greef (2024) critiques the disproportionate focus on environmental metrics alone, calling instead for a conceptualization of sustainability sensitive to socio-economic and cultural specificities. Cheang et al. (2022) and Rabine (2024) likewise challenge the western-dominated narratives that continue to marginalize non-western perspectives. The resulting tensions highlight how the emphasis on sustainability can both empower and exclude, democratizing certain practices while silencing others.

Lusty (2021) draws attention to the commodification of sustainability within neo-liberal frameworks, where it is often reframed as an individual moral responsibility rather than a systemic issue. This approach detracts from the structural changes essential to addressing unsustainable modes of production. Such contradictions intensify when considering the digital sphere, where Halliday (2024) points out that supposedly sustainable innovations – such as virtual fashion or blockchain verification – carry significant environmental costs. Patchett and Williams (2021) maintain that understanding the intersections between digital and physical fashion spaces is imperative for apprehending how power is both exercised and contested.

Ultimately, this evolving body of scholarship demonstrates the complexities and paradoxes at the heart of sustainability discourse. Moving forward, fashion studies must question hegemonic assumptions, embrace interdisciplinary perspectives and acknowledge alternative ways of dressing and living that incorporate global and local voices. By attending to these sociopolitical dimensions, the discipline can move beyond limited understandings of sustainability, inspiring more just and equitable futures for the fashion industry and the communities shaped by it.

TAILORING INTERDISCIPLINARY FASHION KNOWLEDGE

Interdisciplinarity and methodological innovation are hallmark characteristics of fashion studies, enabling scholars to address the multifaceted nature of fashion as both a material and symbolic practice. Drawing upon a diverse array of disciplines – including sociology, anthropology, cultural studies and art history – fashion studies has expanded its analytical scope and methodological repertoire. This interdisciplinary foundation echoes the field's origins in late-twentieth-century efforts to bridge disparate academic traditions. Skov and Melchior (2008) describe fashion studies as a 'hybrid subject' that integrates diverse theories and methods, facilitating explorations of fashion's complexities, from production systems to cultural significance.

Baronian (2024) underscores the necessity of interdisciplinarity for comprehending fashion as a cultural object. She highlights the interplay between theory and object, urging scholars to adopt flexible frameworks that accommodate fashion's shifting cultural and industrial contexts. This adaptability is particularly vital as the fashion industry undergoes rapid transformations, necessitating innovative methodologies.

Methodological diversity is central to this endeavour, reflecting a commitment to interdisciplinary inquiry and critical reflexivity. Experimental studies,

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such as Sampson's 'Walking and wearing' (2018) and Smelik's exploration of 'New materialism' (2018), push the boundaries of fashion research, challenging traditional epistemological frameworks. These works exemplify how innovative approaches can provide fresh insights into the embodied experiences of fashion.

Ethnography has emerged as a key method, offering profound insights into the lived experiences of fashion production and consumption. By foregrounding positionality and context, ethnography captures the nuanced ways in which fashion operates as both material and symbolic practice. Von Pezold's 'Patchwork ethnography' (2024) adapts ethnographic techniques to the challenges posed by the pandemic, demonstrating the field's methodological adaptability.

Visual culture analysis has also become central, providing tools to interrogate fashion imagery – advertisements, runway shows and social media – as sites where identity and power are constructed and contested. Baronian (2024) and Patchett and Williams (2021) advocate for relational frameworks that connect micro- and macro-political dimensions, analysing global circulation and impact. Wood's (2024) integration of garment analysis with wardrobe interviews further exemplifies innovative methods that deepen our understanding of fashion practices.

The rise of digitalization has further broadened the field's methodological toolkit. Digital ethnography and computational methods have become critical for examining online fashion communities, influencer culture and broader implications of digital platforms. Halliday (2024) highlights the opportunities virtual environments provide for studying fashion but stresses the need to adapt traditional methods to digital contexts. This trend is reflected in Rocamora's (2017) analysis of the mediatization of fashion and Ornati et al.'s (2022) investigation into virtual fit platforms, which reveal the interplay of technology and materiality. Smelik's (2018) work on wearable technologies exemplifies how digital tools create new materialities, requiring researchers to integrate material culture studies with digital humanities.

Interdisciplinary approaches are equally essential for addressing issues of power, representation and inequality within fashion. Early critiques by McRobbie (1997) exposed androcentric biases in fashion studies and advocated for feminist perspectives to illuminate the gendered dimensions of fashion production and consumption. These critiques have since informed analyses of race, class and sexuality, such as Lusty's (2021) examination of ethical fashion discourses, which often exclude marginalized voices.

The decolonial turn in fashion studies further demonstrates the value of interdisciplinarity. Rabine (2024) argues that decolonizing fashion requires methods from history, anthropology and material culture studies to interrogate the colonial legacies embedded within fashion systems. Cheang et al. (2022) call for open-ended methodologies that resist commodifying decolonial discourses, instead prioritizing collaborative, locally grounded research practices. Such a perspective is supported by Maples's (2022) analysis of Senegalese fashion histories and de Greef's (2014) reflection on South African fashion as a site of memory. Haller's focus on interdisciplinary collaborations (2024) further exemplifies the innovative and critical spirit in this regard.

Despite its strengths, interdisciplinarity poses challenges for fashion studies. Wallenberg (2018) warns of potential fragmentation as scholars grapple with diverse theoretical and methodological demands. Additionally, the field's

reliance on western academic frameworks risks marginalizing non-western perspectives.

To remain dynamic and relevant, fashion studies must prioritize reflexivity and inclusivity in interdisciplinary practices. By embracing methodological innovation and fostering critical dialogue across disciplines, fashion studies can effectively respond to global challenges and deepen its engagement with the complexities of fashion as a cultural and industrial phenomenon.

EXPANDING THE THEORETICAL FABRIC

The directions outlined above, while crucial, only partially represent the breadth and complexity that characterize the ongoing development of fashion studies. Alongside the decolonial, digital and sustainability perspectives reviewed, significant strands of inquiry illuminate further layers of diversity and depth within this evolving field. Issues relating to gender, race, class and disability are increasingly examined through intersectional lenses, as illustrated by Barry et al. (2024), who incorporate disability studies into the examination of labour and cultural production processes. Likewise, Rabinovitch-Fox's (2019) focus on African American womanhood during the Great Migration and Sayan-Cengiz's (2020) analysis of aesthetic labour in Turkish retail underscore the ways in which identities are shaped, contested and negotiated within fashion's global circuits.

Historical dimensions remain a key resource for reinterpreting the present and envisioning the future. Bethke's (2019) engagement with archival methods and Kurkdjian's (2019) appraisal of French *Vogue* highlight the political stakes surrounding memory and representation in fashion history. De Greef's (2014) insights into South African heritage, Horsley's (2014) reflections on the body in exhibition spaces and Pantouvaki's (2014) interpretations of survival narratives through dress, all reveal how research grounded in historical materialities and memories enriches contemporary analysis. Godart's (2014) critical examination of fashion capitals clarifies the geopolitical trajectories that continue to influence the global concentration of cultural authority.

At the same time, theoretical debates continue to challenge established paradigms. Tse et al.'s (2024) editorial calls for dialogical approaches and critical reorientations that resist homogenizing tendencies. Delhaye's (2024) critique of universalist frameworks further destabilizes conventional assumptions, while Baronian's (2024) emphasis on treating fashion as a cultural analysis object urges scholars to consider fashion's embeddedness within shifting social conditions. These complementary directions – intersectional, historical, theoretical – broaden the conceptual and methodological horizons opened by the Journal's early interventions. They confirm that the pursuits detailed above do not exhaust the abundance of possible avenues and that numerous lines of inquiry remain to be articulated and explored.

FROM LENS TO OBJECT, FROM METAPHOR TO METHOD

When I embarked upon my doctoral research on fashion forecasting and cool-hunting, I felt an acute need to defend my chosen field of inquiry. Although fashion had begun to garner intellectual recognition, it remained all too frequently dismissed as frivolous or peripheral, even in contexts where it wielded evident cultural and economic significance. In response to Lipovetsky's observation that '[t]he question of fashion is not a fashionable one among intellectuals' (1989: 3), I argued that fashion had carved out a space within the

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social sciences. Despite being deeply ingrained, prejudice rooted in the enduring perception of fashion as mere 'surface' rather than 'depth' persisted, leading to its dismissal as an academic subject unworthy of rigorous examination (Svendsen 2006).

From the time of Plato, western thought has systematically privileged the dichotomy between reality and representation, substance and appearance – a legacy that has consigned fashion to the realm of the superficial. Scholars who examined fashion, frequently regarded as grappling with a 'light' or inconsequential matter, felt compelled to justify its scholarly value (Flügel 2003). Blumer (1969) exhorted researchers to accord fashion the respect it merits, challenging its portrayal as an 'ontologically and socially inferior domain' (Lipovetsky 1989: 3), unworthy of rigorous investigation. Bourdieu (1992) similarly observed that academia often conflates the social and political importance of a given subject with the legitimacy of its scholarly pursuit, thus overlooking the capacity of marginal phenomena to illuminate broader mechanisms of social life. Within this framework, fashion emerges as a revelatory field, one that elucidates how identity, consumption and social stratification are produced, contested and negotiated (Crane 2000).

What was once dismissed as 'superficial' or 'frivolous' has, in recent decades, metamorphosed into a pivotal analytic node through which to interrogate modernity itself. This shift attests not only to the maturing domain of fashion studies but also to a more expansive reorientation of intellectual priorities – one that challenges traditional hierarchies favouring the abstract over the material, the political over the aesthetic and the earnest over the playful.

In its nascent phase, fashion studies often served as a lens through which to comprehend social mechanisms – a reflective surface capturing identity, stratification and consumption. While this approach proved illuminating, it was inherently partial. Today, fashion is recognized not merely as a *metaphor* for social processes but as an *autonomous object* of scholarly endeavour – an intricate system in which the architectures of modernity are actively constructed, contested and transformed. The duality of fashion – at once insubstantial and substantial – has become a focal point of analysis. As English notes:

Although fashion trends may appear amusing and seemingly carefree, throughout history, fashion has also been shaped by profound political, social, and economic changes. The stylistic changes in both fashion and art have accelerated at an increasing pace, particularly in the twentieth century, compelling observers to seriously consider how fashion has been, and continues to be, integrated into the cultural fabric of society.
(2007: 1)

This paradigmatic recalibration has serious implications on our understanding of how fashion intersects with other domains. Sustainability now functions not solely as a lens to critique overproduction but as a conceptual framework to explore the reimagining of materiality, ethics and labour within globalized fashion systems. Similarly, digitalization is no longer a mere external force acting upon fashion; it is a methodological avenue for investigating algorithmic identities, digital economies and the dissolution of boundaries between production and consumption. Whether conceptualized as a mirror reflecting social transformations or as an active agent shaping them – even functioning as a homogenizing force akin to the operations of the culture industry

(Horkheimer and Adorno 2002) – the social significance of fashion is beyond dispute.

Since completing my doctorate, my conceptualization of fashion's place within academic discourse has evolved profoundly. Whereas I once regarded fashion primarily as a conceptual gateway into broader social phenomena, I now embrace the legitimacy of approaching it as a full-fledged object of scholarly examination – an outlook increasingly shared by many contemporaneous scholars with whom I have engaged. This attitudinal shift mirrors the broader evolution of fashion studies. No longer is fashion solely a metaphor for interpreting social dynamics; it has become a complex subject worthy of theoretical and empirical investigation on its own terms. Thus, fashion studies now occupies a vanguard position within interdisciplinary scholarship, poised to challenge entrenched binaries between surface and depth, object and method, metaphor and materiality.

By repositioning fashion as an object of analysis, we alter the ways in which we conceive its intersections with other fields. Technology, sustainability and globalization become conceptual tools for interrogating fashion's intrinsic complexities. Digitalization, rather than being regarded as an extraneous factor, provides methods for examining virtual fashion ecosystems, online communities and the digital reshaping of production and consumption practices. Likewise, sustainability emerges as a critical lens for scrutinizing the ethical and material dimensions of global fashion, from labour conditions to environmental footprints. This inversion signals the discipline's coming of age, relocating fashion from the academic margins to a central locus of critical inquiry.

Fashion is thus no longer a mere conduit for understanding other spheres; it now stands as an investigative fulcrum that informs our comprehension of culture, identity and society itself. By acknowledging and embracing this shift, fashion studies has asserted itself as indispensable for grappling with the complexities of a rapidly changing social world. This is the legacy we must sustain and enrich: an enduring commitment to exploring fashion as both a profound cultural phenomenon and a radical terrain for theoretical and methodological innovation.

As scholars, our collective aspiration is to contribute meaningfully to the intellectual advancement of our fields, and academic journals remain crucial facilitators in this enterprise. It is my hope that the *International Journal of Fashion Studies* has advanced this transformative agenda, elevating fashion from a mere lens to a legitimate object and method of inquiry. Whether it has succeeded in this task is a question ultimately left to the discernment of its readers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my fellow editors, colleagues on the Editorial Board, contributors and readers: I extend my profound gratitude for making these years so fulfilling. Your unwavering commitment to the Journal's vision has sustained my conviction in the significance of our collective endeavour. I remain especially indebted to our founding editors – Paolo, Emanuela and Agnès – whose efforts shaped the Journal's trajectory and achievements.

I also wish to acknowledge those who responded so thoughtfully to my recent call aimed at identifying key trends in fashion studies – among them, Leslie Rabine, Rebecca Halliday, Erica de Greef and Melanie Haller – whose insights contributed substantially to shaping the structure of this editorial.

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While I now step away from my editorial role, I do so with confidence that the Journal will continue to flourish under new leadership. Its legacy of encouraging bold, critical and inclusive scholarship will, I am certain, endure. To my esteemed colleagues and friends, Karena, Rosie and Tommy, I offer my sincere best wishes as you chart the Journal's future. May it thrive under your guidance, illuminating the evolving contours of fashion studies and advancing its critical engagement with the complexities of our cultural and social worlds.

In closing, I am compelled by Donna Haraway's reference to the words of British social anthropologist Marilyn Strathern: 'It matters what matters we use to think other matters (with)' (2016: 12). Let us persist in thinking, writing and acting in ways that expand the intellectual boundaries of fashion studies and enrich its contributions to both academia and the wider social world.

With heartfelt gratitude and every good wish for the future of this Journal and our field.

Marco

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CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Marco Pedroni is an associate professor of sociology of culture and communication at the University of Ferrara, Italy, where he teaches sociology of culture, media and journalism and digital media sociology. His research spans fashion, digital media, creative professions and cultural intermediaries,

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focusing particularly on bloggers and influencers. He authored *Coolhunting* (FrancoAngeli, 2010) and edited various volumes including *I media e la moda* (Carocci, 2022) and *From Production to Consumption: The Cultural Industry of Fashion* (Inter-Disciplinary, 2013). He has been the co-editor of the *International Journal of Fashion Studies* from 2020 to 2025.

Contact: Department of Humanistic Studies, University of Ferrara, Via Paradiso 12, 44121 Ferrara FE, Italy.
E-mail: marcoluca.pedroni@unife.it

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1040-5098>

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