

EDITORIAL

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The internationalization of fashion studies: Rethinking the peer-reviewing process

ABSTRACT

The International Journal of Fashion Studies argues that the reception of contributions from countries with less visibility in English-language academic publications has been long overdue. This is why it has set as its main aim the dissemination of the work of non-anglophone scholars who write in their first language by publishing their writings in English translation. To do so, the journal has put into place a peer-reviewing process whereby it reviews submissions written in the authors's chosen language, whether English or not.

The paper discusses the socio-cultural and epistemological issues related to the operationalizing of such a peer-reviewing process. It first looks at the development of fashion studies to situate the journal's approach. It then discusses its linguistic project in relation to the cultural issues pertaining to the internationalization of fashion studies.

KEYWORDS

internationalization
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Eurocentrism

1. Danish, English, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbo-Croat, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish.

Finally, it engages with the epistemological issue of being a journal that welcomes contributions by scholars situated outside the Anglophone world and western regions whilst also being embedded in a form of scientific publishing that originates from the West and is informed by, and reproduces, 'western' norms and values.

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF FASHION STUDIES'S PROJECT

English being a *lingua franca* of the international academic world, much of the most influential literature in fashion studies has been produced in that language. Indeed, access to a global readership is premised on the submission to academic journals of texts written in English. However, over the years a meaningful corpus of fashion studies has developed in other regions that have just as much of a tradition as anglophone countries in costume, clothing and fashion practice as well as in the study of social and cultural phenomena. But this corpus is not written in English and, because of language obstacles, has not reached the international audience it might have. Scholars who are not English-language speakers and have neither the time nor the resources to produce texts in that language may be excluded from current debates in English on fashion, clothing and appearance. The richness of their material can go unacknowledged within the anglophone field, which can only deprive the field of fashion studies of significant findings and insights. This is at odds with both the global nature of the fashion systems and the call, in much contemporary academia, for the fostering of international networks and research.

The editorial team of the *International Journal of Fashion Studies* strongly believes that the reception of contributions from countries with less visibility in English-language academic publications has been long overdue. It has therefore set as its main aim the dissemination of the work of non-anglophone scholars who write in their first language by publishing their writings in English translation, thereby encouraging the global circulation of research undertaken in other languages and cultures.

On the one hand, we acknowledge that English is the language that can reach most fashion studies readers without further translation being necessary. For none of the editors is English a first language. Notwithstanding considerations of the defence of linguistic and cultural diversity, we embrace its use for communication amongst scholars. On the other hand, we believe that the existence of language barriers prevents scientific output from non-anglophone countries from circulating with equal facility amongst fashion scholars. This results in a linguistic dominance that impoverishes the stock of knowledge available to both anglophone and non-anglophone scholars. It is to address this issue that the *International Journal of Fashion Studies* was created.

In operational terms, besides finding out about, and looking out for, research from non-anglophone scholars, not least through the support of our Editorial and Advisory Boards, our principal tool consists in the peer reviewing of articles written in the author's chosen language, whether English or not. This process of peer reviewing will help lower the language barriers that prevent access to the large international anglophone audience. We already cover a wider variety of languages,¹ and will further develop our reach thanks to the help of the fashion studies community. It is only once an article has been accepted for publication that it will be translated into standard British English. The cost will be left to the author but with the assurance that the

work will be published. However, the journal aims to acquire some funding to support the authors in the translation of their articles.

The *International Journal of Fashion Studies* by no means intends to 'ghettoize' non-anglophone fashion studies. This would not be to the benefit of either the authors or the academic community as a whole. The journal is open to contributions written in all languages by authors from every cultural and linguistic context, including the English-speaking countries. The coming together of this variety of contributions will give the journal its richness. We are hoping to create a platform for the sharing of ideas, a platform that by mitigating the linguistic divide can become a bridging field between cultures. This divide is not only unfair to individual scholars who must overcome a language barrier to find an international audience as wide as the anglophone, it also impoverishes fashion studies by limiting the number and cultural diversity of authors who can establish themselves in the field. The supremacy of English in the publication of scholarly work results in a sort of Anglo-American ethnocentrism. In contrast, the *International Journal of Fashion Studies* aims to build a space in which the cultural variety of practices and interests, of research subjects, and of traditions of producing knowledge is legitimized to enrich the field of fashion studies.

This, in broad outline, is the project of the journal. But whilst its logic and structure are easily described, much more complex are the sociocultural and epistemological questions that it entails. Indeed, the launching of the journal has raised a number of issues that we now discuss, starting with the definition of fashion studies. Thus, we first look at the development of this field to best situate the approach of the journal. We then discuss our linguistic project in relation to the cultural issues pertaining to the internationalization of fashion studies. Finally, we engage with the issue of a paradox inherent to our project from an epistemological point of view.

THE FIELD OF FASHION STUDIES

Until recently it was not unusual to come across academic texts on fashion that would start with a lament on the dearth of scholarly attention to this topic and its attendant lack of value in the hierarchy of legitimate objects of intellectual enquiry. Such a position is no longer tenable. Indeed the growth of the volume of research devoted to fashion seems to go unabated to the point that it is frequently referred to as fashion studies, or even Fashion Studies, the capitalization being a nod to, and participant in, the institutionalization of this field of research. But what exactly is fashion studies? And when did, or does, the study of fashion become fashion studies?

Studies of fashion are not a new intellectual pursuit. Indeed scholarly texts on the topic have been traced back to the Renaissance (McNeil 2008: xii, but see also Johnson et al. 2003; Kawamura 2011). Fashion studies, however, as an academic field of research, is of a more recent origin. Mid-century dress history and the 'new art history' of the 1980s can be seen as its bedrock (see Breward 1995: 2; Breward 1998; Taylor 2002). However, fashion studies is also indebted to the rise and development of cultural studies in the United Kingdom and abroad (see also McNeil 2008: xii; Paulicelli and Wissinger 2013), and, like it, finds itself at the crossroad of many disciplines in the humanities and social sciences (see also Kaiser 2012). Thus, although one can find in the writing of Veblen (1994 [1899]) and Simmel (1905), for instance, key contributions to the study of fashion, the 1980s are seen as the decade when fashion studies really took off and was consolidated as a discrete field of enquiry (see, for instance,

Paulicelli and Wissinger 2013). Texts such as Dick Hebdige's *Subculture and the Meaning of Style* (1979), Elizabeth Wilson's *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (1985) or Caroline Evans and Minna Thornton's *Women and Fashion: A New Look* (1989) were published, laying the ground for subsequent analyses of the social and cultural dynamics of fashion and dress.

Since then a range of developments has supported the institutionalization of fashion studies. As others have observed (Aspers and Godart 2013; Granata 2012; Kaiser 2012; Kawamura 2011; Paulicelli and Wissinger 2013), fashion studies courses have multiplied, new journals have been launched – including, in 1997, the seminal *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* – and fashion studies conferences have taken place in various institutions, whilst fashion exhibitions not previously staged in museums have given the field a new, and popular, visibility. There is now a wide corpus of fashion studies texts from a range of disciplines including history (e.g. Arnold 2008; Bartlett 2010; Blaszczyk 2012; Breward 1999; Evans 2013; O'Neil 2007; Steele 1988); cultural studies (e.g. Cole 2000; Lewis 2013; Miller 2011; Rocamora 2009); sociology (e.g. Aspers 2001; Crane 2000; Crane and Bovone 2006; Entwistle 2000); social psychology (e.g. Tseëlon 1995); anthropology (e.g. Eicher 1995; Woodward 2007; Niessen et al. 2003); film studies (e.g. Bruzzi 1997; Church Gibson 2012; Uhlírova 2008) with many finding themselves at the junction of two or more of those disciplines (but see also Black et al.'s *Handbook of Fashion Studies* (2013) for a range of approaches to fashion studies). It may well be that, for some, fashion will never be a legitimate object of enquiry, but its value as a platform for interrogating past and present societies no longer needs to be demonstrated. The outstanding quality of much of the work produced so far is a testament to its richness as a topic through which to engage with issues as varied and central as, for instance, identity politics, sustainability, technology, labour or globalization.

BEYOND FASHION, BESIDES EUROPE

Some scholars have focused on fashion as material culture, others on its symbolic dimension, but what brings their work together under the umbrella term 'fashion studies' is their attention to the social, cultural, political and economic underpinnings of fashion. Fashion studies is interested in studies of dress and clothing, and of their related systems and provisions of production, consumption and representation. Thus, although we agree with Eicher and Sumberg (1995) (after Roach-Higgins 1981, but see also Kawamura 2005) that fashion, dress and clothing are not synonymous, the journal does not intend to privilege one over the other. Rather, it will encompass a broad range of objects. Indeed, the term 'fashion studies' is often used as a shortcut for studies not only of fashion, defined here as the permanent and orchestrated renewal of material and symbolic culture, but also of dress, defined as 'modifications and supplements to the body, extending concern beyond apparel to allow appraisal of body and hair conformation, texture and color, scent and sound' (Eicher 1995a: ix). It also encompasses the study of clothing in the sense of dress as garment and its related systems of production and consumption.

A trilogy of words is also sometimes subsumed under the term 'fashion studies': style–fashion–dress, as in the work of Kaiser (2012) (after Tulloch 2010b), for instance, where style is used to underscore the agentist underpinnings of processes of identity construction through adornment, whether the latter is deemed fashionable or not (Tulloch 2010b). Thus, of her use of the hyphenated

'style-fashion-dress' Tulloch notes that it is aimed at drawing attention to the 'system of concepts that signifies the multitude of meanings and frame-works that are always "whole-and-part" of dress studies' (Tulloch 2010b: 275), and, one could add, of fashion studies. 'Costume' and 'textile' are two more words that can be seen as being covered by the term 'fashion studies', a term, then, that refers to a pluridisciplinary formation inclusive of a multiplicity of realms.

Given this complex mix of diverse research realms and objects, which are manifest in various guises across the world and across various communities, fashion studies cannot apply to a single, historically and geographically circumscribed event, object or practice. It extends well beyond the domain covered by the classic studies on fashion conceived as an expression of European modernity (Barthes 1967; Lehmann 2000; Lipovetsky 1987; Simmel 1905; Veblen 1994 [1899]). Indeed, understood as the rapid turnover of vestimentary styles prior to the material consumption of the garments expressing them, fashion is customarily considered by historians and sociologists to be an expression of European modernity, and therefore of the West (Wilson 1985: 3–5). In its turn, the fashion system – i.e. the integrated industrial system of clothing production which follows the cyclical rhythm dictated by the fashion weeks of the fashion capitals – is seen as a direct expression of western capitalism, a system which, in spite of ongoing processes of outsourcing and globalization, continues to manipulate the levers of economic and, above all, artistic control over fashion (Gilbert 2000). However, to argue that the term 'fashion' is specific to European culture or that the western fashion system has been dominant is not to say that it is the only one. Thus we concur with Craik in arguing that 'fashion should not be defined as exclusively the preserve of the culture of modernity but that other systems of fashion should be recognized and examined in their own terms' (Craik 2009: 19). This seems especially important at a time of increased globalization and of the rise of fashion players such as China, and has indeed been addressed by a range of authors (see, for instance, on China, Segre Reinach 2012).

Our desire to create a new journal was fuelled by the realization that, although fashion studies has brought together a wide range of texts, authors and approaches, more could be done to open up the field to the variety of perspectives any scholarly project is dependent on to thrive. In that respect, our desire to lower the barriers that hamper non-anglophone scholars from accessing the international field of fashion studies is only one aspect of a more extensive project: that of pluralizing the contributions that nourish fashion studies. Indeed, the predominance of the English language is also likely to entail a predominance of the English-speaking point of view. A point of view always indicates a view from a certain point already situated in space and time (Bourdieu 1984). The predominance of the English-speaking point of view implies a predominance of fundamentally Eurocentric values, interpretations (see also Taylor 2002) and, of course, objects of interest. Thus, as Baizerman et al. (1993: 103, but also see Burman and Turbin 2003) note: 'In the study of costume by European and American scholars [...] fashion and western dress have enjoyed privileged positions.' This is especially true of middle- and upper-class dress.

DECENTRALIZING FASHION STUDIES

In fact, there is a traditional dominance of the Euro-American approach in fashion studies that feeds on the dominance of the English language in the world of publishing, including academic publishing, as it does more

2. See, for instance, Akou (2007); Allman (2004); Bartlett (2010); Beng Huat (2000); Colchester (2003); Hansen and Madison (2013); Root (2005). See also the special issues of *Fashion Theory* (Craik and Black 2009; Moors and Tarlo 2007; Puwar and Bhatia 2003; Tulloch 2010a).
3. For instance, the twelve contributors to Allman (2004) are studying or teaching in North American universities (eleven in the USA and one in Canada); six out of eight contributors to Colchester (2003) are researching for European (British or French) institutions, one is a doctoral candidate at Columbia University, New York (USA) and one is a New Zealand artist; the fifteen contributors to Hansen and Madison (2013) are studying and teaching at US universities.

generally in the circulation of symbolic goods. In the last decades, it has been compounded by the status of English as the language of the Internet. This is not to deny the fact that much fashion studies has already started moving away from its Euro-American focus but to suggest that we wish to be more actively involved in supporting the internationalization of fashion studies.

The articulation of fashion studies around various research realms (dress, clothing, fashion, style, textiles) and the related interest in non-Euro-American cultures has been supported by a number of scholars.² By virtue of considering fashion in highly diverse historical and geographical contexts, their work contrasts with more traditional Eurocentric studies, which have tended to stress the role of change, mass acceptance and obsolescence in fashion (Roach Higgins and Eicher 1995: 10) defined as a product of capitalist western culture and economy (Allman 2004: 2–3). However, multiplicity of approaches and disciplinary affiliations notwithstanding, there is a feature common to many of the studies: they are the outputs of authors who have received their training and pursued their careers at European and American universities.³ Their knowledge and expertise, as well as their approach, have therefore been developed at institutions that cultivate the western scientific method. They have internalized its conventions and standards; they have joined the most accredited networks of scholars and research centres; and they have acquired the ability to fulfil the editorial requirements and expectations of those networks and institutions.

Thanks to its different peer-reviewing process, the *International Journal of Fashion Studies* aims to participate in the enrichment of the field by decentralizing it. Its opening up to studies written in the first language of their author should facilitate the inclusion of researchers who have received their training and pursued their careers in a variety of cultural and academic traditions and whose research should be of interest to fashion scholars across the world. For instance, in different research cultures, scientific traditions, research styles and writing rhetorics are used that may be perceived as extraneous to or contrasting with those included in the canon of Anglo-American science. This can result in the neglect and rejection of a number of works and the impoverishment of that canonical knowledge.

THE INHERENT PARADOX

However, inherent to our project is a paradox. On the one hand, the journal welcomes contributions by scholars situated outside both the anglophone world and western regions. On the other hand, it is embedded in a form of research and scientific publishing that originates from the West and carries on being informed by, and reproduces, 'western' norms and values. This paradox obviously entails the risk that conventions of the western-centred scientific system will be imposed on scholars wanting to join the international scientific community. There is no need to attribute this to an explicit will. The hegemony of the scientific discourse and its consolidated practices imposes itself in practice. For example, because it is assimilated as a 'habitus' (Bourdieu 2000 [1972]) by the peer reviewers of articles, who while doing their review cannot distance themselves from patterns of scientific discourse that they acquired during their socialization to the discipline. Thus, the peer reviewing is a bottleneck in the process of scientific knowledge production, and reviewers are the gatekeepers (Lewin 1947; White 1950) who support standards of action that are products of the West.

How, therefore, is it possible to practice fashion studies as part of a scientific tradition with disproportionately western roots so that its boundaries extend beyond Eurocentric culture? To answer this question we must refer to some key concepts of today's science studies. Let us think of science as an organized system of production of knowledge useful for life, including the humanities, the natural sciences and the social sciences. Science in general is not exclusively an expression of the western world (DeKosky and Allchin 2008). However, in Europe there has developed the particular phenomenon usually called *western science*. Its birth and its achievement have been bound up with the development of European modernity in two ways: because western science arose along with the development of basic cultural features of modernity in Europe (Gaukroger 2006); and because western science developed what is today's relatively homogeneous system of knowledge production in the nineteenth century as industrialization advanced (Felt, Nowotny and Taschwer 1995: 30–56).

A constant feature of the self-legitimizing rhetoric of western science is its appeal to the universal value of scientific knowledge. By claiming to produce knowledge valid for everybody, 'also for the Chinese' (Weber 1904: 31), western science apparently aspires to being by definition the universal model of all valid knowledge. Consequently, it is also claimed that western science is the *only* knowledge system able to grasp and precisely reconstruct the order present in nature. It is assumed to be the only true science. Yet many recent studies have highlighted the existence of a multiplicity of valid forms of knowledge in other cultures (Harding 2011: 151–262; Hart 1999). They have thus tied the universalist rhetoric to western culture, so that what from within that culture appears to be universal is in truth only such from the Eurocentric standpoint – that is, from a situated, local point of view. At the basis of postcolonial science and technology studies is the thesis that all knowledge systems, including that of western science, are locally situated (Harding 1998: 55–72). The success of western science is not due to its capacity to neutralize the sociocultural influences by which researchers are affected, and which risk invalidating their cognitive output, but rather to its capacity to neutralize some of those sociocultural aspects *while fully exploiting others* (Harding 1998: 7).⁴ Hence, science is subject to the same problematic issue that we saw in the case of fashion. In both cases it is necessary to dismiss the universalist claim typical of western modernity and learn to appreciate the richness of cultural diversity.

4. The specificity of western science has been amply described by the main historians of science of the past (Ben-David 1971; Bernal 1954). Only very recently, however, have studies on science shown that this specificity does not coincide with cultural aspects, with the ethos (Merton 1968) that scientists and their observatories have traditionally attributed to western science. This has come about with the birth of a significant corpus of postcolonial science and technology studies (for an overview see Figueroa and Harding 2003; Anderson and Adams 2007; Harding 2011; and the journals *Social Studies of Science*, 32: 5/6 [2002]; *Science and Culture*, 14: 2 [2005]; and *Postcolonial Studies*, 12: 4 [2009]).

SOME REASONS FOR A DIFFERENTLY PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL

Why, then, seize on a typical feature of western science, like peer review? We argue that peer review is not only an expression of the cultural framework of western science, but also a condition to break up the cultural closure of western science.

Several scholars have noticed that, if we try to define science itself, we must focus on its social dimension of 'public knowledge' (Bourdieu 2001; Gibbons *et al.* 1994; Ziman 1968). Publication and peer review are tangible expressions of this dimension: scientists consider it mandatory to publish the results of their research (Merton 1968: 610). John Ziman (2000: 34) notes that this custom has led to a 'notional archive' of scientific knowledge that is 'absolutely enormous' and accessible, in theory, to anyone. It consists of the entirety of scientific literature: books, journals, data published online. But the

larger an archive, the less accessible it is in practice. Two features of the archive of science seem therefore to contrast: on the one hand, in the archive knowledge claims are made public and preserved from vanishing; on the other, due to its huge dimensions it is also the 'graveyard' of scientific statements. Few of these survive a destiny of decay. They owe their endurance not to a sort of strength of their own, but to a meticulous system for classifying and retrieving the archive's knowledge claims, consisting of library catalogues, book indices, Internet search engines and especially that portion of the archive known as 'secondary literature'. The secondary literature therefore bears the heavy responsibility of selecting what part of the archive will be available over time. There can be no denying that the majority of the knowledge claimed since science began now lies buried and forgotten in the hidden spots of the archive of science. Only some of it has survived: the knowledge taken up by new knowledge claims. Collective memory, one might say, is the driving principle of science. The *prima facie* validity of research findings is determined not by research methods, linguistic devices or logic, but by the consensus of a community of scientists. The archive of science is not a generic depository. It is a depository of materials that have been filtered through processes of inter-subjective communication and evaluation.

In extremely broad outline, this is what distinguishes western science as such. Here the adjective 'western' denotes not so much the geographical origin or the cultural affiliation of this social system of knowledge production as its unique specificity – as if it were a label. By 'western science' we mean an institutional setting: the knowledge production system based on the dynamics of a big archive, wherever it has originated (though in fact it was born in the West), and wherever it operates (and it is currently active, albeit in a reticular manner, more or less throughout the world). Thus, joining western science is not necessarily equivalent to joining western culture, since it does not necessarily imply assuming the cultural stance of the society that developed it. Joining western science means joining an international community of scholars busy contributing to the game of saving knowledge claims from oblivion.

By questioning and redefining a dominant criterion for the submission of articles – their writing in English only – the aim of the *International Journal of Fashion Studies* is to create an open and hospitable environment for the reception and circulation of the work of fashion studies scholars. They will submit their texts trusting that they will be reviewed rigorously, as this is the condition for their knowledge claims to gain durability and reliability. At the same time they can trust that that rigour is not intended to exclude. We encourage authors not to feel constrained by the format of Anglo-American scientific standards, and reviewers to adopt an open attitude toward topics, methodologies and texts that offer the promise of a more inclusive field of fashion studies. Most of this work has to be carried out by authors, reviewers and scientific boards of the journal. As Editors we commit ourselves to function as gatekeepers, so that the project of the journal can be fulfilled.

We believe in the utility of an unitary, extensive, composite and cross-cultural field of fashion studies; a field aware that it is impossible to free itself from the cultural presuppositions of the knowledge produced; a field aware that it is impossible to produce valid knowledge by restricting itself within the confines of only one cultural (by virtue of its 'westernness') horizon. Yet it is still always *one* field, in which cultural cross-fertilization constantly stimulates the growth of knowledge, but a field, of course, whose boundaries are always challenged by the negotiating process regarding the knowledge claims

that are raised by scholars trained outside of the western scientific tradition and/or outside the disciplines that agree with the legitimizing standards of hard sciences and social sciences. Unity does not mean uniformity. It does not mean that a single cultural stance is superimposed onto others; it means that if different cultural stances want to be mutually relevant they have to meet and confront with one another in a single field.

For this reason, as a peer-reviewed journal, the *International Journal of Fashion Studies* expressly locates itself within the domain of western science. It is not confined to the cultural horizon of the West. Rather, it is integrated into the institutional field of western science as essentially constituted by the huge international archive of science. In fact, opting for peer review means opting, not for the universalist pretensions of western science, but for its solid intersubjective institutional structure, understood as a structure able to give solidity and durability to the knowledge claims put forward. We intend to assist non-English-speakers in publishing their work in English, so that (a) non-anglophone authors can access an international archive of fashion studies that extends beyond their archive; (b) the archive itself can expand; and (c) the discipline can be enriched with the new themes and knowledge that only a variety and coming together of points of view is able to produce.

POSTCOLONIAL FASHION STUDIES?

Modern anthropology has shown how to deal with our paradox, given that it has a similar one at the core of its disciplinary identity. The anthropologist's position in the ethnographic dialogue with other cultures, in fact, inevitably entails that his or her ethnographic endeavour – namely to understand and explain what is perceived as alien to the researcher's culture – arises in the context of western culture and science, and is its expression. The anthropological approach directs attention to two methodologically important aspects. On the one hand, it recognizes the inevitability of the ethnocentrism, albeit critical, of all scholars who have been trained or have worked in a cultural world with roots in the West. On the other hand, it highlights the need 'to inaugurate [...] systematic and explicit comparisons between the history of behaviours [observed in the ethnographic encounter] and the western cultural history embodied in the categories' used to observe such behaviours (De Martino 1977: 391). The systematic comparison between the history of western behaviours and that of the others' behaviours shows the reductionism of the superiority prejudice inherent to the western anthropological gaze (see also Geertz 1973). By so doing, western or westernized anthropologists assume the task of reforming the categories of observation (and classification) available when their research begins and ideally open the boundaries of western scientific method.

On the route pursued by anthropology one meets the domain of postcolonial studies. Although the *International Journal of Fashion Studies* is not programmatically concerned with studies produced in decolonized or postcolonial contexts, it is necessary to clarify our position in regard to a highly fertile debate ongoing in all sectors of the social sciences. This debate certainly has a major impact on a field of enquiry like fashion studies, whose objects are created and produced in all parts of the world and through processes in which relations of dominance and subordination have always been evident. According to Hulme,

the 'post' in 'postcolonial' has two dimensions that exist in tension with each other: a temporal dimension, in which there is a punctual

relationship in time between, for example, a colony and a postcolonial state, and a critical dimension in which, for example, postcolonial theory comes into existence through a critique of a body of theory analyzed as at least implicitly 'colonial' – with the concomitant recognition that the critique in part is made possible by the object of the critique.

(Hulme 1995: 121)

One may thus simply refer to the fact that the phenomena studied concern a historical period subsequent to the colonial age. Or one may refer to the fact that scholars adopt an approach that explicitly distances itself from the knowledge system dominant under colonialism. In both cases, the intention is to emphasize that the object of study takes shape adopting a critical stance towards the power systems (political, economic, social, religious) dominant during the colonial period. Authors like Chakrabarty (2007), Spivak (1999) and Bhabha (1994) try to find space for forms of knowledge alternative to the western one, although with different approaches. Chakrabarty (2007), for example, acknowledges that geographical and historical situations influence the way the knowledge models of the cultures dominant under colonialism are experienced and further developed by scholars originating from decolonized countries. Spivak (1999) instead denounces the impossibility of a speaking stance to develop a discourse outside of the knowledge models and scientific traditions imposed by colonial institutions. In fashion studies, this can generate theoretical and rhetorical conflicts on what constitutes fashion. As shown above (section 3) several scholars have challenged the idea that fashion has a specific geo-political identity (modern European). They question what artefacts should be included in fashion, and what relations can be established between, on the one hand, dress, clothing and textiles as aspects of material culture, and, on the other, fashion as a system of creation, production and consumption inscribed in the capitalist economy (see, for instance, Craik 1993; Roach-Higgins et al. 1995).

The literature produced on these themes in the past fifteen years shows that it is difficult to find a unitary perspective able to address the social and cultural complexity of phenomena to do with dress. However, postcolonial studies have furnished a useful framework for this work. They have highlighted the need to avoid reductionism and binary oppositions (western/ethnic, for example). They have acknowledged the agency of differences and the coexistence of diversities (Bhabha 1994) within the creation, production and consumption of clothes and fashion. They have also recognized the effects of hybridization on a global scale produced by the overlap between European-American influences and other cultures that Appadurai (1996) has aptly illustrated with the image of flows and scapes.

Put extremely briefly, postcolonial studies teach that an overly sharp distinction between what is an expression of a non-European local culture and what is produced by the western economic and cultural system is unjustified and misleading. There is no postcolonial culture that can be 'purged' of colonial influences. As Stuart Hall (1996) emphasizes, critical thinking in postcolonial terms can never ignore the history of the colonization and decolonization of a territory, a community or the phenomena studied. It is therefore not a matter of moving from 'a regime of power-knowledge [imposed by the colonizers] into some powerless and conflict-free time zone' of a purportedly ideal postcolonial condition. Rather, 'some other related but as yet emergent new configuration of power-knowledge relations are beginning to exert their

distinctive and specific effects' (Hall 1996: 254). In other words, postcolonial identity is constituted by moving beyond the colonial power-knowledge regime, but only after it has been *reflexively* metabolized and converted into a set of resources for knowledge and agency. This is also the approach taken by some of the most interesting recent fashion studies on the phenomena of dress, clothing, textiles and emergent fashion in various regions of the world (see, for instance, Hendrickson 1996). They exemplify a new configuration between dominance and subordination at various levels such as the economic and entrepreneurial (Rabine 2002), the religious/ethno-religious (Lewis 2007; 2013), or at the level of gender (see, for example, articles in Allman 2004; Burman and Turbin 2003).

CONCLUSION

In creating a journal whose title includes 'Fashion Studies' we are well aware that we are contributing to the institutionalization of this still elusive academic field and therefore participate in its definition and the shaping of its boundaries. Our intention is not to limit its remit. Rather, it is to support its decentring and to promote the circulation as well as the plurality of discussions and analyses across disciplines, regions and languages. It is hoped that the original peer-reviewing process we have put into place will help us achieve those goals. Anyone who has edited a journal will know that their work rests on the goodwill of scholars to review the works submitted. With the ever-increasing workload most academics seem to be experiencing, finding peer reviewers can be a challenge. Finding them from a variety of languages can be even more demanding. Our journal will take time to build and consolidate but, thanks to the crucial cooperation of our boards and the enthusiasm of our existing network of peer reviewers we are confident it is not a utopic project. We invite our readers to support us in this and spread the word. We are eager to receive your feedback and invite you to get in touch with us if you have any recommendations and suggestions, and of course, if you wish to submit an article or would be willing to act as a peer reviewer in a particular language.

Finally, to support the internationalization of fashion studies we also want to facilitate the circulation of information amongst fashion scholars. To do so, we have put into place a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/fashionstudies>). We wish it to be a communal platform and repository for the promotion of fashion studies related events across the world. Once again we invite you to contact us if you wish to publicize a call for papers, an exhibition or any event that you feel should be of interest to fashion scholars.

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