

## Theodor W. Adorno on the Aesthetic Truth and Untruth of Fashion

Stefano Marino  
University of Bologna

### Abstract

This article is focused on Theodor W. Adorno's critical interpretation of the truth and untruth of fashion, as it emerges from his influential *Aesthetic Theory*, in relation to some fundamental categories of his thought that can be derived from his most important writings, such as *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (co-authored with Max Horkheimer), *Minima Moralia*, *Prisms*, and *Negative Dialectics*. Although Adorno cannot be said to be a systematic theorist of fashion, nonetheless some paragraphs of his unfinished and posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory* clearly testify his interest in this topic. However, little attention has been paid yet to Adorno's philosophical account of fashion, which was clearly influenced by the general approach of his critical theory of society. It is important to take into consideration this aspect of Adorno's aesthetic thinking to understand his views of the relation between fashion, art, and the culture industry. Moreover, an analysis of fashion as a site of intersection between Adorno's aesthetics and his rejection of the culture industry, and a reconstruction of Adorno's critical theory of fashion from his brief writings on the subject, is also useful to prompt a re-evaluation of other aspects of Adorno's thought, including his unique conception of truth as dialectically interwoven with its opposite (namely, untruth).

**Keywords:** Theodor W. Adorno, aesthetics, critical theory, culture industry, fashion.

### 1. Fashion, Critical theory, Culture industry

The present contribution is focused on the aesthetics of fashion in relation to Theodor W. Adorno's philosophy and, in particular, his conception of truth (inscribed in the general context of his critical theory of society) as dialectically interwoven with its opposite, namely untruth. It is my goal in

this article to reconstruct an Adornian critical perspective on fashion through a dialectical reading of fragmented passages on this theme in his *Aesthetic Theory* and other writings. I will present an analysis of fashion as a site of intersection between Adorno's critical aesthetics and his rejection of the culture industry, and show how this can also prompt a re-evaluation of other aspects of Adorno's thought (including his conception of the dialectical relation between truth and untruth).

At first sight the readers might perhaps consider this connection between fashion and Adorno's thinking as a strange and problematic one. Indeed, references to fashion are not particularly frequent in Adorno's writings and, differently from Simmel, Benjamin, Fink, Barthes, Bourdieu or Lipovetsky, Adorno cannot be said to be a systematic theorist of fashion. This fact, in itself, is *not* particularly surprising, because it is well known that, at a general level, "[t]he question of fashion is not a fashionable one among intellectuals" (Lipovetsky 1994, 3), especially in the field of philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

Beside this, it must be noted that, on some of the occasions in which Adorno referred to the very notion of fashion, his use of this term was explicitly critical, for instance in those cases in which Adorno aimed to criticize a certain phenomenon precisely by defining it a mere "fashion." A clear example can be seen in the title of Adorno's last essay on jazz, "Perennial Fashion – Jazz" from 1953.<sup>2</sup> Here, indeed, the concept of fashion is somehow understood by Adorno more as a general dynamic within culture than as a specific field of cultural practice, and in this sense, it is intentionally used by him to immediately clarify his critical stance against jazz as a musical genre. As Adorno polemically observes:

For almost fifty years the productions of jazz have remained as ephemeral as seasonal styles (*so ephemere, als währte es eine Saison*). Jazz is a form of manneristic interpretation. As with fashions what is important is show, not the thing itself (*geht es um Aufmachung und nicht um die Sache*); instead of jazz itself being composed, "light" music, the most dismal products of the popular-song industry, is dressed up. [...] Considered as a whole, the perennial sameness (*Immergleichheit*) of jazz consists not in a basic organization of the material within which the imagination can roam freely and without inhibition, as within an articulate language, but rather in the utilization of certain well-defined tricks, formulas and clichés: to the

exclusion of everything else. It is as though one were to cling convulsively to the “latest thing” (*Reiz des en vogue*) and deny the image of a particular year by refusing to tear off the page of the calendar. Fashion enthrones itself as something lasting (*als Bleibendes*) and thus sacrifices the dignity of fashion, its transience. [...] Jazz sets up schemes of social behaviour to which people must in any case conform. Jazz enables them to practise those forms of behaviour, and they love it all the more for making the inescapable easier to bear. Jazz reproduces its own mass-basis, without thereby reducing the guilt of those who produce it. The eternity of fashion is a vicious circle (Adorno 1997, 121-2, 126).

It is also important to note that fashion notoriously belongs to the wide domain of the culture industry: indeed, it is considered today as one of the most powerful and most influential cultural and creative industries of our time, and we frequently speak of fashion precisely in terms of “fashion industry” or also “fashion system” (see Barthes 1990, 226-93). As is well known, however, for Adorno the domain of the culture industry is basically the realm of sameness<sup>3</sup> and the perennial repetition of the identical: i.e., the repetition of standardized and pseudo-individualized products, aimed to be passively consumed by the viewers and the listeners in a distracted mode of perception. According to Adorno’s critical analysis, the processes of the culture industry definitely favor the transformation of culture into a sort of “social cement” (Adorno 2009a, 315-9) that is ideologically functional to the consolidation of the “social context which induces blindness” that he and Horkheimer famously called the “administered world” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 33, XI-XII). So, according to Adorno, the culture industry plays a relevant role in the definition, organization and consolidation of today’s “total society” (Adorno 1997, 33), which is based for him on the triumph of alienation, commodification and reification.<sup>4</sup>

On this basis, as I said before, the readers could reasonably expect that, for Adorno, also fashion – like popular music and other aesthetic practices belonging to the culture industry – simply and one-sidedly falls into the realm of phenomena that are immediately part of contemporary society, understood as “a whole that is not the true but the untrue, the absolute opposite of justice.” (Adorno 1993, 31) However, although fashion, as part of the culture industry and the

administered society, is surely affected for Adorno by a strong component of untruth, it is also interesting to note that sometimes his views on this topic are more mediated, articulated and nuanced than it may seem at first sight. So, quite unexpectedly, in a few intriguing passages of Adorno's writings, it is possible to find what we may call a defense of fashion's aesthetic *truth*, although always understood as dialectically interwoven with its own *untruth*.

## 2. Fashion, Transience, Appearance

Apropos of what we may call the particular truth of fashion (although for Adorno, as I said, in the midst of its general untruth, as part of the untruth of the culture industry as a whole), a brief but stimulating hint can be found in a passage of the aforementioned essay "Perennial Fashion – Jazz." Here, indeed, Adorno assimilates jazz to a mere musical fashion and one of the various genres of modern "popular music" (rather than a form of "serious music" [Adorno 1976, 21-38]), and then criticizes jazz because, according to him, it tends to disguise itself. In fact, for Adorno, jazz presents itself as a modernist musical genre and eventually "enthrones itself as something lasting," thus sacrificing what he surprisingly defines "the dignity of fashion, its transience (*die Würde der Mode, die ihrer Vergänglichkeit*)" (Adorno 1997, 122). This passage from Adorno's 1953 essay on jazz thus seems to identify what we may call the essence of fashion with the element of transience; then, on this basis, it seems to legitimize fashion, arriving to speak of its dignity.

Now, the fact of identifying the very nature of fashion with transience is not something particularly new or original: namely, it is not something that we can only find in Adorno's aforementioned observations. Indeed, the association of the concept itself of fashion with transience is quite common in the field of fashion studies, including philosophical researches on fashion. Some classical authors in this field, like Lipovetsky, have famously thematized and stressed the strict relation between fashion and the transient, the contingent, the ephemeral and the "enchantment of appearances" (Lipovetsky 1994, 15-87). Beside such classical readings in fashion theory,<sup>5</sup>

if we look at more recent philosophical contributions on fashion it is possible to cite, apropos of this topic, Lars Svendsen's claim that "[t]he nature of fashion is to be transient" (Svendsen 2006, 31).<sup>6</sup> Following Elena Esposito's philosophical and sociological investigation of fashion, we can add that fashion is intrinsically characterized by the element of transitoriness and contingency, or more precisely by the "fascination of contingency" (Esposito 2017).<sup>7</sup> Giovanni Matteucci, for his part, has stressed the dimension of ephemerality that essentially characterizes fashion as a unique aesthetic practice (see Matteucci 2017a).<sup>8</sup>

Anyway, for the delimited and specific purposes of the present contribution (strictly focused on Adorno's aesthetics, although with potential connections with the ideas of some contemporary fashion theorists) what matters the most is that Adorno's philosophical recognition of the particular dignity of fashion, residing in the latter's emphasis on transience, can be connected to some fundamental aspects of his entire philosophy that are related to the dimensions of the transient, the contingent, the transitory and the ephemeral. Some passages of Adorno's mature theoretical masterpiece, *Negative Dialectics* (1966), are especially noteworthy and intriguing in this context. Here, indeed, Adorno famously defines negative dialectics as a form of thinking that expresses "solidarity [with] metaphysics at the time of its fall" (Adorno 2004, 408; on this concept, see Wellmer 2006). This fascinating idea can be interpreted in different ways: for example, as an expression of philosophical solidarity with the "ephemeral traces of freedom" (Adorno 2004, 274) that still persist in a world that generally tends to deny and repress freedom<sup>9</sup>: namely, in an unfree and untrue world, in which living a right life, for Adorno, has become almost impossible.<sup>10</sup>

Other passages from *Negative Dialectics* can also be cited here, in order to support and expand this discourse. For example, there are various noteworthy passages of *Negative Dialectics* which emphatically clarify the unique attitude of negative dialectics towards metaphysics: here Adorno underlines the contrast between the traditional metaphysical search for supposedly stable, necessary and eternal certainties, *on the one hand*, and negative dialectics' attempt to rescue the

significance of semblance<sup>11</sup> and “ephemeral life (*Leben des Ephemerem*)” (Adorno 2004, 156), and the relevance of contingent qualities that have been “dismissed as transitory and insignificant” by traditional metaphysical thinking and “ephemeral objects not yet overdetermined by intentions” (Adorno 2004, 8, 17), *on the other hand*. It is especially important, in this context, to cite a significant remark from the opening sentence of the section “Meditations on Metaphysics” at the end of *Negative Dialectics*, where Adorno poignantly claims that “[w]e cannot say any more that the immutable is truth, and that the mobile, transitory is appearance. The mutual indifference of temporality and eternal ideas is no longer tenable” (Adorno 2004, 361).

With regard to this, it must be underlined that, in the case of a philosopher like Adorno, suspicious and skeptical of *every* form of thinking inclined to a hypostatization, ontologization and consequential de-historicization of the phenomena taken into examination, the aforementioned emphasis on the notions of transience and contingency does *not* mean to hypostatize these concepts as essential features of fashion in an unhistorical way. In fact, this might lead to deny the importance of the historical conditions of such an attribution and the historically variable ways in which fashion can embody the dimension of transience in different times and diverse contexts – and this would be erroneous for a philosopher, like Adorno, who puts a great emphasis on the component of historicity. Such a great emphasis on historicity and the temporal character of *all* phenomena eventually leads Adorno to theorize in his 1958 *Vorlesung* on dialectics, in contrast to *every* conception of truth “as something essentially timeless” that “remains identical to itself,” an idea of truth which takes “historical determinations up into itself”: namely, “the idea that truth itself possesses a temporal core, or [...] that time exists in truth” (Adorno 2017, 13-14).

Adorno’s negative-dialectical thinking convincingly shows how the aforementioned dimensions of the transient, the contingent, the ephemeral and the transitory acquire a unique dialectical and, so to speak, post-metaphysical relevance in the age of the fall of traditional metaphysics. In employing vast,

complex and multilayered concepts such as “metaphysical” or “post-metaphysical,” it is important to note that a fundamental role in Adorno’s critical understanding of metaphysics is played by the idea that *all* the main metaphysical systems of the Western tradition have been characterized by the use of “concepts in a strong sense” and by the search for the “ultimate ground of being” (Adorno 2001, 4, 9). “All metaphysics,” for Adorno, “aims at something objective (*ein Objektives*)” (Adorno 2001, 189).

In the first part of *Negative Dialectics* this idea is expressed through the fitting formula of an “ontological need” (Adorno 2004, 61-96) that has unified various metaphysical conceptions from ancient times until the twentieth century. In this context, a special role is played by what we may call the question of meaning. In fact, for Adorno, in the Western tradition the metaphysical presumption to be able to conceptually grasp “the truly existent” (Adorno 2001, 9) has been typically connected to the idea “that what is [is] meaningful (*daß das was ist ein Sinnvolles sei*),” i.e., “the assertion that what is has meaning (*die Behauptung eines Sinnes dessen was da ist*)” (Adorno 2001, 103-4). However, for Adorno, after Auschwitz “[s]uch an interpretation of meaning (*Konstruktion von Sinn*) is no longer possible,” so that he famously and dramatically arrives to speak of the “impossibility of restoring meaning to existence” today (Adorno 2001, 105, 114).<sup>12</sup> According to Adorno, indeed, “from the postulate that life in a world without meaning cannot be endured,” metaphysicians typically tend to draw the *wrong* conclusion that “a meaning must be constructed,” because, after all, there must be some kind of ultimate metaphysical meaning in life: it is thus the “supposition of a meaning on the sole grounds there must be one since otherwise one could not live,” namely, for Adorno, the “supposition of a meaning as a *lie*” (Adorno 2001, 105-6).

As a conclusion of this section, before proceeding with my analysis of some passages of Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory* that testify his critical interest in fashion, it can be interesting to connect this discourse with some recent philosophical accounts of fashion that suggest to understand the logic of fashion on the

basis of the so-called “principle of the new” (Svendsen 2006, 21-35). This principle can be defined as the inexorable law according to which something old must constantly be replaced by something new, which, in turn, will soon become old and will be unceasingly be replaced by something else, and so on. A conception like this strengthens the idea that fashion embodies in a radical, explicit and *sui generis* way the dimensions of the transient, the contingent, the ephemeral and the transitory.

Various fashion theorists have powerfully stressed the dynamical nature of fashion, based on the accentuation (and, indeed, the radicalization) of the value of appearance, transience, change and fleetingness. For example, according to Elizabeth Wilson (2003, 3), “in all societies the body is ‘dressed’, and everywhere dress and adornment play symbolic, communicative and aesthetic roles,” so that the phenomenon of *clothing*, at a general level, can be defined as a sort of universal human phenomenon. However, for Wilson, in the modern age “[w]hat is added to dress as we ourselves know it [...] is *fashion*,” which is “something qualitatively new and different. Fashion is dress in which the key feature is rapid and continual changing of styles. Fashion, in a sense, *is* change” (Wilson 2003, 3). Following Wilson, and further developing her theses, one is tempted to suggest that what is characteristic of modern fashion – understood here at the level of its intrinsic logic – is change without a *telos*, without a fundamental ground or reason, without a final aim or purpose: namely, change only based on a pure play with transitory, contingent and ephemeral appearances. I have previously cited Giovanni Matteucci’s philosophical account of fashion as the “appearance of the ephemeral” (Matteucci 2017a, 66). Following Matteucci, and further radicalizing his ideas, one is tempted to define fashion not only as the “ephemeral emergence of sense” (Matteucci 2017a, 70), but also as the final disintegration of sense as such, at least in the way in which sense has been mostly conceived in the Western metaphysical tradition.

In his famous essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility* from 1935-1936, Walter Benjamin famously identified the potential and the actual significance of contemporary art (especially photography and



film) with the latter's "destructive, cathartic side: the liquidation of the value of tradition in the cultural heritage," associated by Benjamin to what he called the "decay" or "destruction" of aura: in fact, "what withers in the age of the technological reproducibility of the work of art," for Benjamin, "is the latter's aura" (Benjamin 2008, 22-3). *Mutatis mutandis*, it is possible to apply a similar interpretive scheme to fashion, in relation to its "destruction" or "liquidation" of the belief in the existence of beauty ideals, standards of taste and aesthetic meanings that are supposed to be absolute, necessary and eternal: that is, non-transitory, non-contingent and not destined to quickly age and be replaced by something else in the brief timespan of a season. In my view, it is precisely in these fundamental features of fashion that it is possible to identify what we may call the *aesthetic nihilism of fashion*.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. Fashion, Art, Truth content

In the previous sections I have attempted to establish some connections between fashion, understood from a philosophical perspective, and Adorno's dialectical thinking, mostly focusing my attention on such writings and lecture courses as *Negative Dialectics*, *Minima Moralia*, *Hegel Three Studies*, *Prisms*, and *Metaphysics: Concept and Problems*. In the third and final section of my article, although maintaining my focus on some of the dimensions that have been examined before (the transient, the ephemeral, the transitory, the contingent, etc.), I will shift my attention in a more precise way on Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*.<sup>14</sup>

In fact, although fashion *cannot* be said to be one of the main topics of Adorno's posthumous *opus magnum*, it is nonetheless possible to find two paragraphs in his *Aesthetic Theory* that offer some stimulating remarks on the dialectics between art and fashion, and their respective truth and untruth.<sup>15</sup> For Adorno, indeed, there is *not* a sharp and abstract opposition between the true and the untrue, but rather a complex relation of co-implication, interweavement and sometimes dialectical reversal of the former into the latter (or vice-versa).<sup>16</sup> In a somehow comparable way, in his *Vorlesung* on aesthetics from 27 January 1959 Adorno observes that also

in the case of the relation between fashion and art “we are generally taught [...] to simply oppose the concept of fashion to the concept of art,” but on closer inspection this view risks to appear “a too primitive and too undialectical perspective” (Adorno 2009b, 277).<sup>17</sup>

In the first of the two paragraphs of *Aesthetic Theory* dedicated to fashion – a passage from the section “On the Differentiation of Progress,” in the chapter “Toward a Theory of the Artwork” – Adorno assumes as his starting point the fundamental question concerning the “truth content of artworks, on which their rank ultimately depends”: Adorno argues that the latter, on the one hand, “is historical right into its innermost cell (*bis ins Innerste geschichtlich*),” but, on the other hand, must *not* be simply understood as “related to history in such a fashion that it, and thus the rank of artworks, simply varies with time” (Adorno 2002a, 191). In fact, “such variation takes place,” as Adorno explains, and “artworks of quality [...] are able to strip themselves of their outer layers in the course of history (*durch Geschichte sich zu entblättern*)”; however, in this process the truth content of artworks, i.e., what we may call their intrinsic value, “does not fall prey to historicism” (Adorno 2002a, 191). For Adorno, indeed, “[h]istory is immanent to artworks,” but at the same time it is *not* “an external fate or fluctuating estimation”; rather, the truth content of art, if properly understood, “becomes historical by the objectivation of correct consciousness in the work” (Adorno 2002a, 191).

On this basis, in this paragraph of *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno investigates the delicate question concerning the definition of the “criterion of the most progressive consciousness” in the field of art: for Adorno, the latter actually consists in the “level of productive forces in the work, part of which, in the age of art’s constitutive reflectedness, is the position that consciousness takes socially” (Adorno 2002a, 191). According to Adorno, as the “materialization of the most progressive consciousness, which includes the productive critique of the given aesthetic and extra-aesthetic situation,” the truth content of artworks can be defined as “the unconscious writing of history (*bewußtlose Geschichts-*

*schreibung*) bound up with what has until now been repeatedly vanquished” (Adorno 2002a, 191-2).

It is precisely at this point that the question of fashion comes into play. In fact, after having emphasized the dimension of what is progressive and new in art, Adorno specifies that “what is progressive is never so obvious as the innervation of fashion would like to dictate” (Adorno 2002a, 192). Indeed, also this element, like *every* other aspect or dimension in the field of art, “has need of reflection,” and ultimately the “determination of what is progressive (*Entscheidung übers Fortgeschrittensein*)” involves the state of theory as a whole, for the decision cannot be resolved on the basis of isolated elements” (Adorno 2002a, 192).

Now, the principle of the new, that I have previously cited apropos of fashion, has been also one of the guiding principles of the development of aesthetic modernism and avant-garde art. Reinterpreting (or, so to speak, refashioning) Arthur Rimbaud’s famous aphorism, according to which “One must be absolutely modern (*Il faut être absolument moderne*),” one is tempted to say that the basic spirit of aesthetic modernism was: “Art must be absolutely new.” In the specific context of the present contribution, it is noteworthy that the role of “the new (*das Neue*),” as a guiding principle of the development of twentieth century avant-garde art, was masterfully exemplified by Adorno’s philosophical interpretation of the adventures of the “new music (*neue Musik*)” of Schönberg, Berg, Webern and other composers of the twentieth century (Adorno 2006; see also Adorno 2002b). With regard to this, it is interesting to note that Benjamin in his unfinished *Arcades Project* – which Adorno held in high esteem, arriving to consider it as “*prima philosophia* in [his] own particular sense” (Adorno and Benjamin 1999, 83)<sup>18</sup> – had importantly spoken of the spectacle of a “true dialectical theater of fashion,” identifying the latter in “the unique self-construction of the newest in the medium of what has been” (Benjamin 1999, 64).

In this context, the relevance conferred to “the new” might appear at first sight as something that modern fashion and avant-garde art have in common and share. However, as

has been explained by contemporary art theorists like Yves Michaud (2003), the basic project and the gradual development of twentieth century avant-garde art was generally guided by an idea of change that was aimed to disclose new revolutionary possibilities for artistic experimentation. In the field of avant-garde art the exploration of new paths could eventually lead to the creation of profound, and sometimes even abyssal, masterpieces. That was the age that Adorno emphatically called “the heroic years of modern art (*den heroischen Zeiten der neuen Kunst*)” (Adorno 2002a, 159).<sup>19</sup> Instead, if we turn our attention to fashion – especially taking into consideration its recent transformations from *haute couture* to *prêt-à-porter* up to the contemporary regime of *fast fashion* – one is tempted to agree with Svendsen’s critical diagnosis, when he observes that fashion

is not “more profound” than calling for change for the sake of change. [...] Beauty in fashion [is] not to find an attraction in something eternal, and not at all in any functionality, but in sheer temporality. [...] The insistence on originality was the mantra of the artistic avant-garde. [...] It is, however, possible to claim that the cultivation of novelty by the avant-garde was fueled by the aim of creating the definitively new that could not be surpassed by anything even newer, and that as such it did not completely embrace the logic of fashion. [...] Fashion would basically seem never to have been subject to this illusion and has, if anything, always foreseen that everything new will soon be surpassed by something even newer. [...] A fashion object does not *in principle* need any particular qualities apart from being new. (Svendsen 2006, 27-9)

Although not exactly in these terms, a similar consideration also surfaces in the aforementioned passage of *Aesthetic Theory*. Here, indeed, after having compared fashion and art with regard to the criterion of “what is progressive,” Adorno observes that “Rimbaud’s *Il faut être absolument moderne*, itself modern, remains normative”; however, “because art’s temporal nucleus is not its thematic actuality but its immanent organization (*ihre immanente Durchbildung*),” Rimbaud’s famous statement “finds its resonance in what is in a certain sense an unconscious impulse of disgust for the musty and stagnant. The capacity (*Organ*) for sensing this,” Adorno explains, “is bound up with what is anathema to cultural conservatism: fashion” (Adorno 2002a, 192). At this point,

having paid attention to the question of the *truth content of art*, and having mentioned fashion as an aesthetic phenomenon that has tight connections with modern art (although in complex and sometimes contorted ways), Adorno explicitly mentions the question of the *truth content of fashion*. In fact, Adorno observes that fashion

has its truth as the unconscious consciousness of the temporal nucleus of art (*als bewußtloses Bewußtsein des Zeitkerns von Kunst*) [...]. Great artists since Baudelaire have conspired with fashion; if they denounced it, these denunciations were given the lie by the impulses of their own work. Although art resists fashion when it seeks to level art heteronomously, it is allied with it in its instinct for the historical moment and in its aversion to provincialism and the subaltern, the refusal of which delineates the only humanly worthy concept of artistic niveau (*den einzigen menschenwürdigen Begriff künstlerischen Niveaus*) (Adorno 2002a, 192).

*On the one hand*, because of its heteronomous character and its dependency on business, fashion takes part to the affirmative lie of conformist and commodified mass culture,<sup>20</sup> which is emphatically defined by Adorno as the veritable “adversary [of] avant-garde art”: indeed, the latter for him “serve[s] truth,” unlike the products of the culture industry that merely represent “the aesthetic equivalent of power” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 101, 103). *On the other hand*, however, Adorno also recognizes that the idea of fashion – understood at a strictly aesthetic level and aside from the fact that, in reality, fashion is usually “manipulated by the culture industry” – possesses a specific truth content, which makes it possible to consider it as an ally of modern art “in its instinct for the historical moment” (Adorno 2002a, 192).

Although with different accentuations and nuances, more or less the same motifs (including this twofold evaluation of fashion as both untrue and true) also recur in the second passage of *Aesthetic Theory* dedicated to fashion, which is included in the aphoristic section of the book entitled “Paralipomena.” Here, indeed, Adorno assumes as his starting point the question of the relation between autonomy and heteronomy in art and aesthetic experience. As is well known, this is one of the fundamental questions of *Aesthetic Theory* in its entirety. As Adorno observes, “[i]n the face of the obvious

dependency of fashion on the profit motive and its embeddedness in capitalist industry (*Verfilzung mit dem kapitalistischen Betrieb*) [...] fashion in art is no less corruptible than the zeal of ideological art agents who transform every apology into advertisement” (Adorno 2002a, 315-6).<sup>21</sup> However, notwithstanding this component of dependency on profit and hence of untruth (in terms of a secret complicity with the “untrue whole” of contemporary society and its most powerful agent, the culture industry), for Adorno there is also a component of fashion that “makes it worth salvaging” (Adorno 2002a, 316). In fact, there is a sort of particular truth content in fashion, which requires to be adequately emphasized and valorized, and which consists in the fact that,

though [fashion] hardly denies its complicity with the profit system, it is itself disdained by that system. By suspending aesthetic values such as those of inwardness, timelessness, and profundity (*Innerlichkeit, Zeitlosigkeit, Tiefe*), fashion makes it possible to recognize the degree to which the relation of art to these qualities, which are by no means above suspicion, has become a pretext. Fashion is art’s permanent confession that it is not what it claims to be. For its indiscreet betrayals fashion is as hated as it is a powerful force in the system; its double character (*Doppelcharakter*) is a blatant symptom of its antinomy. Fashion cannot be separated from art as neatly as would suit bourgeois art religion. Ever since the aesthetic subject polemically distanced itself from society and its prevailing spirit, art communicates with this objective spirit, however untrue it is, through fashion. Fashion is certainly [...] entirely manipulated and in no way a direct adaptation to the demands of the marketplace, even if these demands are sedimented in it and the consensus of the marketplace is still requisite for fashion to succeed. Because, however, manipulation in the age of monopoly capitalism is itself the prototype of ruling social relations of production, fashion’s *octroi* itself represents a socially objective power (*ein gesellschaftlich Objektives*). If, in one of the most remarkable passages of his *Aesthetics*, Hegel defined the task of art as the appropriation of the alien (*das Fremde*), fashion – doubtful of any possibility of such spiritual reconciliation – appropriates alienation (*Entfremdung*) itself. For fashion, alienation becomes the living model of a social being-thus-and-not-otherwise, to which it surrenders as if in ecstasy. If it is not to betray itself, art must resist fashion, but it must also innervate fashion in order not to make itself blind to the world, to its own substance (*Sachgehalt*) (Adorno 2002a, 316).<sup>22</sup>

The truth content of fashion, according to this passage of Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, paradoxically seems to reside in its extreme openness and frankness (also in comparison to modern art) in letting emerge the universal untruth of our society, in which the profit system and manipulation have now become "the prototype of ruling social relations of production," without falsely embellishing the horrible truth of the contemporary world, but rather daring to show "what is" (i.e., the existing reality), as it really is. Instead than dishonestly pretending that, in the age of the triumph of heteronomy and unfreedom, there is still something that can be *entirely* autonomous, *absolutely* free and *completely* capable to escape the power of manipulation, alienation and reification, for Adorno fashion transparently presents itself as "entirely manipulated," even arriving to "appropriate alienation itself."

For a rigorous critical theorist like Adorno, the honest confession of its *untruth* represents the particular and, so to speak, paradoxical *truth* of fashion. In comparison to other fields of contemporary culture that falsely pretend to be not complicit in, and not compromised with, the untruth of what exists, fashion vice-versa celebrates the power of appearance with its shining and scintillating sequence of "superficial changes that in reality have no other assignment than to make the object superfluous on the basis of non-essential qualities" (Svendsen 2006, 27). Nietzsche famously (and critically) defined truth as a set of "illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are" (Nietzsche 1976, 46): namely, as a group of lies that have been enhanced and embellished in order to be disguised as something else than mere lies.<sup>23</sup> Metaphorically speaking, we can say that, from an Adornian perspective, fashion is a liar that, differently from other liars that dishonestly proclaim to be honest, true and authentic, does *not* conceal its real nature: indeed, it lucidly and candidly presents itself as one of the harbingers of the existing world, which for Adorno is a world entirely built on lies.

This discourse plays an important role in a normative and prescriptive (rather than merely descriptive) aesthetic theory like Adorno's. In fact, what has previously emerged shows that fashion can serve as a positive warning for art, or at

least for those artworks that heroically intend to resist (to the extent that this is still possible today) to the influence of “the affirmative character of art,” which, “under the dictates of the culture industry, [...] has become omnipresent” (Adorno 1992, 250). From this point of view, fashion is an influential aesthetic practice of our time that, in an age of globalization<sup>24</sup> and of widespread aestheticization (and commodification) like ours,<sup>25</sup> does *not* conceal its real status of aesthetic commodity: for this reason, for Adorno fashion is functional to permanently reminding us that also art can *never* consider itself absolutely guaranteed and a priori free from the risk of being influenced by processes of manipulation, standardization and commercialization. This is a risk that today is more present than ever, in the age in which even the works of some of the most celebrated artists testify the “aesthetic dimension of commodity form” and the fact that “commodity’s social performativity is necessarily carried out within an aesthetic medium” (Vitali 2024).

It is exactly for this reason that Adorno penetratingly defines fashion as “art’s permanent confession that it is not what it claims to be” (Adorno 2002a, 316). On this basis, it is not surprising that Adorno, in the final passages of the paragraph on fashion in the “Paralipomena” section of *Aesthetic Theory*, makes specific reference to “[r]adically oppositional art,” which is animated by the ambition to ruthlessly renounce “everything heterogeneous to it” and, “in its ruthlessness (*Rücksichtslosigkeit*),” denounces

the fiction of a subject existing purely for-itself, the disastrous illusion of a strictly self-engaging integrity that usually functions to hide a provincial pharisaism. In the age of the growing powerlessness of subjective spirit vis-a-vis social objectivity, fashion registers the alien excess of objectivity in subjective spirit, which is painful yet all the same a corrective of the illusion that subjective spirit exists purely within itself. Against its detractors, fashion’s most powerful response is that it participates in the individual impulse, which is saturated with history. (Adorno 2002a, 316)

According to Adorno, if art aims to preserve today at least a part of its autonomy in a heteronomous society (and hence a part of its truth in an untrue world), it must *not* falsely pretend to be completely safe and totally immune from the



influence of the guiding tendencies that (regrettably) determine the *Zeitgeist* of the contemporary age. At the same time, differently from fashion (that, for its part, accepts and even enthusiastically exhibits its “embeddedness in the market”), for Adorno art must *not* resign itself to merely mirror and replicate the existing world. Rather, for Adorno, artworks that still aim to be ambitiously provided with an adequate truth content must learn to stand their ground and must function as the “antithesis of empirical reality” and as the “determinate negation of the existing order of the world” (Adorno 2002a, 89).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> As observed by Lars Svendsen, “[t]raditionally, fashion is not considered a satisfactory object of study” in the field of philosophy, and although “the position has changed to a certain degree in recent years with a stream of academic publications on fashion,” with a few exceptions “these have not been written by philosophers” (Svendsen 2006, 17). *On the one hand*, it must be said that since 2006 (when Svendsen published his book) the situation has changed to some extent, so that valuable philosophical contributions on fashion have meanwhile appeared. However, *on the other hand*, despite the important writings on fashion offered by some philosophers (like, for example, Pappas 2016 and Grewal 2022), it is also clear that specifically philosophical contributions on fashion are still a minority in the field of contemporary Fashion Studies. On the relation between philosophy and fashion, see also the recent book of Coccia and Michele 2024, written in the form of an open dialogue between a philosopher and a fashion designer/creative director.

<sup>2</sup> Adorno’s overall musicological production on jazz includes the contributions *Abschied vom Jazz* (1933), *Über Jazz* (1936), *Oxfordorder Nachträge* (1937), *Jazz* (1942), *Zeitlose Mode. Zum Jazz* (1953) and *Replik zu einer Kritik der “Zeitlosen Mode”* (1953), and his reviews of two books by W. Hobson, *American Jazz Music*, and W. Sargeant, *Jazz, Hot and Hybrid* (1941). These writings were generally composed and published by Adorno in a range of twenty years, although some traces of his critique of jazz can be found also in his later writings, like *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (1962) or his posthumous *Aesthetic Theory* (1970).

<sup>3</sup> For Adorno, indeed, “the goods” produced by the culture industry are *all* characterized by an “identical character” (Adorno 1991, 40), and the latter infects “*everything* with *sameness*”: “*all* mass culture [...] is identical,” it is “*nothing but business*,” a sort of “trash [...] intentionally produce[d]” by the culture industry on the basis of a perverse “cycle of manipulation and retroactive need” aimed at suppressing “*any trace* of spontaneity” in our aesthetic experience (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 94-6; emphasis added).

<sup>4</sup> Also thinkers with a different philosophical orientation than Adorno's, like the phenomenologist Eugen Fink (author of a short book on fashion in 1969), have clearly recognized the strict relation of modern fashion with the domain of the culture industry. According to Fink, the "fashion industry" represents indeed "a particular and particularly significant branch of the culture industry" (Fink 2023, 103). Very differently from Adorno, however, Fink believes that "[t]he culture industry, in its full breadth, encompasses all phenomena that emerge from human freedom, from the human being's finite creative power bound by corporeality." From Fink's point of view, fashion – understood as a part of the culture industry – represents "a preserve of freedom, where the individual chooses and where the customer is king," and must *not* be interpreted (as has often happened, indeed) "as a tyrannical force." In fact, the "relationship between the class of customers and that of manufacturers within the domain of fashion," for Fink, "is by no means one of manipulation and a fortiori not a situation of compulsion, not a 'dictatorship' where one can only 'choose' what others decree. The phenomenon is multifaceted and complicated" (Fink 2023, 59, 62-3, 103, 106).

<sup>5</sup> This article is specifically focused on Adorno's aesthetics and, in particular, on some passages of his works in which he explicitly thematizes the aesthetics of fashion in the context of his critique of the culture industry, with the attempt to also establish some comparisons with more recent studies of fashion. So, I will *not* dwell here on the classical sources of the philosophy of fashion from a historico-philosophical perspective or other similar topics. For a reconstruction and interpretation of the main phases of development of a philosophical discourse on fashion in the nineteenth and twentieth century, see Marino 2017 (in particular, 20-36).

<sup>6</sup> According to Svendsen, in modern fashion "[t]here is a central insistence on radical innovation, a constant hunt for originality. Fashion is only fashion insofar as it is capable of moving forwards. Fashion moves in cycles, where a cycle is the space of time from when a fashion is introduced to when it is replaced by a new one, and the principle of fashion is to make the cycle – the space of time – as short as possible, so as to create the maximum number of successive fashions. The ideal fashion, seen in this way, would only last a moment before it was replaced by a new one" (Svendsen 2006, 31).

<sup>7</sup> This strong emphasis on the dimension of transience and contingency is also one of the reasons why fashion has been defined by some fashion theorists as intrinsically ironic: i.e., as "modernist irony" (Wilson 2003, 15).

<sup>8</sup> For Matteucci, if fashion represents "a veritable and indeed complicated challenge for philosophy," it is precisely because fashion is "the place of the ephemeral, the illusory, the cyclical, the metamorphic, and the multifarious: that is, it is precisely the place of what Western philosophy has always demonized but has also become predominant in the global culture of our time. [...] [Fashion] outlines an experience of the ephemeral that almost leaves no trace and shies away from museums because, rather than defining standards, it represents a temporary, cyclical, 'trendy' articulation of taste. Disinterested in acquiring a determinate form, fashion finds its fulfillment in something that takes shape in the performance of the event that exhausts it. It is therefore as *practice* of beauty that fashion coincides with the ephemeral emergence of

sense” (Matteucci 2017a, 52, 70). According to Matteucci, this is one of the reasons why “the theoretical interest raised by fashion in recent times can be described as a sort of ‘return of the repressed.’ [...] [A] subtle self-ironic capacity constitutionally belongs to fashion, when the latter, by elevating the ephemeral to something worthy of worship, reveals itself as a ‘double-edged’ phenomenon” (Matteucci 2017a, 52, 65).

<sup>9</sup> On the same topic, see also the following passage: “The physical moment tells our knowledge that suffering ought not to be, that things should be different ‘Woe speaks: Go.’ Hence the convergence of specific materialism with criticism, with social change in practice. [...] The *telos* of [a different] organization of society would be to negate the physical suffering of even the least of its members, and to negate the internal reflexive forms of that suffering. By now, this negation in the interest of all can be realized only in a solidarity that is transparent to itself and all the living” (Adorno 2004, 203-4).

<sup>10</sup> One of the most striking aphorisms in Adorno’s *Minima moralia* famously reads: “Wrong life cannot be lived rightly (*Es gibt kein richtiges Leben im falschen*)” (Adorno 2005, 39). Many years later, in his 1963 *Vorlesung* on the problems of moral philosophy, Adorno affirmed to have discovered a similar position on the “wrong life” in Nietzsche (Adorno 1996, 1) – in particular, in some observations that can be found in *Human, All Too Human*, where we read: “Every belief in the value and dignity of life rests on false thinking [...]. The great majority endure life without complaining overmuch; they *believe* in the value of existence, but they do so precisely because each of them exists for himself alone, refusing to step out of himself [...]: everything outside themselves they notice not at all or at most as a dim shadow. Thus for the ordinary, everyday man the value of life rests solely on the fact that he regards himself more highly than he does the world. [...] [M]ankind has as a whole *no* goal, and the individual man when he regards its total course cannot derive from it any support or comfort, but must be reduced to despair. [...]. The whole of human life is sunk deeply in untruth” (Nietzsche 1996, 29-30).

<sup>11</sup> In one of the few passages of *Negative Dialectics* in which Adorno explicitly mentions aesthetics, he precisely speaks of “the incomparable metaphysical relevance of the rescue of semblance, the object of esthetics” (Adorno 2004, 393).

<sup>12</sup> In *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno dramatically claims that “[e]ven prior to Auschwitz it was an affirmative lie, given historical experience, to ascribe any positive meaning to existence” (Adorno 2002a, 152).

<sup>13</sup> Also these remarks can be connected with Svendsen’s philosophical interpretation of fashion that identifies the very principle of fashion in “the New” and observes: “In order to be able to talk of ‘fashion’ it is not sufficient for a change to take place on rare occasions. It only becomes a fashion when this change is sought for its own sake [...] without any reason apparent other than the change itself. [...] There is in fashion a vital trait of modernity: the abolition of traditions. [...] But there also lies in fashion an element that modernity would not have wished to acknowledge. Fashion is irrational. It consists of change for the sake of change, whereas the self-image of modernity consisted in there being a change that led towards increasingly rational self-determination” (Svendsen 2006, 22-4).

<sup>14</sup> For a general assessment of Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* and its legacy today, see the essays collected in Gandesha, Hartle and Marino 2021.

<sup>15</sup> To my knowledge, the first interpreter who paid a specific and systematic attention to the few paragraphs on fashion in Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* is Giovanni Matteucci (2012, 97-100).

<sup>16</sup> The question concerning truth and, in particular, the dialectical relation between *truth* and *untruth* (and also what we may call the truth of the untrue) represents one of the most complex questions of Adorno's thinking in its entirety. On Adorno's dialectical conception of truth, see Schweppenhäuser 2003 and Zuidervaat 2024 (in particular, 1-17, 129-140). On the relation between truth and untruth in Adorno's thinking (also in connection to his critique of mass culture), see Marino 2019 and Marino 2021.

<sup>17</sup> This *Vorlesung* belongs to Adorno's lecture course on aesthetics from the winter semester 1958-59 at the University of Frankfurt, later published in the context of his *Nachgelassene Schriften*. Together with other seminars, conferences and lectures on aesthetics held by Adorno in the 1950s and 1960s, also his lecture course from 1958-59 can be considered one of the occasions in which Adorno had the opportunity to publicly present some preparatory materials that he would later use for his unfinished and posthumously published masterpiece, namely his *Aesthetic Theory*. In the specific case of the relation between Adorno's *Vorlesungen* from 1958-59 and his *Aesthetic Theory* (appeared in 1970, one year after Adorno's untimely death), this is particularly clear apropos of his original treatment of the question concerning natural beauty (see Adorno 2002a, 61-78 and Adorno 2009b, 56-71. On this topic, see Villani 2019 and 2021). A complete list of Adorno's teaching activities, including all his seminars and lecture courses on aesthetics, is available in Müller-Doohm 2003, 944-50.

<sup>18</sup> Adorno emphatically defines Benjamin's *Arcades* project as "*prima philosophia* in [Benjamin's] own particular sense" in his letter to Benjamin from 20 May 1935 (Adorno and Benjamin 1999, 83). Already in his letter to Benjamin from 6 November 1934 Adorno had ambitiously claimed that Benjamin's "work on the *Arcades*" had to be regarded "as part of [their] destined contribution to *prima philosophia*," also adding that there was nothing he desired "more than to see [Benjamin] finally capable, after all the long and painful hesitations involved, of bringing this work to a conclusion which does justice to the momentous subject matter" (Adorno and Benjamin 1999, 53). A different but similar expression was also used by Adorno in his letter to Benjamin from 6 September 1936, where he referred to Benjamin's "*ultima philosophia*, the *Arcades* project" (Adorno and Benjamin 1999, 147).

<sup>19</sup> The metaphor of "heroism" is also used by Adorno, in *Aesthetic Theory*, with specific reference to avant-garde movements such as cubism and expressionism (Adorno 2002a, 155, 293).

<sup>20</sup> On the critical relation between art and "affirmative culture" (or also what Adorno calls "the affirmative power of society" and "the affirmative, ideological totality"), see Adorno 2002a, 2, 40, 48, 93, 106, 110, 113, 140-1, 160, 249, 252, 319.

<sup>21</sup> In a parenthetical remark within this passage Adorno also observes that "in the art market, which finances painters but overtly or covertly demands in

exchange that they furnish whatever style of work the market expects of them,” the capitalist industry “extends into so-called artistic fashions and directly undermines autonomy” (Adorno 2002a, 315).

<sup>22</sup> In a subsequent passage from the same paragraph of *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno also adds another interesting element to this discourse on art and fashion, namely the “erotic element.” In fact, according to Adorno, this element is one of the main causes that have provoked the “disdain of fashion,” but it is also an element “in which fashion reminds art of what it never fully succeeded in sublimating. Through fashion,” Adorno explains, “art sleeps with what it must renounce and from this draws the strength that otherwise must atrophy under the renunciation on which art is predicated. If art, as semblance, is the clothing of an invisible body, fashion is clothing as the absolute. As such, they stand in accord with each other (*Kunst, als Schein, ist Kleid eines unsichtbaren Körpers. So ist Mode Kleid als Absolutes. Darin verstehen sich beide*)” (Adorno 2002a, 316-7).

<sup>23</sup> As is well known, the entire passage from Nietzsche’s *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense* defines truth as “[a] mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins” (Nietzsche 1976, 46-7).

<sup>24</sup> On Adorno as “a critical philosopher of globalization,” with a specific focus on his aesthetic theory, his conception of fashion and, in particular, the central role played by his notion of shudder, see Matteucci 2017b.

<sup>25</sup> On this topic, see for example Lipovetsky and Serroy 2016; Gandesha and Hartle 2017.

## REFERENCES

- Adorno, Th. W. 1976. *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*. Translated by E. B. Ashton. The Seabury Press: New York.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1991. “On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening.” In *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, edited by J. M. Bernstein, 29-60. London: Routledge.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1992. *Notes to Literature 2*. Translated by Sh. Weber Nicholsen. New York: Columbia University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1993. *Hegel. Three Studies*. Translated by Sh. Weber Nicholsen. Cambridge (MA)-London: The MIT Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1996. *Probleme der Moralphilosophie (1963)*. Edited by T. Schröder. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1997. *Prisms*. Translated by S. and Sh. Weber. Cambridge (MA): The MIT Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2001. *Metaphysics: Concept and Problems*. Translated by E. Jephcott. Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2002a. *Aesthetic Theory*. Translated by R. Hullot-Kentor. London-New York: Continuum.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2002b. "The Aging of the New Music." In *Essays on Music*, edited by R. D. Leppert, 181-202. Translated by S. H. Gillespie et al. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2004. *Negative Dialectics*. Translated by E. B. Ashton. London-New York: Routledge.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2005. *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*. Translated by E. Jephcott. London-New York: Verso.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2006. *Philosophy of New Music*. Translated and edited by R. Hullot-Kentor. Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2009a. "On Popular Music." In *Current of Music: Elements of a Radio Theory*, edited by R. Hullot-Kentor, 271-326. Cambridge-Malden (MA): Polity Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2009b. *Ästhetik (1958/59)*. Edited by E. Ortland. Frankfurt. a.M.: Suhrkamp.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2017. *An Introduction to Dialectics (1958)*. Edited by C. Ziermann. Translated by N. Walker. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Adorno, Th. W. and Benjamin, W. 1999. *The Complete Correspondence 1928-1940*. Translated by N. Walker. London: Polity Press.

Barthes, R. 1990. *The Fashion System*. Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Benjamin, W. 1999. *The Arcades Project*. Translated by H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin. London-Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2008. *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*. Translated by E.

Jephcott et al. Edited by M. W. Jennings, B. Doherty and T. Y. Levin. London-Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.

Coccia, E. and Michele, A. 2024. *La vita delle forme. Filosofia del reincanto*. Milano: Harper Collins.

Esposito, E. 2017. "The Fascination of Contingency: Fashion and Modern Society." In *Philosophical Perspectives on Fashion*, edited by G. Matteucci and S. Marino, 175-90. London-New York: Bloomsbury.

Fink, E. 2023. *Fashion... Seductive Play*. Translated by C. Turner and I. A. Moore. Edited by S. Marino and G. Matteucci. London-New York: Bloomsbury.

Gandesha, S. and Hartle, J.F. (eds.). 2017. *Aesthetic Marx*, London-New York: Bloomsbury.

Gandesha, S., Hartle, J.F. and Marino, S. (eds.). 2021. *The "Aging" of Adorno's Aesthetic Theory: Fifty Years Later*. Milano-Udine: Mimesis International.

Grewal, G. 2022. *Fashion | Sense: On Philosophy and Fashion*. London-New York: Bloomsbury.

Horkheimer, M. and Adorno, Th. W. 2002. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Translated by E. Jephcott. Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press.

Lipovetsky, G. 1994. *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy*. Translated by C. Porter. Princeton (NJ) and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Lipovetsky, G. and Serroy, J. 2016. *L'esthétisation du monde. Vivre à l'âge du capitalisme artiste*. Paris : Gallimard.

Marino, S. 2017. "Philosophical Accounts of Fashion in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century: A Historical Reconstruction." In *Philosophical Perspectives on Fashion*, edited by G. Matteucci and S. Marino, 11-45. London-New York: Bloomsbury.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2019. *Le verità del non-vero. Tre studi su Adorno, teoria critica ed estetica*. Milano-Udine: Mimesis.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2021. *Verità e non-verità del popular. Saggio su Adorno, dimensione estetica e critica della società*. Milano-Udine: Mimesis.

Matteucci, G. 2012. *L'artificio estetico. Moda e bello naturale in Simmel e Adorno*. Milano-Udine: Mimesis.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2017a. "Fashion: A Conceptual Constellation." In *Philosophical Perspectives on Fashion*, edited by G. Matteucci and S. Marino, 47-72. London-New York: Bloomsbury.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2017b. "Adorno's Aesthetic Constellation from Shudder to Fashion: A Form of Life in the Age of Globalization?". *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 62 (1): 42-56.

Michaud, Y. 2003. *L'art à l'état gazeux : Essai sur le triomphe de l'esthétique*. Paris : Editions Stock.

Müller-Doohm, S. 2003. *Adorno. Eine Biographie*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.

Nietzsche, F. 1976. "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense." In *The Portable Nietzsche*. Translated by W. Kaufmann. New York: Viking Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1996. *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. Translated by R. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pappas, N. 2016. *The Philosopher's New Clothes: The Theaetetus, the Academy, and Philosophy's Turn against Fashion*. Oxford-New York: Routledge.

Schweppenhäuser, G. 2003. "Das Glück 'jenseits des Pedestren' und die Ehre der Fußgänger. Anmerkungen zu Adornos Wahrheitsbegriff." *Zeitschrift für kritische Theorie* 17: 27-72.

Svendsen, L.F. 2006. *Fashion: A Philosophy*. London: Reaktion Books.

Villani, E. 2019. "I corsi universitari di Adorno sull'estetica." *Aesthetica Preprint* 112: 139-49.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2021. "Aesthetic performativity and natural beauty. Theoretical observations on Adorno's landscapes." *Studi di Estetica* 3: 95-111.

Vitali, R. 2024. "'Mimesis of the Alienated': Commodity Form and Artwork's Autonomy in late Capitalism: An Analysis of Hirst's *For the Love of God* and Santiago Sierra." *Meta:*



*Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy* 16 (1): 133-58.

Wellmer, A. 2006. "Modell 3: Meditationen zur Metaphysik. Metaphysik im Augenblick ihres Sturzes." In *Theodor W. Adorno: Negative Dialektik*, edited by A. Honneth and C. Menke, 189-206. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.

Wilson, E. 2003. *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*. London-New York: Tauris & Co.

Zuidervaart, L. 2024. *Adorno, Heidegger, and the Politics of Truth*. Albany (NY): SUNY Press.

**Stefano Marino** is Associate Professor of Aesthetics at the University of Bologna. His main research interests are focused on critical theory, hermeneutics, neo-pragmatism, philosophy of music, and aesthetics of fashion. He is the author of several monographs, among which: *The Philosophy of Radiohead* (2024), *Aesthetics, Metaphysics, Language: Essays on Heidegger and Gadamer* (2015), *La filosofia di Frank Zappa* (2014), *Gadamer and the Limits of the Modern Techno-scientific Civilization* (2011). He has translated from German into Italian, or from English into Italian, the following books: R. Shusterman, *Esperienza estetica e arti popolari* (2023), Th. W. Adorno, *Variazioni sul jazz* (2018), C. Korsmeyer, *Il senso del gusto* (2015), H.-G. Gadamer, *Ermeneutica, etica, filosofia della storia* (2014), H.-G. Gadamer, *Che cos'è la verità* (2012). He has published several collections (as books or special issues in journals) as coeditor, among which: *Gadamer on Art and Aesthetic Experience* (2025), *Embodiment and Emotions in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century German Philosophy* (2025), *Foucault's Aesthetics of Existence and Shusterman's Somaesthetics* (2024), *Varieties of the Lifeworld* (2022), *Popular Culture and Feminism* (2022), *Pearl Jam and Philosophy* (2021), *Kant's "Critique of Aesthetic Judgment" in the Twentieth Century* (2020), *Adorno and Popular Music* (2019).

**Address:**

Stefano Marino  
University of Bologna  
via Barberia 4  
Bologna, Italy  
Tel.: +39 051 20 9 8412  
<http://www.unibo.it/docenti/stefano.marino4>  
E-mail: [stefano.marino4@unibo.it](mailto:stefano.marino4@unibo.it)