"La frase ‘in questo istante sono alla moda’ è pura contraddizione in termini in quanto nell’istante in cui la pronuncia, il soggetto che lo fa è già fuori moda’.

‘‘I am in this instant in fashion’ is contradictory, because the moment in which the subject pronounces it, he is already out of fashion.”

Giorgio Agamben, What is the contemporary?
It seems to be almost a mantra in the glossy magazines to have a “passion for fashion.” Fashion is a virtuous desire, a desire sanctified by the muses of media. A passion for fashion; such a catchphrase may hold more truth than we might think. Indeed, to have a passion is a twofold emotion: firstly it is ephemeral, a fleeting interest, a quick connection and engagement, but nothing lasting. Secondly, it is intense, beyond our control, an emotion so powerful it leads to suffering, desire, so dominating and intoxicating that reason becomes its slave.

But what is the energy of fashion that we become so passionate about, and what social dynamics can we trace that produce our wilful submission to this power? How come we so voluntarily sacrifice our freedom for its vitalizing and glamorous social effect? If fashion is social energy – do we need to follow its energy downstream, or could we use this power to cut across and go against the stream?

Thermodynamic laws push us along the stream of time, and fashion is per definition a form of fleeting passion. Fashion is “to dress like everyone else, but before everyone else”, as Swedish fashion journalist Suzanne Pagold playfully argues. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu thinks along similar lines as he sees fashion, per definition, as “the latest fashion, the latest difference.”

Fashion’s temporality may be clearer if we set it in relation to the old Greek concepts of time. One type if time was that of kairos, the propitious moment or opportunity, the other
La transitorietà della moda risulta più chiara se la si considera alla luce della concezione che del tempo avevano gli antichi Greci. Questi ultimi operavano, infatti, una distinzione tra kairos, termine con cui indicavano il momento propizio o l’opportunità, e chronos, ossia il tempo cronologico e sequenziale. Il kairos ha carattere qualitativo; il chronos è quantitativo. Una storia d’amore travolgente è un’improvvisa esplosione di desiderio, un fuoco incontrollabile, un fervore di feroce intensità. È passionale proprio perché, non potendo durare per sempre, trova un porto sicuro nel kairos. La sofferenza, al contrario, può essere cronica, può durare nel tempo sino ad apparirici priva di fine e può, senza dubbio, risultare inesauribile. Capace di durare nei decenni, l’abbigliamento appartiene di diritto al dominio del chronos; la moda, invece, durando un solo istante, o una sola stagione, incarna perfettamente il concetto di kairos. Giorgio Agamben sottolinea come “l’attualità, il kairos della moda siano qualcosa di inafferrabile: la frase ‘in questo istante sono alla moda’ è pura contraddizione in termini in quanto nell’istante in cui la pronuncia, il soggetto che lo fa è già fuori moda”.

L’evoluzione della moda può essere tracciata identificandone i diversi momenti di rottura con gli stagnanti ruoli sociali del costume e della tradizione; lungo l’intero corso della storia, la moda è sempre stata sinonimo di nuovo, bandiera dell’ultima (futile) affermazione o ribellione contro la gerarchia sociale. Se la storia e le tradizioni radicate non propongono alcun cambiamento, non promettono nulla di nuovo e, in quanto tali, perdono rapidamente il loro prestigio e il loro appeal, passioni e desideri sono fonte di possibilità, progresso e cambiamenti rivoluzionari. La moda è in grado di offrire alle sfaccettature più neofile della mente umana un grado di soddisfazione che il passato non potrebbe mai e poi mai sognarsi di raggiungere.

Ma la passione si può tradurre anche in una forma di smodata avidità di piacere che was chronos, sequential time or duration. Kairos has a qualitative nature, while chronos is quantitative. A passionate love affair is a sudden burst of lust, uncontrollable, a fire and fervour of fierce intensity. It is passionate precisely because it cannot last forever and is therefore safely harboured in kairos. Suffering on the other hand may be chronic, it stretches across time to appear endless, and it can indeed be inexhaustible. Clothing may last for decades, and reside within the realm of chronos, while fashion lasts only a moment or season, and is thus an epitome of kairos. Giorgio Agamben highlights, “the ‘now’, the kairos of fashion is ungraspable: the phrase, ‘I am in this instant in fashion’ is contradictory, because the moment in which the subject pronounces it, he is already out of fashion.”

The evolution of fashion can be traced to its different breaks with stagnant social roles of custom and tradition, as throughout its history it has automatically become a signifier of the new, the latest (futile) affirmation or rebellion against social hierarchy. Whereas chronic traditions and history offer no change, promise nothing new, and thus come to lose attraction and prestige, passions and desires radiate possibilities, progression and even revolutionary change. For the neophilic aspects of the human mind, fashion offers a fulfilment the past can never attain. But passion is also a form of greed for pleasure that snares the mind and clouds the eyes of reason. Once the mind has found its pleasure in the new, it is hard to stop its fixation and enslavement to the arrival of the tides of time. Indeed, throughout time the passions have been seen as primitive drives in a human being, connected to the deadly sins. Nevertheless, passions such as lust and jealousy are the very emotional states that drives fashion forward.

Both as a fleeting desire and a force of enslavement, fashion has a power over human beings that is in a continuous state of becoming. “On fashion [...] one can’t

2 Giorgio Agamben, “What is the contemporary?” in What is an Apparatus?: And Other Essays, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 49
fashion as social energy

say that it ‘is’,” Georg Simmel posits, “It is always becoming.” Fashion’s power is perpetually on the move, only temporarily manifest in a material silhouette, pattern or garment. Fashion is thus not only a matter of signification or of performative qualities as a symbol or sign: it is a form of energy.

The energy of difference

Like a passion, a sudden burst of energy, fashion is a firing of ephemeral intensity, a temporary distinction, a flash of difference. Neophiles as we are, when confronted with new fashion we can find ourselves, almost unconsciously and often unwillingly, animated and electrified by the brilliance of its very newness. Often the difference is too strong, and we can exclaim “I would never wear that!”, just to find ourselves craving for it a month later. This burst of intensity is how a new fashion “hits” us, how we are temporarily “blinded” by its luminosity. And just think of how “immune” we become to last season’s collections after the last epidemic craze has passed.

The metaphor of how fashion “hits” us like a force or electric energy is not at all abstract. In our time when mass-produced fashion is as cheap as chips, the quick replacement of goods and continuous rotation of new incoming trends triggers even more consumption, just because the instant gratification is so close and almost within reach to us. The fast pace with new garments on the hangers almost every week makes consumers feel that if they hesitate they might miss the chance, feeding “a terrible hunger in the consumer.” Fashion is all about feeding a beast within, unfettering our desire, and letting it free within the temples of “democratic” consumerism.

The strategy set out by the industry is simple: by restricting the amount of some styles of mass produced garments, yet not making explicit “limited editions”, the consumer imagines there is some hidden gold among all

the cheap deals. This triggers a paradoxical feeling for the consumer where even easily accessible goods seems to offer a “sense of tantalising exclusivity.” To keep feeding the bulimic consumers with temptation Zara uses a tight communication loop between consumption and production with a fast update cycle providing new goods in the store twice a week to create a self-reinforcing system of fast synergetic consumption rhythms. Speed is profitable, especially for the brand, and like any other stimulant, it produces addiction. Only ten years ago a typical London customer visited an average store four times annually, while now they visit Zara stores 17 times. The consumer can’t stay away from the next ephemeral difference, the new fix. Our drug is on constant discount, too cheap for us to stay away.

This world of accessible consumer gratification is a world where “neurological connectivity” becomes a highly sought potential. Marketing researchers Robin Lewis and Michael Dart expound on how the game around the fast lustre of satisfaction is “an experience that triggers a dopamine surge in the consumer’s brain” and is a part of a larger neural marketing strategy of brands today. In connection to the neurological level, Lewis and Dart observe a tendency of “preemptive distribution” – getting consumers ahead of competition by providing what they did not yet know they wanted. The right kind of difference produces attraction and status, reproducing more desire to be imitated. We all rush to become different, to become “ourselves” before someone else takes the symbols of “our” distinctiveness. Yet, most often we fail to see the absurdity in our endeavour. Or, as sociologist Rosalind Coward points out, “one thing fashion is quite categorically not is an expression of individuality.”

7 Rosalind Coward, Female desire, London, Paladin, 1984, p. 30

4 Lucy Siegle, Why fast fashion is slow death for the planet, “The Guardian”, 8 maggio 2011
Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman draws similar conclusions, that fashion is a perpetuum mobile, a “self-feeding, self-sustaining, self-propelling and self-invigorating process.” The becoming of fashion is fused into the very fabric of our current social order, and we are incapable of stopping or even slowing it down as it gains evermore speed and impact. As an energy, fashion needs to be far beyond equilibrium, it draws its potentiality from preserving imbalances and social injustices. As Bauman notes, fashion cannot exist in a condition of stability, as it needs to be perpetually renegotiated. Bauman continues; “The perpetuum mobile of fashion is thereby the dedicated, dexterous and seasoned destroyer of all and any standstill. Fashion casts lifestyles in the mode of permanent and principally un-finishable revolution.”

In its perpetual motion, fashion lets no-one feel safe, but one needs to constantly update oneself to keep up with fashion – it is a matter of individual survival to avoid being socially excluded and rejected. You must keep up with fashion since you will be “sanctioned with capital punishment (in the sense of social death) for desertion.” To follow Bauman’s advice you constantly need to reinvent yourself, and you have an obligation to choose; “If you do not wish to sink, keep surfing.”

Indeed, for Bauman, fashion gets its kinetic energy from its self-contained paradoxes, or movement and counter-movement, between belonging and uniqueness, social support and autonomy, imitation and separation, security and freedom, like a pendulum swinging indefinitely, by its own momentum. The energy between these opposite poles produces difference and at the same time imitation fuelled by status anxiety: the power of passion is turned on.

Fashion as a designated Escape from Freedom

One of the enigmas echoing through post-war sociology has been the emergence and power of totalitarian regimes in the middle if the 20th century. What social mechanisms made people across Europe

7 Rosalind Coward, Female desire, London, Paladin, 1984, p. 30
8 Bauman 2010, p. 58
9 Ibid., p. 59
“There’s a gothic feel to the look with the smoky eyes, but it’s a more dramatic...

"power itself is invisible, I only experienced the blunt force of peer-oppression."

"but I felt invincible, in total control of my fate. No fate, only me, me, me."
"I was dressed in my own dreams. A total auto-erotic pleasure. I never tired of watching myself."

"I never saw any responsibility."

"the menu of fashion is a special form of map. Within an aura of subjectivity I found an authentic sense of intelligence. A trap door."

Ott von Busch, W/kased, suX zine "timesX", 1995
choose to not defend their freedom and instead so deliberately sacrifice it in order to escape into the safety of uniformity and social conformity? As critical theorist Erich Fromm argues, totalitarianism can be a tempting alternative as freedom comes to be seen as frightening.10

Building on a distinction drawn by political theorist Isaiah Berlin, between positive and negative freedom, Fromm traces the human capacity to organise society primarily to ensure “freedom from” (negative) choice. As Fromm sees it, it is as if we prefer the constrained freedom of choosing between limited alternatives, an exercise which easily channels our actions into unquestioned obedience. The opposite, a “freedom to” (positive), may simply seem too demanding for us, too disruptive and challenging, even fearful, as it would mean the full freedom to employ all our capacities for spontaneity. If we were truly free the creative acts of becoming a whole integrated personality would possibly make the world unpredictable and thus threatening. It is so much safer to hang onto the superficial and customary bonds of our conventions, not least individualism and consumerism that tend to isolate and atomize the human being in society.

Continuing on Fromm’s ideas, it could be argued that design channels our actions into unquestioned obedience. The opposite, a “freedom to” (positive), may simply seem too demanding for us, too disruptive and challenging, even fearful, as it would mean the full freedom to employ all our capacities for spontaneity. If we were truly free the creative acts of becoming a whole integrated personality would possibly make the world unpredictable and thus threatening. It is so much safer to hang onto the superficial and customary bonds of our conventions, not least individualism and consumerism that tend to isolate and atomize the human being in society.

9 Ibid., p. 59
imprevedibile e, in quanto tale, minaccioso. È, quindi, molto più sicuro rimanere ancorati alla superficialità e alla consuetudinarità delle nostre convenzioni tra cui, non ultime, l’individualismo e il consumismo che tendono a isolare e atomizzare l’essere umano nella società.

Proseguendo sulla falsariga del pensiero frommiano, si potrebbe sostenere che il design canalizzi la scelta del consumatore in ben precisi percorsi di azione e consumo, un concetto che non differisce molto da quello di “defuturizzazione” espresso dal teorico del design Tony Fry11. Indicandoci un percorso di azione, il design approva e autorizza il comportamento che ci propone. Il design indica una direzione per convogliare, quindi, le azioni lungo il percorso prestabilito. La moda ci fornisce una scusa, un timbro di approvazione al consumo libidinoso che, come ben sappiamo, è deliberatamente votato all’obsolescenza. Consumando scegliamo automaticamente di non scegliere la frugalità. In modo analogo, lo stato totalitario tiene il cittadino al sicuro dal timore di lasciare il sentiero battuto. Pur avendo già indicato il percorso da seguire, lo stato lo cela sotto il velo dell’ideologia, dietro valori positivi come “disciplina”, “igiene” e “ordine”, o come avviene ai nostri giorni, “identità”, “libertà” e “stile.” Come sottolinea Fromm, anche le società capitaliste liberali offrono diversi percorsi di fuga dalla libertà: autoritarismo, distruzione e conformità. È interessante notare come la moda incarni alla perfezione tutti questi aspetti. Il primo tra questi percorsi, quello dell’autoritarismo, è sinonimo di sottomissione al controllo di superiori, persone o idee nonché di ambizione alla lode per la propria obbedienza. Lo si può percorrere per sfuggire all’ansia, ma anche nella speranza di poter adottare, un giorno, gli stessi meccanismi con gli altri, di ascendere e diventare prima o poi un’autorità. Nel regno della moda, questa autorità è detenuta dalle icone e dagli idoli dello stile: li seguiamo per sentirci al sicuro, ma anche nella vana speranza di acquistare noi stessi lo status di icone minori. La seconda via di fuga dalla libertà è rappresentata dalla distruzione già designato il path, yet veiled it in ideology, under positive values such as “discipline”, “hygiene”, and “order”, or in our times, “identity”, “freedom”, and “style.” As Fromm highlights, the liberal capitalist societies also offer several routes to flee freedom: authoritarianism, destruction and conformity. Interestingly enough, fashion perfectly embodies all three of them.

The first form, authoritarianism, means submitting to the control of superiors, persons or ideas, and to seek praise for one’s obedience. This can be done to avoid anxiety, but also in the hope of one day also utilising the same mechanisms towards others, to rise and one day become an authority. In the realm of fashion, such authorities are the icons and idols of style: we follow to feel safe, but also with a vain hope of becoming recognized as minor icons ourselves. The second way to escape freedom is to establish systematic destructiveness, striking down on that which one cannot have or acquire for oneself. This can come in the form of collective destruction, or in the small acts of gossiping and back-talking others. As mentioned before, fashion is on a meta-level a grand act of energized destruction, a pendulum between differences, but also in its micro-politics a phenomenon based on competitive small talk and subtle acts of aggression. Finally, conformity, to become an automaton helps people to unconsciously embrace normative values and make them their own, escaping any form of genuine stance. Human culture is based on imitation which is part of most processes of education. The aim is to solidify inherited hierarchies of values and make them popular, and finally to reward consent.12

But as Fromm highlights, obedience and conformity are not necessarily pushed onto subjects from above. Instead it is the internalized mechanisms that make our escape from freedom so easy for us, and also makes us blind to it. By having a “duty”, doing a “good job”, or being “active”, we escape responsibility for our own freedom: “the individual has to be active in order to overcome his feeling of doubt.

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and powerlessness. This kind of effort and activity is not the result of inner strength and self-confidence; it is a desperate escape from anxiety.”

To make “active” choices in the realm of fashion, to pick one’s “own style” from the mass-produced goods readily available *prêt-a-porter* (ready-to-wear) in the fashion boutiques, makes us feel we use our freedom actively. Even if fashion today is expressing traits of social re-mix, of identity as an assemblage of expressions and styles drawn from many walks of life, it may not offer us more freedom. Diana Crane, sociologist of fashion, frames this transition correspondingly: Fashion is presented as choice rather than a mandate. The consumer is expected to ‘construct’ an individual appearance from a variety of options. An amalgam of materials drawn from many different sources.

The more “free” and convenient the choice appears, for example by cheap and accessible “fast fashion”, the more blind we become to the designated path already laid out ahead of us, that we have learned to conform even more. Indeed, the “democratized” fashion, today so cheap and abundant it seems accessible to everyone, offers neither a community of commitment nor substantial social interaction. Instead it has become a vehicle for increasing social stress or status anxiety. Passionately blinded by its accessibility and shine, we fail to see how “the tyranny of fashion itself has in fact never been stronger than in this period of visual pluralism”.

The love for fashion offers the perfect ephemeral and passionate affair. We are hungry for attention and appreciation, yet still fearful of the responsibility a real dressed freedom would bring. The very capacity for disobedience and freedom are inseparable, and as Fromm argues, as we are afraid of freedom very few have the courage to be

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12 Fromm 1994, pp. 141 sg.
13 Fromm 1994, pp. 78 sg.
scegliendo fra più opzioni. Un’amalgama di materiali provenienti da più fonti diverse”

Più la scelta pare “libera” e conveniente, come, per esempio, ci portano a credere l’economicità e l’accessibilità del “pronto moda”, più diventiamo incapaci di scorgere il cammino prestabilito che siamo indirizzati a percorrere, cui abbiamo imparato a conformarci ancor di più. La moda “democratizzata”, oggi così copiosa e a buon mercato da sembrare alla portata di chiunque, non offre né comunità di intenti né sostanziale interazione sociale. Al contrario, si è fatta veicolo di crescente stress sociale e di ansia da status. Ardentemente accecati dal suo splendore e dalla sua accessibilità, non riusciamo a vedere come “la stessa tirannia della moda non sia mai stata più forte che in quest’epoca di pluralismo visivo”

La passione per la moda ci offre la storia d’amore perfetta, effimera e passionale. Siamo affamati di attenzione e apprezzamento e, tuttavia, sempre timorosi delle responsabilità che la vera libertà comporterebbe. La stessa capacità di disobbedire e la libertà sono inseparabili e, come sostiene Fromm, essendo intimoriti dalla libertà pochissimi di noi hanno il coraggio di essere disobbedienti.

Nel mondo conformista del fashion crowd tutti sono sostituibili come un qualsiasi indumento e si può passare da una storia d’amore all’altra con la stessa rapidità e facilità offerta da un qualunque articolo “usa e getta”.

Si può essere appassionati, ma non liber o disobbedienti. No hidden catch, no strings attached; it’s free love.

La moda compassionevole

Quindi, l’unico modo per opporsi alla moda è forse divenire immuni a essa, sincerarsi di non essere contaminati dalla sua abbondanza di energie sacrificali?

Non è insolito ritenere che il contrario di consumismo sia parsimonia e che frugalità sia l’antitono di dispendio. Tuttavia, proprio come il contrario di guerra non è pace ma creazione, il contrario di consumismo non è parsimonia ma generosità. Se crediamo ancora disobedient. In the conforming fashion crowd you are just as replaceable as any garment, you may jump between love affairs as fast and convenient as anything ready-to-consume. You are passionate, but neither free nor disobedient. No hidden catch, no strings attached; it’s free love.

Com-passionate fashion

So is the only way to oppose fashion to become immune to it, to make sure we are not contaminated by its abundance of sacrificial energies?

It is not uncommon to think that the opposite of consumerism is thrift, that the opposite of expenditure is frugality. However, just as the opposite to war is not peace but creation, so the opposite of consumerism is not thrift, but generosity. If we still believe there are some positive aspects of fashion our issue is not to stop or resist its energies, but rather ask ourselves how to make such energies creative and generous, and not trap them into authority, destruction and conformity. We could try to turn the passion into a com-passion, a passion of spontaneity and togetherness.

If Fromm thought of individual action as atomizing, limiting our sense of belonging and togetherness and fuelling our fear of freedom, we should perhaps look for forms of communality within the realm of fashion.

For Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito, communitas, or community, should not be regarded as a stable property, but instead as a void. Community is a debt between members and thus community is a reciprocal gift to the other. Esposito points to the etymological root of community, the Latin munus, and relates it to onus, obligation, officium, office, as well as donum, a category of gifts where an exchange in return is obligatory. To Esposito, community is a “totality of persons united not by ‘property’ but precisely by an obligation or a debt; not by an ‘addition’ but by a ‘subtraction’.”

As Esposito pinpoints, community reveals the alterity shared among members. Thus

14 Diana Crane, Fashion and its social agendas: class, gender, and identity in clothing, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000, p. 15
15 Anne Hollander, Seeing through clothes, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993, p. 345
16 Roberto Esposito, Communitas: the origin and destiny of community, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2010, p. 6
community is a continuous building process of a super-organism held together by mutual interactions and, as Esposito explains, community is juxtaposed to immunity, the condition of being free from communal obligations. This is important, as community builds on the opposite than the individual claiming his exclusive rights against the others; “The subjects of community are united by an ‘obligation’, in the sense that we say ‘I owe you something’, but not ‘you owe me something’.” Using the concepts of Fromm one could say Esposito’s community is the “freedom to” be together, not the “freedom from” others with the help of illusionary symbols of individuality.

But there is also a need for sharing the social energy of fashion. As for cultural theorist Michel Serres, the exchanges and rituals of food are central features of community, which he regards as a web of intricate exchanges between parasites. The parasite is for Serres not primarily an organism which benefits at the expense of the other, the host, but instead Serres sees the parasite as a courageous actor within uneven or asymmetric exchanges. Literally, parasite in Greek means “to eat next to,” and to Serres the parasite is the guest that eats from the table of the host, but simultaneously reciprocates this generosity with his gift of stories, as Socrates in Symposium. Thus, the exchange happens asymmetrically, or on different frequencies, activating or resonating with different social or biological needs, creating diversity and public dialogue. The parasite stirs, makes noise, causes disruption as a “thermal exciter.”

The meals, feasts, repasts and banquets, with dance, alcohol, laughter, and excess, are all parasitic events, operating inside the social body of the community, activating various symbiotic exchanges and gift economies which form the living and dynamic social fabric. The essence of such rituals is outside the commodity economy, with their spontaneous excitement and social energy of togetherness. Even if they may

16 Roberto Esposito, Communitas: the origin and destiny of community, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2010, p. 6
17 Ibid., p. 6
18 Michel Serres, The Parasite, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2007, p. 190
Ma vi è anche la necessità che l’energia sociale della moda sia condivisa. Proprio come per il teorico culturale Michel Serres, gli scambi e i rituali del cibo sono caratteristiche di capitale importanza per la comunità che Serres vede come una fitta rete di complessi scambi tra parassiti. Per Serres il parassita non è, in primo luogo, un organismo che vive alle spalle dell’altro che lo ospita, ma piuttosto un attore che si muove coraggioso in un mondo di scambi disomogenei e assimetrici. Nella lingua greca, la parola “parassita” significa letteralmente “colui che si nutre presso (un altro)” e per Serres il parassita è l’ospite che si nutre al tavolo dell’ospitante e ne ricambia la generosità donandogli delle storie, come Socrate nel Simposio. Così, lo scambio si svolge asimmetricamente ovvero su diverse frequenze, attivando e risuonando di diverse esigenze biologiche o sociali, generando diversità e dialogo pubblico. Il parassita agita, fa rumore, porta scompiglio in quanto “eccitatore termico”.

I pasti, i convitti, i banchetti, con le danze, l’alcool, le risa e gli eccessi che li contraddistinguono non sono altro che eventi parassitari che si svolgono nel ventre sociale della comunità, dando luogo a diversi scambi simbionti e ad economie del dono che della comunità formano il tessuto sociale vivente e dinamico. L’essenza di questi rituali, con il loro spontaneo entusiasmo e l’energia sociale dell’aggregazione, si situa al di fuori dell’economia delle materie. Pur potendo essere denotati da beni di consumo, possono, al contempo, trasgressire e sfuggire i propri vincoli monetari, liberando più energie sociali di quelle catturate nei rituali stessi.

La visione della moda come energia sociale va a sollevare una serie di interrogativi per gli stilisti: come possiamo produrre comportamenti di moda in grado di infondere coraggio piuttosto che paura della libertà? Come può un marchio di moda rendersi utile e risultare, al contempo, redditizio all’interno di una comunità senza andare, tuttavia, a destabilizzare quell’economia del dono da cui la comunità stessa ha avuto origine?

Sono, poi, varie le problematiche che si vengono a sollevare per la moda sostenibile: se la moda è, infatti, moto perpetuo, e i rituali della be “designated” by consumer goods, they can simultaneously transgress and escape their monetary bonds, liberating more social energies than those captured within the rituals themselves.

If we come to see fashion as a social energy, a series of questions for fashion designers emerge, such as: how to can we produce types of fashion behaviours that foster courage rather than fear of freedom? How can a fashion brand make itself useful, as well as profitable, within a community, in a way that does not undermine the very gift-economy that shaped the emergence of this community? For sustainable fashion several issues emerge: if fashion is indeed *a perpetuum mobile*, and the rituals of fashion are based on squandering, what non-material ways can there be for such rituals? And, if fashion today seems energized by social injustices and inequalities, what are socially sustainable ways to think of the future of fashion?

Fashion is a social phenomenon and a man-made industry. We can change it if we take its energies seriously. But as with energy in physics, the social energy of fashion can neither be created nor destroyed. It pulsates through the social fabric of our civilization. But we can recircuit the energies of fashion, we can modulate and tune them. Yet we cannot do this if we are immune, only if we are in some way part of the contagion.

As an essential part of my teaching I try to get my students to see how we must plug-into fashion, understand the circuitry, redirect some flows and boost others. One way can be to “hack” fashion, making it more participatory, disseminating tools and techniques and offer wider interfaces for engagement between fashion designers and consumers. This could mean anything from co-design to more street-level initiatives of craft-based connections to the processes of fashion. For example learning from the sustainable experience at the hair-dresser: I come back perhaps every month for a treatment, and I leave the service refreshed and optimistic, yet with less material (hair) than when I entered. How does a sustainable fashion store operate that has learned its lessons from the hairdresser? What about lessons learnt from the local hacker-space,

moda si basano sullo spreco, quali modalità immateriali possono seguire tali rituali? E, se oggi la moda pare nutrirsi delle ingiustizie e delle diseguaglianze sociali, quali modi sostenibili vi sono di concepire il futuro della moda?
La moda è tanto fenomeno sociale quanto industria creata dall’uomo. La possiamo cambiare solo prendendo le sue energie con la dovuta serietà. Ma, così come avviene per l’energia nella fisica, neppure l’energia sociale della moda può essere creata o distrutta. È un’energia che pulsa attraverso il tessuto sociale della nostra civilità. Possiamo, però, reindirizzarla, modularla e sintonizzarla; ma non se ne siamo immuni, solo essendone in qualche modo contagiati.
Uno dei principali obiettivi che mi pongo nell’insegnamento è quello di provare a far si che i miei studenti si rendano conto che la moda è qualcosa cui dobbiamo connetterci, di cui dobbiamo comprendere i circuiti, reindirizzare alcune correnti incoraggiandone altre. Un modo di farlo può essere “hackerare” la moda rendendola più partecipativa, diffondendo strumenti e tecniche e proponendo più ampie interfacce di contatto tra stilisti e consumatori. Questo può spaziare dal co-design a iniziative di “strada”, volte a stabilire connessioni di tipo “artigianale” con i processi della moda. Imparando, per esempio, dall’esperienza sostenibile che si può vivere dal parrucchiere: faccio visita al mio parrucchiere forse una volta al mese ed esco dal salone rinfrescato e ottimista, ma nondimeno con meno materiale (capelli) di quanto ne avessi al mio ingresso. Come può funzionare un negozio di moda sostenibile facendo proprio l’insegnamento del parrucchiere? E cosa dire di ciò che possiamo imparare dal locale hackerspace, dal mercato ortofrutticolo, dalla nostra banca o dalla biblioteca del nostro quartiere?
Per divenire fashion-able, capaci di comprendere la moda, dobbiamo farci abili plasmatori delle correnti di moda; non ne dobbiamo respingere le energie ma piuttosto piegarle e manipolarle assieme agli altri in modo com-passionevole.