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Vassar College

Designing for the Anthropocene: Sympathies, Tensions and Hypocrisies in Clothing

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Bachelor of Arts in Sociology

by

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Designing for the Anthropocene: Sympathies, Tensions and Hypocrisies in Clothing

This paper examines the response of clothing to risks of global ecological catastrophe. Clothing is described as an element within interlocking semiotic systems of cultural meaning and in economic systems of resource extraction and commodification. Haraway's concept of the Chthulucene is used to describe these entangled systems. Chapter One lays the theoretical groundwork of the Chthulucene and attempts to untangle the relationships between climate change, individualism, and commodities. Chapter Two aims to position clothing as a space that mediates one's experience of the environment, and how designers and consumers respond to climate change with dress. Chapter Three examines how clothing expresses political dissent against climate change. Patagonia is presented as a case study in the hypocrisies of green capitalism and the consumption of dissent. Chapter Four examines contemporary fashion trends that foreshadow a collective anticipation of an ecological doomsday.

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Introduction

> "Clothing, in its relationship to the human body, bears our marks…clothing is a membrane through which we become with nature, as it formalises our relationship to the natural world. Fabric records evidence of those interactions." (Calvert, Power, Ryall 2014).

Clothing, in basic form, enacts a physical barrier between internal wearer and external environment. From its original conceptions, dress has functioned as a means to provide shelter against environmental volatilities–an exercise of control over the uncontrollable. Across iterations of dress, mediation of the natural environment ensues. Throughout the lifecycle of a garment–its stages of resource production, use, and waste–a negotiation takes place between human and nonhuman forms of nature. Clothing, created from the earth's resources, constitutes apparati that tame, obfuscate, and render predictable Earth's environment. Embedded in the membrane of clothing is this environmental hubris, but as the planet becomes less predictable, clothing responds to, rather than obfuscates, risk.

Clothing has taken on a myriad of ambitions, each informed by their broader cultural sphere and perspective; across applications of dress, there is a unity amidst their function as cultural signifiers of identity. The twofold functions of materiality and signification empower clothing to mediate human relationships with the external world, to enclose the self and alienate it from other lifeforms and things. Clothing, in its pure exoskeletal form, renders the self central, and reifies anthropocentrism.

Becoming an extension of the human form, clothing is omnipresent in interaction with other beings and external forces in general. Utilized for material functionality and social signification, fashion designers have long dichotomized these two aspects. Runway shows are dominated by impractical, encumbersome garbs that could only be adorned in a bourgeois social vacuum of cleanliness. Garments sold on the basis of function are typically relegated to 'outdoors-ware', finding their fame in catalogs and sportswear markets. Only recently, in the streetwear trend, have windbreakers and fleeces finally hit the runway as part of a broader swing towards practicality (Satenstein, 2017).

As aesthetic form displaced functionality on the runway, so did the human figure withdraw from nature. Only as climate change disrupts the predictability of the external environment does negotiation between functionality and signification reconverge in the arena of fashion.[1] Amidst an atmosphere of dwindling sales and decreasing consumption (Fury, 2016; NPD Group, 2018), fashion companies are in need of broadening their consumer base. Fashion designers are quickly pivoting towards consumer anxieties. In a world of growing risk, clothing offers shelter to consumers, whether as refuge from physical risk or affirmation against existential fear.

Nature re-enters the aesthetics of dress, as materials are influenced by the impositions of a volatile climate and aesthetics come to signify conceptions of risk. Global risk is embedded in the human condition at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Beck, 2006:330). Marked by the 2001 World Trade Center attacks, risk has come to be perceived as omnipresent, and

[1] *Fashion*, as I am using the term, simply means clothing. At one point fashion once would have been identifiable to the runway, but the distinctions between haute couture, ready-to-wear, and streetwear have been blurred amidst an incorporation of casual, quotidian style. Highlighting the collapsed barriers between materiality and signification is the emancipation of fashion as a category. Gucci's creative director, Alessandro Michele, offers that "fashion is the way you dress, the way you are" (Fury).

transcendent of borders. Confronted by this uncontrollable 21st Century phenomenon, elected officials are unable to ameliorate the risks imposed by man-made threats such as climate change and terrorism. This birth of omnipresent risk did not happen overnight; the climate crisis has gradually amassed in the atmosphere alongside the political instabilities aggravated by its myriad forces. Droughts are frequent, oceans and their subsequent weather patterns are volatile, but underlying such environmental risks is the gradual uncoupling of humanity from nature–something that has been long underway. The project of modernity, achieved through the prophetic delineation between human and nature, leaves us with an atmosphere saturated with particulate matter spewing from the exhaust pipes and power plants that facilitate globalized consumerism.

Considering the environmental toll of textile production, and the alienation from other beings reproduced through use, I seek to unfold the relationships between climate change, risk, and cultural signification embodied by clothing. How has clothing facilitated alienation from nature? How does it respond to risk? Clothing is not an agent in itself but in its mediation of the external environment, clothing has informed human conceptualizations of nature while availing space for individuals to respond to risk. Focusing on clothing as a space of environmental control and cultural response demands that attention be given to the very *things* of modernity that have inbred climate change. To prioritize the interconnectedness of things and the undoing of planetary relationships, I borrow Donna Haraway's term, *Chthulucene*. Encompassing the "past, present, and yet to come," this framework "entangles myriad temporalities and spatialities and myriad intra-active entities-in-assemblages—including the more-than-human, other-than-human, inhuman, and human-as-humus." (Haraway 2015:161). "Chthulucene is a compound of two

Greek roots (khthôn and kainos) that together name a kind of timeplace for learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying on a damaged earth." (Haraway 2016:2). This is a time for new beginnings, full of inheritances, remembrance, and nurturing of what is yet to come. Clothing, in providing apparati to reconfigure relationships to nature, is a promising space to rearticulate risk and learn to stay with the trouble.

Haraway offers the Chthulucene as a rectification of what is more commonly known as the anthropocene: the current geological epoch in which humans enact a dominant influence over the Earth's biotic and climatic relationships, citing that the latter as "more a boundary event than an epoch" (Haraway 2016:160). Prior was the Holocene epoch, in which places of refuge for Earth's critters still existed, even thrived (Tsing 2015). The dawn of the anthropocene is often estimated to have occurred in the late eighteenth century, the dawn of the industrial revolution, as marked by the proliferation of the steam engine. Analyses of the gaseous contents of polar ice support this estimation, marking the beginning of growing global concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane in ice caps (Crutzen 2000). Mainstream communication and education approaches climate as a scientific issue of *now* or *later,* but following social and geographic organizations of human activity across history, it rather speaks to the structural oppositions imposed between humans and nature that have been cultivated across time. The Neolithic revolution, in which the conception of agriculture may be located, provides a more informative benchmark for the anthropocene, citing the perceived mastery of humans over the environment alongside a growing awareness of seasonal cycles and ecological relationships. Not far from the inception of agriculture is the conception of dress situated, echoing this taming of the environment and the production of controllability.

I am using Haraway's concept of chthulucene as a signifier in a system of various meanings, particularly clothing. How does the end of the world appear, as an expressed meaning (a signifier), in clothing, as a semiotic system? How do people express concern, or its lack, for the end of our current biotic arrangements in the selection of their clothing? How is this communicated, silently, visually, among people? Clothing provides a semiotic vessel through which one can understand the subjectivity of the user within its wares as they confront risk. Aside from availing signifiers to understand the relationship between individualism and risk, the materiality of clothing provides a catalog of environmental interactions. Beyond the ecological degradation that resource extraction, production, and waste necessitates, alienation from nature ensues in all stages of a garment's life cycle; the use stage–or the moments of reproduction–too maintains this detriment upon the environment by physically mediating relationships to it.

To set a bit of atmosphere: the world is burning, and Western consumption is inextricably embedded to this unraveling. Carbon is the invisible thread that interconnects all consumers to commodities and their spaces of production. Approaching an atmospheric precipice (Aengenheyster et al. 2018) the trajectory of the Great Acceleration is maintained (Steffen et al. 2015). In focusing on Western affluent consumers–those most generative of the climate crisis–I seek to understand the appeals of fashion in the Chthulucene; confronting their own complicity, how do consumers seek to express dissent against climate change? How do consumers, facing emergent risks and insecurities, turn to clothing as a means of self-preservation? Fashion avails an apparati through which consumers, regardless of their carbon consumption, may resist or conform to the risks of the Chthulucene. Fashion, constituted as a system through which individuals exercise the simultaneous needs to conform to the larger group while distinguishing

oneself as a member of a smaller group (Simmel 1971:223), offers an arena through which people can resist the status quo and express dissent through expressing political affiliation.

Climate change, despite overwhelming support from the scientific community, is fractured between activists, deniers, and inbetweeners, either apathetic or marred by the appearance of discord. Despite the certainty at which climate change threatens the biosphere, cultural denial and gridlock avail little room for subversion. Identity and individualism subsume politics of resistance with no apparent path of action. This neoliberal politic of self-expression, noted by Amitav Ghosh, lays out a sort of moral-political Protestantism, comparable to Weber's Protestant work ethic, in which the self is perfectible in its aspiration for moral sanctity. But the solipsistic quest for salvation results in a political expression rooted in individualism; "the self becomes a battleground of choice and conflict in a world with problems of global commons" (2016:132). We are in need of structural reformation, and that demands an escape from the individualizing imaginary that is rooted in consumption. Climate change, granted its global interconnections, is of such scale that it renders individual choices inconsequential. But civilian resistance against it is subscribes to a narrow recourse, namely dissent on social-media platforms, aesthetic self-cultivation, and exercising consumer preferences organized on the individual scale amongst other actions. Amidst a political climate so rooted in individualism, yet polarized by widespread denial and vigorous activism (Gosh 2016:137), it becomes of importance for individuals to communicate which camp they belong to.

This polarization, and the need to situate oneself on either side, is highlighted by responses to the 2016 U.S. Election. This performative politic, rooted in spectacle, is illustrated by the accessories deployed to signify political orientation. Amidst the election of Donald

Trump, the safety pin became a means to communicate alliance with the marginalized groups that his populist rhetoric targets (Haider). However, it offered little to zero support to those it sought to help while doing little to resist the state-sanctioned violence they were responding to. Perhaps immediately, the safety pin became a mere gesture of affinity between defeated opponents of Trump, or a token of "performative wokeness" (Henry 2016).

This hollow signifier of wokeness is modular to dressed oppositions to climate change that utilize mass-produced commodities. Responding to destructive cycles of fast-fashion and hyperconsumption, "sustainable" clothing has gained footing with consumers. Patagonia, in filing a lawsuit against the Trump administration, has been spearheading this shift towards an eco-conscious brand image. Wearing Patagonia now represents a degree of consideration for the environment. The black down jacket, made with synthetic down and certifiable fair labor practices, offers an illusory materialization of a pipedream in which capitalism is productive and non-violent. It is no surprise then, that the signature down jacket has been co-opted by Silicon Valley, having become a uniform among its technocrats (Nicas 2018). Adorning Patagonia to highlight a sustainable consciousness is part of a broader makeover of capitalism's image that business leaders are undertaking as a means of instilling confidence in their products as solutions to climate change. However, as I will explore later, Patagonia is ripe with contradictions–namely consecrated market growth, accelerated resource consumption, and the inaccessibility of their wares to people with low incomes.

Clothing–specific garments and the styles they communicate–offers a potent vessel through which we can examine how individuals experience and express their powerlessness in response to risk. By focusing on civilians of the West reckoning with the ineptitude of politicians

to confront global risks, we can see how individuals exercise a semblance of control over egos and fates. Ulrich Beck describes this moment of powerlessness as *tragic individualism*: as global risks come to infiltrate everyday life, a new variant of individualization takes form. "The individual must cope with the uncertainty of the global world by him- or herself. Here individualization is a default outcome of a failure of expert systems to manage risks... Disembedding without embedding–this is the ironic-tragic formula for this dimension of individualization." (Beck 2006:336). Individuals facing risk conforming to personalized political expression, unassured by responsible institutions, come to utilize clothing as a source of resistance to both the physical threats imposed by climate change and the widespread denial of those very conditions.

This work will focus on clothed expressions of tragic individualism in a volatile climate; how is clothing utilized as a physical security? How is clothing used to express political dissent? Equally, I will be focusing on the contradictions embodied by materialist expressions of resistance–the consumption of dissent (Batur 2018)–against climate change and hyperconsumption, granted that the ecological crisis we are in has been spawned by these very materialistic pursuits. Clothing, in its commodified form, demands ecological harm; and granted the spatial dislocation of this lifecycle, ecological feedback is truncated, rendered discontinuous. From resource extraction in production stage, to environmental alienation and cleaning in its use stage, to landfill in its afterlife, these phases are all connected through global transport networks underpinned by fuel consumption. Thus, in consuming clothing, even as a form of dissent, we consent to capitalism's violence against the planet. Despite the contradictions abound, the consumption of dissent operates across flows of power that simultaneously uphold initial means

of production while offering to rearticulate new conceptualizations of risk, accountability, and justice. The *relations of definition* that structure risk are constituted by "the resources and power of agents (experts, states, industries, national and international organizations), the standards, rules and capacities that determine the social construction and assessment of what is a global risk and what is not" (Beck 2016:98). Of these standards are compensation, accountability, and visibility–standards of proof. Aestheticizations of risk may offer to redistribute these relations of risk by making space for subordinate voices to conceptualize and respond to modernities' manufactured uncertainties (Beck 2009).

Whether by rearticulating the socialization of risk through aesthetic signification or protecting oneself with its materiality, clothing may be utilized in myriad ways to confront risk. Clothing operates as political and aesthetic devices that seek to negotiate power and agency in response to the existential uncertainties of the Chthulucene. Engaging in politics of visibility, aestheticization of risk offer to redistribute the relations of definition to avail civilian viewpoints and experiences of risk. The visibility of aestheticizations of risk, granted their physical artifice, contrast the invisibility of risk; until risk materializes as a catastrophe, it is conceptual, immaterial (Beck 2009:292). Clothing avails tangible materializations of resources–water, carbon, and labor–that have become commodities; through these artifacts, in dialogue with their social contexts of reproduction, we may see how individuals, specifically affluent consumers, respond to and see themselves in relation to risk.

My investigation of clothed responses to climate change revolves around risk as an existential threat that demands material and symbolic protection. I focus on fashion practices and styles deployed in the United States, granted the exceptionally zealous consumption of its

citizens and its general domination of the carbon economy (Gillis, Popovich). The self-importance of the U.S., and its violent imposition of power structures across the world, positions the U.S. at the forefront of climate change. As environmental risks, compounded with other political insecurities, unfold across the world, Westerners face images of their own violence. Equipped with material abundance and wealth, fashion designers and affluent consumers alike undertake compelling, and often contradictory, approaches in responding to growing perceptions of risk.

Any assemblage of garment offers an aestheticization of the Chthulucene. Within dress is the expression of the relationship between user and environment and, perhaps, a broader articulation of conceptions of nature. Some of these expressions may be more functional, architectural and others merely symbolic. This work will be underpinned by specific styles and outfits adorned both on the runway and in public spaces. In doing so, I will grant attention to both designers and consumers. Chapter One will lay theoretical groundwork to the moment of the Chthulucene by untangling the relationships between climate change, individualism, and commodities while situating them in stratified articulations of space. Chapter Two aims to articulate a history of clothing as a space that mediates one's experience of the environment; to see how designers and consumers respond to climate change with dress, we must understand how it was anticipated through dress, too. Chapter Three will look at clothed expressions of political dissent against climate change. By focusing on Patagonia, I argue that the consumption of dissent depends on structural blindnesses that obfuscate the violence maintained by green-capitalism. What are the ethical loopholes Western producers and consumers alike exploit to justify indulgent consumption? Chapter Four, then, will examine contemporary fashion trends

that foreshadow a collective anticipation of “doomsday.” How is dress utilized, aesthetically, to respond to risk? Despite maintaining destructive means of production and structures of inaccess, these aestheticizations of risk may generate new ways of conceptualizing and responding to risk.

Situating the Chthulucene in Objects: Spatial Articulations of Power, Production and Consumption

As part of a broader shift towards renewable and recycled fuel sources, a Swedish power plant began burning discarded clothing manufactured by multinational retail company H&M; 15 tons of unsold H&M clothing were burned by the Vasteras plant in 2017 alone (Starn 2017). Yet this volume is but a fraction of the textile waste generated annually; a third of all clothing in the UK enters landfill (Armstrong 2015). These practices, however anomic they may seem, are an apt embodiment of fast-fashion, providing an illustration of the destructive curtails of hyperconsumption. Myriad spaces of extraction, production, exchange, consumption collide in the wastelands of fast-fashion. The Vasteras power plant, with its waste piles of H&M clothes, in addition to the supermarkets and malls in which we shop are the very objects of the Chthulucene. They are the manufacturers of climate change. Their multiscalar interconnectivities, through which interflows of people and *things*–resources, garments, and waste–are contoured viscerally by the vehicular exhaust pipes of their transport. Environmental destruction is its *modus operandi*.

The Chthulucene, in etymology, echoes the *Pimoa cthulhu*, an eight-legged arachnid that lives under the stumps in the redwood forests of Sonoma (Haraway 2016: 32) . Haraway evokes the *Pimoa cthulhu* for its eight-leggedness and tentacular sensibilities. Attuned to the underworld, equipped with feelers, this chthonic being is borrowed by Haraway to accentuate the interconnections of the Anthropocene alongside its myriad lifeforms and things (2016). The Chthulucene rectifies the

Anthropocene by deconstructing the anthropocentrism from which its name is derived; what about the nonhuman? The Chthulucene, as embodied by its guttural pronunciation, invites the forces of the nonhuman–the objects through which humans metabolize the earth alongside the artifacts of its consumption. The subterranean–the chthonic, with which the Cthulhu shares its etymology–converges with the atmosphere; fossil fuels, plastic pollutants, and particulate matter collide alongside manifold temporalities. Petroleum reserves tucked deep into the ground re-materialize in the atmosphere; from the chthonic comes climate change, bringing a new dimension to the world from beneath.

Climate change is but one dimension of the Chthulucene; underwriting the climate crisis are the processes through which we metabolize nature and its resources. Capitalism and neoliberal notions of individualism and consumption render the planet salvageable for resources; their calibrated amassing, formed over millenia, become means to economic ends. The carbonic byproducts of these processes, amassed in the atmosphere, provide a material record of the totality of human activity over time (Ghosh 2016:115). The tentacular feelers of the Chthulucene recognize this homologous cluttering of the atmosphere alongside the underlying power imbalances of the carbon economy. It is this attentiveness to converging temporalities, scales, and spaces of power that the Chthulucene encourages, providing an ideal staging to analyze clothed responses to existential panic and material insecurity.

Clothing is just one technological arena through which we facilitate our metabolization of the planet, but it an especially appealing field to unwind the role of *things* amidst the Chthulucene. Granted the globality of production chains, any single garment encapsulates numerous spaces of production. All textiles begin their life stages as fibers torn from the earth.

As they become thread–and then fabric, garments–a globalized economy takes form, and constituent labor forces, supply chains, and consumer practices partake in the assemblage of commodity. Interconnecting these spheres is carbon, and along with it the devaluation of nature and the dehumanization of workers: producer interests, of both the factory worker and factory manager, are pitted against consumer demands, forcing producers to cut corners to stay afoot with competitors to attract consumers. In following the production of a single t-shirt, a group of researchers discovered a supply chain that traveled across the globe. Raw cotton grown in Mississippi was shipped to Indonesia, where it was spun into yarn before making its way to Bangladesh, eventually becoming a fabric before being cut, sewn and finally returned to New York, where it had been initially designed, as a finished product (NPR 2013).

In addition to pollutive transports of materials, the various spheres of production are linked by reliances on technology. Access to mechanization, affecting labor costs, informs the economic hierarchies embedded in textile production chains. The United States sits upon the global cotton industry through its technological investments and subsidies; the high production of cotton at low costs is a driver of the globalization of fashion (Claudio 2007). American cotton is popular in the global textile economy because of its regularity; such consistency is required by spinning factories that use calibrated robots to process raw cotton into perfected threads (NPR 2013). Indonesia occupies an interstitial niche in the global market, somewhere between the advanced industrial countries that have higher labor costs and the developing countries that, despite lower wages, cannot afford to build a yarn processing plant that demands mechanized infrastructure to satisfy the perfectionist standards of Western consumption (Smith 2013). Within

these production spheres, laborers must play games of pennies out of fear that processors take their product (and labor) elsewhere (Kenney 2013).

The U.S., in exporting its raw cotton to more affordable spheres of labor before being returned for domestic sale, facilitates a global supply chain that merges disparate spaces of production and consumption. These networks with their discontinuities collapsed by fossil fuels are tentacles of the Chthulucene. The finished garments embody a coalescence of tremendous resources; aside from burned petroleum reserves used to transport textiles throughout its stages–some of it even becoming clothing in the form of polyester–exhaustive water consumption and agrochemical use further the environmental degradation necessitated by clothing production (Baydar et al. 2015).The world bank estimates that 20% of global water pollution results from textile processing (Paraschiv et al. 2015). Cotton, comprising 40% of the global textile market, accounts for 11% of global pesticide use, stretching over 2.4% of all arable land (Bevilacqua, 2014). A single pair of jeans takes nearly 3,800 liters of water to produce, and 33.4 kilograms of carbon dioxide are generated throughout its lifecycle (Levi Strauss 2018). Facilitating these cycles of ecological degradation, fashion encompasses a system of organized responsibility, accelerating a "circular movement between symbolic normalization and permanent material threats and destruction," (Beck 2009: 91).

Clothing, in regard to the environmental damage it produces, is generic of commodities operating under capitalist modes of production. Resource consumption is the very logic of capitalism, lying at the heart of climate change. Peripheral to the depleted waterbeds and polluted rivers of global garment industries are vaster undoings of Earth's natural systems; coral bleaching, oceanic dead zones, deforestation, coastal land loss, drought, and shifting

temperatures are rearranging the biotic arrangements of the planet. At the heart of the climate crisis is the prophetic rift between human and nonhuman forms of nature (Marx 1972). Capitalism, in enforcing this opposition, renders the nonhuman exploitable. Performing the logic of neoliberalism, self-conceived individuals are invited to reap nature of its worth for capital gain. Neoliberalism, the driving force through which market forces have chased resources to the deepest corners of the Earth, occupies a diminished state that leaves individuals in similar positions of vulnerability to the zeal of capitalist pursuits.

The deregulation of the economic sphere has been mirrored by disempowerment of the civilian sphere and a cataclysmic disregard for the sacredness of life. Neoliberalism reconfigures social relations of power between people and their environments; natural resources are commodified and diminished to exchange value. Social, economic, and environmental alienation ensues with vast ecological repercussions, as our interactions with nature and our domination over environments replicate the underlying power structures of masculinity, whiteness, and domination. As neoliberalism comes to inscribe social hegemony, the self becomes the base-unit of social life, and with it the disempowerment of the collective. Under capitalism, destructive modes of production and exchange are mystified by a false sense of objectivity. Divorced from their spaces of origin and labor, commodities seem absolute and the means of production appear natural (Marx 1972). Value is determined by the modes of production–the exploitation of labor and the "objective" commodity produced. Exchange values are deranged from their use values, alongside considerations of environments, thus reconstituting the nature as a means to assemble commodities for capital gain; forms of nature are alienated from their innate values as limited lifeforms or things.

Global arrangements of consumption, production, and waste–with the artifacts of their interconnectivities–are spatially mapped upon stratified arrangements of race and risk. The patterns of life (i.e. modernity) that have generated the carbon economy underscoring climate change is only available to a select population that is ultimately dictated by access to capital power (Ghosh 2016: 92). The World Bank staff estimates that the wealthiest 10 percent of humanity are responsible for approximately 59 percent of all resource use and therefore 59 percent of the pollution (Cieslikowski 2009). To be in this top 10 percentile, one needs $68,000 in wealth (Suisse Credit 2015). With a median family net worth of $81,000, the majority of American citizens have collectively spearheaded climate change, in total accounting for the most emissions generated by any nation across time (Bricker 2017). Despite having just over 4 percent of the global population, the U.S. has produced nearly a third of the excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (Gillis 2017). Though China has surpassed the United States in annual greenhouse gas emissions, their emissions per capita are less than half of that of the U.S.; 7.5 metric tons of carbon dioxide, compared to the 16.2 metric tons generated by the average U.S. consumer (Marland 2000). This disparity is further compounded by the portion of China's emissions that are generated from producing commodities for American and European consumers.

Bangladesh, with the second largest garment industry behind that of China (EIU Digital Solutions 2016), makes many of the clothes that are sold in the United States. But the Bangladeshi garment industry is plagued by labor abuse issues. Garment workers had been paid the equivalent of roughly 50 dollars per month before being raised in 2013 following the collapse of the Rana Plaza, a garment factory complex, in which 1,134 people died. On the morning of the collapse, workers and managers argued over the safety of the building, as large cracks had

appeared in its structure a day prior. Workers were told that they would not be paid for the month if they did not work that day (Hoskins 2015). Following the disaster, thousands of workers protested the disregard for safety alongside dehumanizing wages; Pope Francis likened the working conditions and wages to slave labor (Calamur 2013). Worker protests continue, seemingly unheard, as wages remain insufficient and working conditions unsafe (Safi 2016). Since the collapse of Raza Plaza, only 8 of 3,425 factories inspected have been sufficiently repaired to pass a final safety inspection, despite international fundraising efforts that exceed $280 million (White 2015).

With its low elevation and frequent tropical storms, Bangladesh is especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Despite producing just 0.3 percent of greenhouse gas emissions (Harris 2014), Bangladesh is at the forefront of the climate crisis; ocean tides are rising there ten times faster than the global average. Bangladeshi climate scientists and politicians agree that by 2050, rising sea levels will have overtaken around 17 percent of the land whilst displacing about 18 million people (Harris 2014). The disparities in living conditions between the U.S. and Bangladesh– alongside their asymmetrical proximities to the risks of climate change–are emblematic of the global power structures of race and place that inform clothing production. Western consumerism, turning into a game over pennies, depends on dehumanizing labor conditions to sustain such low prices for garments.

There is no home for the 18 million Bangladeshi people who are expected to become climate refugees in the United States under recent immigration policy. The Trump administration, in dismantling immigration and climate programs alike, has shown little hope for people displaced by climate change. The administration has recently moved to dismantle climate

adaption programs, like the Denali Commission, that safeguarded and relocated Alaskan residents that were displaced by rising sea levels and storms (Milman 2017). The xenophobia channeled through the 2016 U.S. Election–anticipated by the successful Brexit campaign–illustrate the vigilance through which the West denies responsibility for its manufactured risks. Immigration provides a scapegoat through which leaders may simplify and obfuscate the challenges faced by nation-states amidst the risks of the Chthulucene. Promises of a border wall only further signal the desperation of nation-states to uphold the very boundaries that are being called into question by climate change and refugee crises. This is the simulacrum of national security, deflecting accountability through obfuscation of risk and identification of responsible parties.

The Chthulucene is globalized by its emergent risks and the carbonated atmosphere. A changing climate compounds with extant threats: natural disaster, drought, land loss, biodiversity collapse, competition for resources, and nuclear proliferation. These risks know no boundaries, threatening to materialize catastrophically anywhere, anytime; nation-state borders yield no protection from hurricanes and drought. Decoupled from geographical location and space, risk is omnipresent in the Chthulucene (Beck 206). Only some nations are equipped with the resources and institutions to anticipate and confront these risks; others, like Bangladesh, are seemingly powerless against the hourglass of climate change. Where will people go when Western consumption floods their homes? The landscape of risk demands a restructuring–a rejection of the nation-state. Risks and accountability must be shared; reparations are due for the peoples marginalized by Western consumption. Yet, the nations most responsible for climate change proceed in the opposite direction, towards authoritarianism and nationalism.

The spatial articulation of modes of production, consumption, and waste laying obfuscate the violence imposed by Western consumption by severing ecological feedback and avenues to empathy. Structural blindness is imposed by exporting waste overseas and relying on non-domestic, non-white spaces of production. Such distance, geographic and spiritual, from experiences of suffering avails numerous ethical loopholes through which consumers may justify their inertia. Inertia, though synonymous with immobility, reinforces the destructive cycles of capitalism by maintaining consumerist lifestyles. Donating clothes becomes an excuse to buy more. Buying organic cotton, too, justifies continued consumption through its appeals to sustainability. These ethical loopholes, propagated by green capitalism, will be revisited in chapter three, but, in short, the immediate appeals to green capitalism woefully misperceive the very scale of the Chthulucene and capitalism's role in it. Instilling false trust in a system that has proven no interest to the wellbeing of people or the planet, the ultimate misperception endorsed by green capitalism is that by reducing consumption to that of sustainable, long-term, or recyclable products, one may circumvent the ecological destruction necessitated by capitalism.

Stratified arrangements of production and consumption reify the logic of capitalism, further devaluing human labor and natural resources. Colonialism and industrialization, underwriting the globalization of capitalism, dictate the material interflow of the global textile industry and the disproportion of emissions. Western nations, inebriated by the self-importance of whiteness, have generated this ethnocentric exploitation, ultimately reliant on the relentless appetites of Western consumers. Bound to this overconsumption is the overproduction of retailers like H&M–the largest buyer in Bangladesh (Gearhart). This arrangement of risk and diminished accountability, spatially stratified, demands vast restructuring.

For structural reformation to effectively combat climate change, we are in need of grassroots coalition building that may establish alliances between global institutions and local communities to share information, resources, and risk.[2] This collective effort demands an escape from the individualizing memory that occupies Western thought and lifestyle. Granted the intimate relationship between clothing and the self, rectifying our relationship to clothing can inspire a broader shift in how people–those who subscribe to western notions of individualism–assemble identity through commodities. Though just a beginning, we can at least withdraw support from the companies that inspire working conditions like those at the Rana Plaza. Expressing dissent against climate change (or any phenomenon so multiscalar and omnipresent) is challenged by the very individualism that conspicuous consumption speaks to. As opposition comes to be expressed through the base unit of the individual, having lost their power to the successes of neoliberalism, *indulgent individualism* takes form as consumers turn inward toward their own appetites and away from global risks.

Of all modernity's manufactured uncertainties, climate change is the most daunting to confront. What is the individual to do, when the institutions of recourse, the very means of living and seeing ourselves, are embedded in the problem at hand? What does it mean to oppose petroleum while keeping it in one's closet in the form of polyester; when the object of opposition is the object of desire? Left against the risks of the Chthulucene, the individual must cope with these uncertainties by themself, the intact institutions unable to offer rectification. This is the conundrum of manufactured risk: the sciences, the state, and the military are part of the problem they are supposed to solve. "It is not the crisis but the victory of modernity which is undermining

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[2] See Beck's *World Risk Society* for more on this cosmopolitan localism.

[its] basic institutions [*sic.*] due to unintended and unknown side effects" (Beck 2009:55). Neither science, politics, mass media, business, law nor even the military are able to define or control risks rationally (Beck 2006:336). Facing the manufactured uncertainties of climate change, legitimized denial, and an unwinding global powerscape, the individual is forced to mistrust the promises of key institutions. Consequentially, people are thrown back onto themselves, alienated from expert systems with nothing else instead. Responsibility for confronting risks and their origins is left to self-conscious citizens (Beck 2009:45).

Embodying the script of neoliberalism, self-expression gains valance as a space of control and resistance to the power structures of an untethering world. Consumer rights inform the logic of tragic individualism. Material safety and public health are forfeited to market autonomy and the forces of creative destruction (Harvey 2007). Medicine is to be bought; geographic dislocation from toxic spaces, too. Individuals equipped with surplus of capital acquire assemblages of commodities as a means of cultivating self-conceptions, aesthetic identities, and political commentaries. Consumers seeking to express opposition to climate change may be attracted to "sustainable products." In addition to evoking a sense of environmental duty, adorning eco-friendly clothes–or simply a Patagonia logo–may be pursued to expressing dissent against the silent majority of capitalism. But validating green capitalism reifies its hegemony. In addition to resisting against the hegemony of climate change through political and aesthetic commentary, clothing avails provisions of safety against the risks it imposes. Bearing the force of the Chuthlucene's antagonisms, consumers utilize clothing for its material security.

If the survival bunker was a shelter against cold war anxieties (Colomina 2007), *ad-hoc* garments are a protection against the omnipresent risks of the Chthulucene, offering security from not just ultraviolet solar energy, but from the surveillant infrastructures imposed by nation-states. In response to risk, consumers utilize an array of 'nomadic technologies' (Colomina 2007:301)–cell phones, gasmasks, *etc.*–to secure oneself while regaining lost autonomy. Of emergency tools embedded in clothing are jackets that suppress heat signatures, facemasks disrupting facial recognition, and external pockets that prevent cell phones from broadcasting location. Though consumption of dissent avails generative potentials, it ultimately affirms what it seeks to destroy. In consuming the fruits of capitalism, destructive means of production are reified and accountability for violence is diminished. As long as expressions of resistance under capitalism rely on commodities, dissent will be inscribed into economic hegemony. However, the aestheticization of risk, when implemented to resist structures of domination and waste, offers to reconfigure social conceptualizations of risk and underlying notions of accountability.

The maintained consumption of Western consumers, despite ongoing concern over labor abuses and environmental consequences, signals an unwillingness to make material sacrifices to one's quality of life (Clancy 2015). In purchasing commodities, consumers condone resource extraction and facilitate the interflow of capital that uphold the stratified powerscapes of the Chthulucene. But in citing the insufficiency of green capitalism, one must too acknowledge the minimal agency of consumers. Conforming to the tenets of neoliberalism structured around consumer choice, individuals have little sway against the hegemony of capitalism. To blame consumers for the violence of capitalism is to practice consumer scapegoatism, further driving

tragic individualization (Akenji 2014). Producers and consumers must both be held accountable and their interdependencies scrutinized; in the echelons of fashion, dependencies between consumers, producers, and designers are intertwined, demanding intervention at all stages. To accommodate this consortium of agents, it must be accepted that power relations are extant throughout all spaces of fashion: from production, to consumption, to use, to waste. The next chapter attunes to the use stage of clothing–as embodied by consumers–and the alienation from nature contained within it.

Clothing as the Metabolic Rift

Following hazardous levels of air pollution in urban centers around the world, air-filtration masks have become ubiquitous. In 2014, following a public advisory to citizens warning them to wear air filtration masks to combat hazardous air pollution, Beijing based designer Zhijun Wang began to make filtration masks out of deconstructed sneakers. Citing the aesthetic banality of disposable masks–made of colorless polypropylene and polyester–Wang stitched together sections of distinguishable shoes (his first pair repurposed a pair of Yeezys, a highly coveted sneaker designed by Kanye West [Appendix]). Wang's mask provided a functional and fashionable mask to a market of air-filtration masks saturated with synthetic blandness [Appendix: 3M Masks).

The ripples of the Yeezy air-filtration mask were emboldened by Wang's unapologetic destruction of a lauded high-end sneaker. In what some, wedded to footwear, may consider sacrilege, Wang produced a garment that visualized his civilian experience with air pollution, one that is otherwise uncommon in dialogue and imagery, thus incorporating a commentary on environmental degradation into view for a globalized fashion audience that would rather ignore its complacency in climate change. Aside from its fashionability, Wang's mask received such acclaim for operating within the logic of Western ostentation and opulence. Posted on Wang's personal Instagram account is a photo of himself adorning his repurposed Yeezy masks

contrasted by an enshrouding black Canada Goose jacket.[Appendix]. As the fur hood lies over back, its silhouette frames the mask. The contrast between the fresh-kill animal fur, and the eco-conscious fashionable mask deployed to combat air-pollution, reminds us that, no matter how subversive against fashion's obfuscation of its toxic relationship to the environment, the mask is generated by capitalist extraction, and environmental violence abounds.

Wang's mask is exceptional for its transformative potential, as it responds to environmental pollution by bringing it into the quotidian through means of fashion. In doing so, it marks a foray into climate change's influence over fashion. But as much as the Yeezy air-filtration mask is fashionable, it is ultimately utilitarian, as it reimagines clothing as a means of confronting manufactured uncertainty. Whereas the utility of clothing was once concerned with overcoming seasonal shifts and changes in atmospheric conditions, and the temperature control aspect of dress is now assumed, we now see a move towards confronting airborne particulates and existential risk. Clothed responses to climate change are expressions of tragic individualism, as consumers must equip themselves to confront what regulators and manufacturers will not. However, air-filtration masks–fashionable or generic–are an extension of a long history of textiles utilized as a means of adapting to the external environment. Aside from resisting dirt, microbes, and infection, clothing has been a crucial tool in overcoming extreme climates. In attuning to this history of textiles as a space of environmental control, we can see how populations have anticipated climate change through dress; how clothing has pivoted from a defensive utility to a cultural signifier, and, along this trajectory, has underlined alienation from nature and the development of modern individualism

Across anthropological demonstrations of dress, there is a unity underlying their original functionality: to install a physical barrier between the internal wearer and the external environment. Alongside the evolution of the hominid is the history of textiles, having always been an essential tool in overcoming environmental restrictions (Hurn 2011). Human responses to changes in climate have always been bound by thermal parameters, thus clothing has enabled entering unfriendly climate zones and altitudes (Gilligan 2007). But aside from making extreme temperatures tolerable, clothing provides a hygienic barrier, protecting against abrasive surfaces, rash-causing agents, insect bites, and ultraviolet radiation.

Clothing works, as a thermal medium, by producing “micro-environments” beneath layers of cloth (Gordon 2013:74): air is trapped in layers and pockets along the surface of skin, thus reducing the thermal gradient between one’s skin and external environment. Initially, these micro-environments were deployed against low temperatures and wet conditions (74, gilligan or gordon). Quilted blankets are among the earliest adaptations of textile micro-environments, but adoptions of such mediums have been perverted by industry, as battery powered jackets that radiate heat, alongside other patented developments like gore-tex, which sells itself on being waterproof yet permeable to vapor, show how far textiles have come in adapting to external conditions. Space suits epitomize the notion of micro-environments, sheltering astronauts from the airless vacuum of space.

As much as clothing has granted access to spaces that were once inaccessible, it has alienated us from the nature embodied by these spaces; through concealing ourselves with dress, we have withdrawn from nature. Clothing mediates, rather physically, our relationship to the external environment. In exerting control over environmental barriers, clothing generates an

anthropocentric hubris over the physical environment. Gilligan argues that the generation of modern behavior is linked to clothing, as it was the environmental control it availed, rather than cognitive developments, that allowed humans to develop more controlled ways of living (104).

This threshold of modern behavior, as suggested by Gilligan, is situated in the distinction between simple clothing and complex clothing. Simple clothing refers to loose-fitting textiles, whereas complex clothing is fitted to one's figure, "insulating or separating humans from contact with natural environment" (2007:104). In completely covering the body, complex clothing avails a more uniformly warm micro-environment. In becoming an extension of the human form, it renders the human separate, discontinuous, from the external environment and other living beings. Clothing has certainly been instrumental in developing anthropocentric conceptions of nature. Clothing, as it comes to enclose the self from the external environment, encourages mythic notions of enclosure and discontinuity that underlie popular conceptions of nature as oppositional to humanity.

With humankind withdrawn from nature, exterior environments are invoked as means to an end. Subject to this anthropocentric hubris, nature becomes "penetrable" at the whim of the capitalist aggressor, free to reap its fruits for material gain. Assemblages of natural resources, clothing becomes a feat of human ingenuity, thus operating as a metric to distinguish between humans and animals (Hurn).[3] Though it may be strikingly obvious that dress has nothing to do with distinction between humans and nonhumans, the significance of dress has been a source of tremendous violence against indigenous populations confronted by European colonialism, as clothing has long been a colonial weapon to enforce assimilation and erase indigenous cultures.

[3] As recent work in the fields of neuroscience and ecology has illuminated the prevalence of sophisticated intelligence and cultural aptitude of nonhuman animals, clothing emerges as one of humanity's lingering exceptions of differentiation from other animals (Hurn 2011).

Nudity, not as an aesthetic but as a lack of clothing, has long been considered a signifier of animality amongst non-western people, and thus used as a justification for the violence wreaked upon them (Hurn 2007:114).

Speaking to Foucauldian notions of power's omnipresence, clothing is a ripened space of social coercion. Straight jackets and corsets may most concretely evoke this sort of control, but warm clothing, too, works power over its wearer. The textures of comfort and warmth become a physical extension of ourselves; part of our skin. The emergence of complex clothing marks a perversion of the self, as it enables decorative modification of garments and thus symbolic modification of the physical environment. Clothing, through the intimacy we share with it, takes on the "harmless aspect of the familiar" (Carson 2002). Clothed mediations between internal and external spaces do not necessitate alienation from that environment, thus we cannot unilaterally critique clothing as a space of alienation. However, one can generalize about clothing worn in capitalist spheres, granted that these garments are commodities and thus detached from their sense of place and origin.[4] The spatial disorientation embodied by a single garment obfuscates the systems of nature that it contains. Detached from its material structure and the spaces of labor that assembled it, our relationship to material extraction and labor injustice is normalized.

Given the instrumentality of individualism and technological metabolization of nature, it would be reductive to name capitalism the be all and end-all of environmental alienation. Through the material progressions of capitalism and industry, cultural notions of identity and individuality have fundamentally altered understandings of nonhuman realms of nature. Though

[4] Marx conceives that it is this very delocalization that marks something as a commodity: "this locational movement— the bringing of the product to the market, which is a necessary condition of its circulation, except when the point of production is itself a market—more precisely be regarded as the transformation of the product *into a commodity*"(Marx 1973:40).

capitalism dictates the processes through which nature is consumed, its hegemony owes itself to its precursive relations of power that initially drew binaries between the self and other, human and nonhuman, history and nature. Patriarchy and racism have implanted the very oppositions that underlie conceptions of the Other that enable violence.

In regard to the articulations of individualism endorsed by Western consumerism, it is important to understand the historicity of the underlying selfishness signified by conspicuous consumption; Western expressions of individualism have progressed in tandem with shifts in conceptions of nature as a realm apart from the human, largely through the inverted relationship between the empowerment of the individual and the depletion of nature. The neoliberal subject of today, truncated from processes of ecological feedback and presumably isolated from the awe of non-industrialized nature, marks the apex of the progressions of individualism and alienation from nature that can be traced through schools of Western thought. The textile industry is evidently complicit in ecological destruction, but there is a longer history between clothing, individualism, and nature, as clothing has always facilitated the consumption of nature. Thus, before seeing how consumers respond to climate change and ecological uncertainty, we must be attune to how individuals have anticipated it through dress.

Notions of individualism championed by modernity–or, rather, demanded by neoliberalism–can be traced to the Italian Renaissance, where Simmel situates the "birth of individuality" (1971:217). As power, and honor alongside it, spread to a greater degree of men, the need for social distinction grew, not so much to signify one's belonging to a certain class, but more so to distinguish the self as unique. Thus, as demonstrated by the Florentine fashion of the time, culture and style were driven not so much by distinct taste, as it was less about conformity

or removal from the group, but more about being conspicuously remarkable. It is this demand of "distinction," as spurred by the loosening of one's control over power, that drives the renaissance man's ambition for uniqueness. (Simmel 1971).

Jumping to the European Enlightenment, the growing rift between humans and nature becomes growingly evident in Western conceptions of individualism. This rift is established through the binary thinking championed by Renaissance logic. The hubris expressed by the human ability to compartmentalize a problem–to break it into its constituent parts and then reassemble–imposes imagined barriers between subjects: us from them, self from nature, mind from body, internal from external. Underwriting the alienation of the self from nature is a consistent deployment of Cartesian dualism that endorses the very binaries that withdraw the self from other and the human from nature (Ghosh, 34). Whereas distinction motivated the individualism of Renaissance Italy, Enlightenment thought of the 18th century marked a shift in which individualism is driven by notions of freedom rather than remarkability (Simmel 1971:218). Marked by a belief in the "natural equality of equals," that entitles each man to pursue his own interests,[5] "equality and differentiation become the moral imperative" (Simmel 1971:224). Freedom came to be seen as an ability to transcend the constraints of material life. Thus, this perceived equality, rooted in misconceptions of natural law and availed exclusively to white men, employs a hubris over the environment, as the realm of nature is subsumed by the logic of the market and "free competition" (Ghosh 2016:56). White men's agency, white men's appropriation of the earth, came to represent the natural order of the time. The market, too then, is imbued with the language of organic nature. The "free man" is rendered perfect, beautiful, and

[5] The dominant framework underwriting this notion of *natural equality* restricted "equals" to the white men.

indifferent. This naturalistic hubris flows from 18th century conceptions of nature as mechanistic and scientific (Simmel 1971:220). The disempowerment of nature follows the empowerment of the self.

As the influence of industry and modernity accelerated through the 19th century, the fortification of the individual as the base social unit is fortified alongside the domination of nature. Simmel notes that this general liberation of the individual from restriction and determination is followed by a desire to distinguish oneself from another, thus elevating the importance of personality above the person (1971:221). As broadening populations gained access to capital, aspirations gravitated beyond freedom and further towards distinction, as cultural means were increasingly taken to feel particular and irreplaceable to their social group. The value of differentiation is expressed through the Romanticism of the 19th century, as art and culture came to be contextualized through personal feelings and individual experience. Expressionism further drove this passion, as the inner emotions of the artist manifest par-experience (Simmel 1971:381).

Throughout the 20th century, following the proliferation of a middle class, and thus a consumer class afforded by global capitalism, art turns further inward, searching itself rather than the external world for beauty and truth (Ghosh 2016:120), turning an eye away from state-sanctioned violence and the looming environmental threats of pollution, nuclear proliferation, global warming. Looking at the 21st century, the self has maintained its trajectory towards self-expression as a means of dissent. Clothing provides an appealing space to resist the cultural hegemony underlying the climate crisis. As tragic individualism is driven forward by prolonged denial of climate change and the arrival of its antagonisms, the social valance

provided by fashion proliferates, as civilians confronting the manufactured uncertainties of late capitalism are left to arrange for their own safety. Nature is no longer a space to be conquered, but rather it is a source of fear.

Clothing is the skin of the modern world; protection in its afterness. Against the manufactured uncertainties eroding the predictability of bourgeois life, clothing offers a space of bodily security and self-reification. Its material content provides a physical barrier against nonhuman forces galvanized by climate change, while it reifies the self in the face of risk by materializing expressions of identity. The carbon economy cannot be changed, but the self can be equipped to resist existential threats–as they exist both imaginatively and materially. Tragic individualization avails the body as a final frontier of controllability, encouraging self-cultivation through the externality of objects (Simmel 1971:230). Culture is a perfection of man, and fashion produces this body of culture to be appropriated to manifest the ideal self.

Tragic individualization gives way to institutionalized individualism (Beck 1999:9), as consumers are invited to plan and design themselves as individuals. The aesthetic value of fashion generates additional value in the face of risk as stability and outlets for agency seem to diminish elsewhere. Garments become ways to emote mood, political communication, and aesthetic preference. The appeals of self-expression in response to risk are well understood by fashion designers, who have eased their authoritarian grip on aesthetics to give more space to consumer choice and style. Rather than presenting complete head-to-toe looks and entire silhouettes, brands–namely Gucci and Vetements, who will be discussed later–have begun conceiving their garments each as separate entities to be reappropriated by consumers.

The history of clothing as a technology through which humans familiarize themselves with their environments and render them predictable illustrates that we cannot account for the ecological toll of clothing entirely as a machination of twentieth century consumption and individualism. Amidst disproportionate carbon consumption, we must interrogate the relationships between consumers and producers as they come together to reify environmental alienation while dissipating accountability; how do producers avail ethical loopholes to uphold indulgent consumption, and how do consumers exploit such claims through ignorance and apathy?

Moral Sympathies and Contradictions of Consumed Dissent

> The academic debate concerning climate change is over, but the political and moral responses have reached a new level. . . . Human beings, as researchers have established with a unanimity rare with such multi-faceted issues, bear the primary blame for global warming. . . . The real novelty, perhaps even the historic message of this report, is the conclusiveness with which all evasions and doubts concerning the human causation of climate change are dispelled.
>
> -Müller-Jung, 2007

Within fashion, producers and consumers converge in media and market, diminishing accountability by dispersing responsibility across vast bodies of agents and consumers. Fast fashion, propelled by its participating consumers, enacts a series of aggressions upon the Earth; the textile industry demands landscape degradation, the generation of pollution, and alienation from nature. The industry's harms are not isolated to the act of production. To participate in aesthetic practices of dress to expend resources on one's own leisure before aiding the foundational needs of others demands a mystification of its ecological impacts. Whether to make clothing or to wear it, consumers and producers engage in a system of *organized irresponsibility* in which nobody is really accountable for the consequences (Beck 1999:33). Underpinning this irresponsibility is a consumer subjectivity dependent on structural blindnesses and obfuscation of impact. Producers, through token 'sustainability' campaigns and philanthropic strategies, seek to exploit consumer ignorance in order to uphold consumption models despite the environmental repercussions.

Tragic individualism demands that civilians amass commodities to express both identity and resistance; consumption is a consequence of everyday life (Akenji 2014:17). Seeking to

express opposition to the destructive cycles imposed by hyperconsumption, civilians are unable to opt out of the modes of production, facilitating the consumption of dissent. In order to object to destructive commodities, consumers seek products made from responsible sources–hoping to evade the collateral damages of production. But to consume 'eco-friendly' products and garments overlooks that these collateral damages are not incidental, but built into the modes of production granted the alienation of nature and consumption of resources that textiles demand. Though organic cotton offers a less destructive alternative to non-organic cotton, both require vast amounts of water and resources. Green capitalism, in marketing certain products as "sustainable", appears to circumvent the ecological violences of capitalism, communicating a false sense of accomplishment and efficacy to consumers, providing a "warm glow" for altruistic behavior (16, Akenji). In doing so, eco-labels–marketing tags applied to commodities–may simply encourage additional consumption of items that otherwise may not have been purchased.

Green capitalism is apologist at best, distracting from the structural problems of capitalism by providing an illusory appearance of progress. Embedded in it is the capitalist logic that is built upon the devaluation of nature; retained is the system of commodity fetichism that reifies its artifacts appropriated from nature. Not only do sustainability campaigns overlook the fundamentality of capitalism to reduce all beings and things to an exchange value deranged from their spiritual–or even use–value, but they approach the individual as the sole consumer, rather than the communal group, thus reinforcing the isolating logic of neoliberalism (15, Akenji). The scale of climate change and species loss escape the grasp of individual choices, demanding structural change. These seemingly sustainable alternatives garner an appearance of benevolence and action for consumers while maintaining lifestyle habits. By seeking to ameliorate peripheral

problems (avoiding pesticides, using fair trade items, recycling wasted materials), green capitalism evokes an image of efficacy that prevents consumers from critiquing their structural relationships to the commodities they consume and climate change. This move to preserve habit solidifies the logic of neoliberalism by isolating opportunities for rectification to an individual scale, thus reinforcing the hegemony of capitalism and ecological destruction, expanding the market with a new niche.

Appeals of green capitalism to affluent consumers depend on the obfuscation of their ecological violence, as the appearance of diminished impact makes its commodities attractive over their cheaper, more unsustainable counterparts. Consumption of eco-friendly products, like all conspicuous consumption, is encouraged through ignorance. Marketers exploit such unknowing with eco-labels, deployed as signifiers of environmental compliance. But the standard of compliance is so low, more often than not set by other producers; further, consumers are unfamiliar with the criteria of eco-labels (Steinhart 2013:278). Such marketing obfuscates the insufficiencies of current sustainability models by presenting a binary between good and bad rather than choosing the lesser of many evils. Eco-labels, seemingly assured of their benevolence, provide “moral license to consume” (Steinhart 2013:279), perhaps encouraging consumption that otherwise would be deferred.

Sustainability campaigns, operating within the same power structures that determine spatially stratified arrangements of production, consumption, and waste, benefit from the structural blindnesses of whiteness. Heather Swanson writes that “white middle-class American subjectivities are predicated on not noticing. They are predicated on structural blindness: on a refusal to acknowledge the histories we inherit...For [*sic.*] the white and middle-class of the

global North, the Anthropocene is so banal that they do not even notice it. It is the green front lawn, the strip-mall parking lot" (2017). Clothing, like most commodities, comes to us through storefronts and online marketplaces detached from the myriad spheres in which labor was performed and materials extracted; clothing can be beautiful when it is removed from the dehumanizing labor conditions and destroyed landscapes from which it is made.

As embodied by the juxtaposition between the dehumanizing production at the Rana Plaza and the overconsumption signified by the Veritas power plant, affluent Western classes are deeply detached from the effects of their lifestyles. As these blindnesses are collapsed by mediated images of violences, consumers must confront their violence and make ethical justifications to uphold consumerist lifestyles. Conscientious consumers who still consume clothing while maintaining a benevolent self-image come to depend on two primary premises to justify their behavior: acquired garments are sourced responsibility, and donating old or unused clothing fights cycles of waste. Reducing consumption, avoiding negligent brands, and supporting "sustainable" producers fulfills one's sense of responsibility, enabling continued–albeit more concentrated–consumption. Ignorant to the violence remnant in sustainable capitalism, wealthy consumers are encouraged to buy products with appeals of reduced environmental impact, long-term use, or philanthropic affiliations. Overlooking the gridlocked inequalities of consumerism, affluent shoppers encounter a simplified choice between 'good clothes' or 'bad clothes'. The appearance of amelioration availed by the eco-friendly option–the lesser evil–overlooks the exceptionalism of sustainable consumption granted that the ability to consume less harmful goods is reserved to those with the economic means to do so; one

buys what they can afford.[6] Shopping for clothes presents an economy of guilt in which consumers with surplus capital are able to exude a sense of accomplishment and dissuade responsibility. Donating them also grants this altruistic self-image by making space for buying and adding more clothes to the closet.

The fashion cycle, as a form of organized irresponsibility between producers and consumers, imposes a circular movement between symbolic normalization and permanent material threats and destruction (Beck 1999). Entrusted by the logic of free market naturalism, consumers and producers engage in a symbiotic relationship of unaccountability amidst a herd mentality: people find acceptance in fashion, no matter how extravagant or tasteless a style may be (Simmel 1971:313). Consumers expect companies to do the work, (Han, 163) and companies exploit the multifarious quests of consumer rights. As the pillars of security–state, science, economy–are failing to provide security, the self-conscious citizen is declared their heir (Beck 2009:45). Promoting green consumerism lays responsibility on consumers to undertake the simultaneous maintenance of economic growth and the drive towards sustainability. Though consumers may strive towards ethical consumption, expecting a consumer driven shift performs consumer scapegoatism by reifying the individual as the source of change (Akenji 2014).

Appeals of sustainability rely on the appearance of efficacy in both stages of production and waste: the object of consumption does not impose unnecessary destruction in any stage of its life cycle; it is okay to buy clothing, to over consume, as long as those clothes do not wind up in landfill. Donating old and unused clothes encourages one to buy more, constituting a system of "organized waste" accelerated by the aesthetic cycles of fashion. Amidst falling prices and lower

[6] Though organic cotton production increased by 3000% from 1992-2007, organic cotton represents 0.1% of clothing market. (Achabou)

quality, consumption grows as even less time is considered before purchase, even if clothes will be worn just once or twice (Jørgensen 2012:170). Clothing brands have demonstrated a strong willingness to exploit these perceptions, not just through the application of eco-labels but through participating in recycling campaigns that frame donating clothes as an excuse to buy more.

These contradictions are evoked most clearly by H&M. In April of 2016, a year before news would break regarding the incineration of their unsold clothes at the Vasteras power plant, H&M embarked on a publicity project–*World Recycle Week*–in which they would collect 1,000 tons of used clothes from customers. Upon collection, the items were shipped to sorting plants where they were sorted to be re-worn and sold in second-hand stores, re-used as cloth, or recycled into new fabric. These staged campaigns are embedded with perks that attract consumers, too. Though the campaign seeks to "change people's behaviour when it comes to caring for their clothes, to make sure that no fashion goes to waste," customers received a voucher for 15% off their next purchase at H&M in exchange for donating, encouraging customers to then buy more clothes (*H&M Magazine* 2016). As consumers buy into such messages, they collude with producers in a delusion, upholding hypocrisies in environmental policy. Sustainability is co-opted and rendered meaningless.[7]

H&M, embodied by the contradictions of World Recycle Week, demonstrates an indifference to its effects on people and environments as long as it does not affect price-points. A report on their supply chains found a strong correlation between their subcontractors and quality of life, concluding that H&M is less willing to supply from countries with higher metrics of

[7] One cannot help but wonder if clothes produced at the Rana Plaza, prior to its collapse, wound up in the Vasteras power plant.

well-being (Shen 2014), showing a reliance on cheap labor (Jørgensen 2012). The convenience of clothing donation boxes at H&M and the discount rate granted in exchange is just a foray into the insufficiency of clothing donation programs. Like H&M clothes that wound up as fuel for a power plant, much of the clothing that the West donates winds up in landfill or saturated second hand markets, where they remain stagnant as unwanted relics of hyperconsumption (Hollins 2006). Of the donated clothes that do not wind up in landfill or second hand markets, many are shipped abroad in the form of 'aid.' 16% of all U.S. exports to the continent of Africa (in volume) is used clothing, where they have catastrophic effects on the local textile industries that they saturate (Frazer 2008:65).[8]

Baudrillard argues that objects are no longer mere commodities, but tests that interrogate us, developing a circular response through which we come to manifest ourselves (Baudrillard 1994:75). We are no longer what we eat (Katz 2010); we are what we wear. The self, navigating tragic individualism, seeks out eco-labels and philanthropic consumption to cultivate a self-image of benevolence. Clothing, performing social differentiation (Simmel 1971:315),contributes to this image through garments that become signifiers of brand affiliation. Brands attempts to develop a relationship with consumers that resonates with their sense of self (Klein 2009). Facilitating the desire to distinguish oneself as a dissenter against climate change, consumers gravitate towards brands that reinforce their commitment to sustainability. Co-opting

[8] Across all countries on the African continent, clothing donations are responsible for 40% of production decline and 50% of employment decline on average. One can only imagine the social and ecological gains and protections that would have been put in place had these stunted economies afforded industrial development. Textile and apparel production and exports provide an important stage of economic growth, laying a foundation of economic and human capital upon which technological growth may continue (Frazer 2008:64-67).

eco-friendliness makes space to stage personalized experiences with consumers to overcome negative perceptions (Han 2017:166).

This likeness between brand image and self-image is nowhere more apparent than the marketing campaign of multinational retail brand Patagonia. The brand's very logo–the skyline of the Cerro Fitz Roy in the Patagonia mountains, from which the brand gets its name–appropriates naturalistic imagery to convey a passion for the environment that resonates with consumers seeking to oppose the impacts of consumerism. More than any other brand, Patagonia provides personalized experiences to attract consumers, selling outdoors wear and equipment designed for the natural landscapes. In providing personalized products for personalized experience, they generate an emotional relationship between consumer and clothing that prolongs the use of the garment, preventing its discarding through the inculcating of sentimentality (Achabou 2013:1898). Patagonia's "worn-wear" campaign, featured a van which toured the U.S. in search of stories shared between clothes and their wearers, and offered to repair old garments along the journey.

Patagonia has managed to create a very successful and positive brand image by offering a remedy to eco-alienation, having discovered an untapped market of consumers who want to do something about climate change and ecological degradation amidst a shortage of agency in affecting such change. Yet, despite their commentary on overconsumption, the brand has demonstrated concerted efforts to expand its market; the scale of operations has doubled in the past six years whilst opening forty new storefronts worldwide during that same period (MacKinnon 2017). In an interview with Rick Ridgeway, the companies' vice-president of environmental affairs, the facade of having stumbled into a niche market withers. The company's

environmental approach was inspired by a New York Times article about consumer spending during the last days of the Great Recession (Goodman 2009). The article found that financial stress was putting "value in vogue" in ways beyond bargain hunting, as conspicuous consumption had stalled. In its place, consumers were shifting to products that offered long-term use and durability, like fuel-efficient vehicles and gardening tools. Of the article, Ridgeway said, "That really caught my eye, because that is our value proposition. That is what we're trying to deliver to our customers—those kinds of products" (MacKinnon 2017).

Patagonia exudes an imagery of naturalism and sustainability, seizing upon a swath of consumers suffering alienation amidst a condition of "post-domesticity," in which humans are decoupled from the land and systems that provide life (Hurn 2011:111). But there is a jarring contradiction between the brand's appropriation of natural landscape imagery and their storefronts through which they sell product. Upon visiting their stores in locations such as Manhattan, Paris, and Hong Kong, one will see the "affluent recreational shoppers who helped to inspire the nickname Patagucci" (MacKinnon 2017). This tension between pushing a naturalistic brand image while consecrating on growth is epitomized by the brand's "Don't Buy This Jacket" advertising campaign. On Black Friday of 2011, Patagonia took out a front page advertisement in the New York Times, depicting their signature fleece jacket alongside a mission statement that asked customers not to buy the jacket. The ad reads "We ask you to buy less and to reflect before you spend a dime on this jacket or anything else" before noting the environmental impact of the jacket shown above (135 liters of water and 20 pounds of carbon dioxide–24 times the weight of the finished product) (Patagonia 2017). Pivoting from such discouragement, the advertisement then boasts of the "60% recycled polyester jacket, knit and

sewn to a high standard; it is exceptionally durable, so you won't have to replace it as often." Sales skyrocketed, alongside company growth and byproduct consumption (MacKinnon 2017).

This environmental transparency proved to be attractive to a growing niche of customers, as it has become a frequent marketing ploy. As important as it is to raise awareness of levels of resource extraction and greenhouse gas emissions unleashed by commodification, these branding schemes are becoming part of a facade of capitalist production–an "eco-friendly masquerade" (Achabou 2013:1902)– used to mask the violence maintained despite transparency. Patagonia, though exceptional in its commitment to disseminating information and utilizing its resources to protect national landmarks (Bhattarai), is surrounded by a drive to co-opt philanthropy, environmentalism, and sustainability while expanding markets to attract new customers.[9] These campaigns do nothing to affect their company structures and proximities to climate change. Instead, they enact micro-changes along the fringes of their companies.

Green capitalism, in demanding that consumers bear the burden of affecting systemic change, is the ultimate form of tragic individualism. Recused from formats of responsibility, consumers must utilize their own means and resources to reduce ecological impacts. But, if one can afford to expend extra resources on less destructive products, they must then partake in an 'ethical calculus' (Hoskins 2014:11) to figure out which issues are most important and which products most effectively respond to those issues. It is idealistic to instill faith in brands simply because they promote sustainability through ad campaigns. And because of consumer unfamiliarity with eco-labeling, using labeling as a criteria for buying is an empty effort (Clancy

[9] Gucci partook in a unicef campaign in which 25% of profits from an accessory line were donated to Unicef; Hermes incorporated recycled textiles in the Petit H collection; Yves Saint Laurent developed a vintage line made of reworked clothing; Nike has utilized organic cotton in a few designs (Achabou 2013:1897).

2015), unless one buys into transparency campaigns, against which one cannot knowingly be compared with other retailers who are not as transparent.

Green capitalism shares its big brother's evils, and is perhaps the ultimate form of denial against their violence. As climate change accelerates, along with its biotic uncertainties, 'sustainable' products give an impression of action against the underlying systems, obfuscating the maintenance of a system of alienation from nature incited by commodification.
Wedded to green capitalism is a faith in technocracy; expansion and capital growth are still positioned as spaces in which to master problems. This faith in *techno fixes*–a belief that "technology will somehow come to the rescue of its naughty but very clever children" (Haraway 2016:103)–invokes green capitalism and emergent modes of textile production as a *deus ex machina*, encouraging us to proceed further down the path of production and consumption (Foster 2011). But effectively responding to climate change demands a structural upheaval, beginning with a massive curbing of resource consumption.

Despite this need to slow down and reevaluate our relationship to textiles–and the world external to the self in general—clothing will be a major tool in the Chthulucene, availing material resistance against emergent risks and comfort to existential panic. Specifically, textiles provide a means to reign in emergent climatic volatilities. As a means of preventing ice-melt, climate scientist Evan Nisbet proposed to drape huge sheets of white polypropylene over the glacial ice of Mount Kilimanjaro in summer periods until reforestation is possible (Gordon 2013:96). Sandbags, encased with burlap, are already used to contain floods, and booms of woven polyester coated with etherane are used to clean oil spills (Gordon 2013). As rising temperatures disrupt habitat zones, pathogenic biomes and insects become increasing threats to

public health (Ginty 2018); clothing, for its physical barriers, will continue to protect against infectious disease.

In 2015, luxury fashion house Chanel deployed garments made with 3d printing. The New York Times called the premise “a little bit futuristic” (Friedman 2015), evoking a faith in techno fixes. A slew of startups have emerged, promising sustainative alternatives to textile production. Spiber offers a technique that modifies the DNA sequences of spider silk proteins to “produce limitless varieties of materials with unprecedented versatility” (2018). In a similar light are the sneakers made by Adidas that recycle plastics collected from ocean waters, turning “the threat into thread” (2017). With the luxury of access to material resources and intensive, high-skill labor, luxury fashion houses and large-scale clothing companies have sought to offer possibilities for production that seek to answer problems rather than cause them. Though clothing commodification ultimately reaffirms capitalist means of production and environmental violence, the aesthetic performances of dress offers to rearticulate how we conceive of nature and climate change, alongside our roles within such spaces.

Aestheticizations of Risk: Denial, Apathy, And Transformation

"To the extent that risk is experienced as omnipresent, there are only three possible reactions: denial, apathy or transformation. The first is largely inscribed in modern culture, the second resembles post-modern nihilism, the third is the 'cosmopolitan moment' of world risk society. The fundamental ambivalence of global risks opens up unintentionally the (mis)fortune of a possible new beginning: How to live in the shadow of global risks?" (Beck 2006:331).

The Chthulucene is a spectre haunting modernity. Ensnared in its tentacles is a disorientation of lifeforms and *things* confronted by risk. Temporalities and discontinuities collide alongside the undoing of planetary biotic and climatic relationships. Risks, unbound to specific agents and spaces of production, become omnipresent, instilling anxiety in those once sedated by the purported predictability of modernity; to confront risk demands existential experimentation (Beck 2009:12).

Existing through social beings and their artifacts of culture through which risk is conceptualized, the Chthulucene lives in clothing. Its anxieties–or rather, fear for the end of the world–alongside delights of unknowing, are communicated visually and silently through dress and sublimated through aesthetics. Following the incumbency of Donald Trump, a gamut of trends have surfaced that signify anxiety and anticipation of risk; "apocalyptic fashion" is trending (Phelan). Biohazardous symbolism and evocations of interplanetary escape are

appropriated into stylizations of risk. Though aestheticizing nuclearism and climate change often fetichizes their wastelands, embedded in these stylizations are opportunities to reconceptualize risk and to communicate its existence, anticipate its materialization into catastrophe, and imagine an alternative future.

Beyond adornments that directly respond to the existential staging of risk, one can see any assemblage of garments as a signifier of risk; bound to the social conditions of production and reproduction, aestheticizations of risk offer artifacts to understand the subjectivities of consumers coming to grips with modernities' manufactured uncertainties; these artifacts are the discarded clothes in landfills, signifiers of unbridled consumption; commodities currently in production, further feeding the atmosphere with emissions; the dress of our intimate reproduction through which we perform existential experimentation (Beck 2009:5). Assemblages of garments become aesthetic articulations of risk perception, or *aestheticizations of risk*, bound to their stages of expression (Thompson 1980).

In response to the risks of the 21st century, myriad articulations of panic, conformity, and unknowing emerge. Looking at the Chthulucene as a signifier within the symbiotic field of fashion, how is proximity to risk, or lack thereof, communicated visually? How do anxieties regarding climate change and global insecurity appear? Beck's triad of reactions–denial, apathy, and transformation–encompass the gamut of dress worn by consumers who utilize commodities to express social commentary; namely, affluent consumers with the surplus of resources needed to cultivate aesthetic expression.

These three categorizations, when applied rigidly, overlook the complexity under which the consumption of dissent operates. Contradictions abound when appropriating the fruits of

capitalism to dissent against its violence; but confined by tragic individualism, consumers must equip themselves with means to overcome the existential threat evoked by risk. Granted the hegemony of the carbon economy and the centrality of commodified consumption to everyday life (Akenji 2014:17), it is a rarity to circumvent the modes of production generative of climate change. Further, as much as clothing enhances the agency of individuals and facilitates self-expression, the decorum of clothing drives the wearer inward, reifying self-importance.

The consumption of dissent is "open to a double inflection," (Hebdige 2012) as garments made as fruits of capitalist domination may be appropriated by subordinate groups to carry "secret" meanings; clothing becomes a signifier through which wearers may express, in code, a form of resistance to the order that guarantees environmental subordination. Though resistance against climate change is stalled by indulgent individualism, aestheticizations of risk availed through dress offer to change how risk is conceived (not just in its existential threat, but in discourses of accountability and justice. Thus, most aestheticizations of risk do not fit statically into Beck's triad, but rather hover above and shift across these categories in different moments according to the specific signifiers and spaces of reproduction.

The social conditions through which aestheticizations of risk are reproduced signal a proximity, or lack thereof, to the production or effect of risk. Aestheticizations of risk that are amassed through capitalist consumption indicate an ability to expend resources on material expression, thus signalling a relative ability to withstand manufactured uncertainties. Here lies a contradiction that blunts the efficacy of aesthetic resistance to climate change: it is only those least affected by climate change and most responsible for its causation, who are able to expend a surplus of resources on aestheticizing their existential uncertainty. To cultivate an aesthetic

identity, or to even amass objects in response to risk, signifies power. To not have the resources necessary for material assemblage and aesthetic expression signals a susceptibility to risk.

Enforcing all expressions of dress into the categorizations of denial, apathy, and transformation would be obtrusive, overlooking the stratifications of class that inform consumption. In overlooking topologies of power and the structural (un)availability of resources, all embodiments of social conformity become apathetic and all utilizations of commodities become forms of denial, complacent in environmental destruction. But aestheticizations of risk, for the most part, are most informative when a basis of intentionality is extant. To satisfy this need for intentionality, there must be an awareness of one's ability to expend resources on aesthetic expression. This surplus of capital that luxury fashion lends itself to signals a distance from the ongoing impacts of climate change, alongside a participation in its causation.

Looking at aestheticizations of risk across runway shows, one may confidently utilize Beck's categorizations of denial, apathy, and transformation to see how the globally affluent–those with a surplus of resources to expend on aesthetic expression–confront risk as they come to be perceived as omnipresent and indiscriminate. Runway shows, offered by luxury fashion houses, offer aestheticizations of risk bolstered with intent and opulence. Granted the environmental impacts of textile production, fashion designers and consumers are seemingly in direct contact with risk; whether through expressing opposition, acknowledging complicity, or turning an eye, garments are always connected to the broader culture of violence. To utilize the concepts of denial, apathy, and transformation for understanding aestheticizations of risk, such sympathies and contradictions must be grounded in a critique of capitalism and the devaluation of nature it imposes. Embedded within the logic of capitalism is a faithfulness to industrial

growth as social progress; this is the precipice upon which aestheticizations of risk diverge: to uphold technocracy through denial or apathy, or to transform through aestheticizing risk.

Tragic individualism, expressed through capitalist structures, demands consumption. Transformative aestheticizations of risk are not those that refute means of production, though such anti-capitalist critiques are central to galvanizing a social metamorphosis into a world of shared risk and responsibility. Rather, transformation allows us to live in the moment and fight for the future. Haraway, in untangling responses to the Chthulucene, sees two dominant reactions: first, a blind faith in techno fixes, as demonstrated by green capitalism and the Adidas sneakers made from recycled ocean plastics; second, hopelessness: "a position that the game is over, it's too late, there's no sense trying to make anything any better, or at least no sense having any active trust in each other in working and playing for a resurgent world" (Haraway 2016:3). Clothed embodiments of this apathy are those that knowingly turn away from global stresses and instead seek to empower the individual, even at the expense of the collective. Apathy reifies the tragedy of the commons.

If green capitalism is a form of denial and indulgent individualism a practice of apathy, then transformative aestheticizations of risk are those that ameliorate the collective existential demands of the Chthulucene: expressions of perseverance, knowledge, and imagination. To stay with trouble " requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings" (Haraway 2016:1). The end is not upon us; there is work to do, kinships to be fostered. We cannot wait for an emancipatory catastrophism (Beck 2016:35) to halt further aggravating an already volatile climate.

Aestheticizations of risk normalize what is psychologically unimaginable, inuring us to it and allowing us to live in between moments.

Looking at risk signifiers across the luxury fashion houses, patterns of apathy and denial underpin many attempts towards transformation. Though many designers, increasingly aware of global insecurity and risk, strive towards transformation, many of these attempts fall short by succumbing to denial and apathy, if not ignorance. A misperceived sense of radicalism imbues runway shows, taking the aesthetic forms of deconstruction and edge rather than dialogue about ecology, labor, and education. Spectacular reserves of attention are awarded to minute details of garments: their seams, contours, textures are all components that are scrutinized to be sold to affluent consumers seeking to partake in the aesthetics of opulence. This indifference, in itself, even becomes an aesthetic.

The embellishments of luxury fashion speak to the inwardness of its culture, detached from risk and the perils faced by lower classes. A survey of fashion trends demonstrated on runway shows following the incumbency of Donald Trump highlight a heightened perception of risk. Though dangers imposed by climate change, nuclearism, and terrorism were extant well before Trump came to office, he has come to be a figurehead of the evils of climate change denial and nuclear uncertainty. Manifold expressions of opposition have been demonstrated against Trump in fashion (Binkley 2017), yet most react in superficial ways, failing to recognize that the global insecurities posed by climate change were extant far before Trump's incumbency. Failing to recognize this structuralism of the climate crisis, labels that confront Trump often fail to see their own complicity in manufacturing uncertainty. Not only do fashion designers–namely those in luxury fashion houses–propel the aesthetic cycles of fast fashion and hyperconsumption,

but they occupy a fraction of the global population that holds the majority of its wealth; they are the least affected by climate change, drought, and volatile coastlines, yet most responsible for it.

The experience of anxiety faced by those in control of the means of production is oppositional to the conditions of risk experienced by civilians unequipped with reserves of capital to withstand manufactured uncertainties. The blindnesses of elitism render it unattuned to risk because experiences of catastrophe, disproportionately imposed on people with less resources, are unknown to the elite. Whereas individuals subservient to threats of risk face existential doubt, elite ranks are less fearful of immediate risks than their secondhand effects: how does risk influence consumerism? Luxury fashion houses, atop economic, social, and cultural hierarchies, have the most to lose from the abbreviated consumption that fashion labels are beginning to confront.

Runway shows animate the chthulucene with aestheticizations of elite panic (Clarke 2008). Amidst declining fashion sales (Rupp 2018), downturned consumption and growing ecological awareness, luxury fashion shows are embedded with anxiety. Such panic in response to risk, fearful of impacts on consumerism, speaks more to their facilitation of bourgeoisie culture and need to maintain the current system at hand. Self-preservation for the elite is not just surviving risk; it is staying atop social hierarchies (Simmel 1971:317). Luxury fashion brands, dependent on the indulgence of their affluent consumer base, must avail temptations that understand the condition of risk faced by individuals. Attuning to the relationship between consumers and producers of fashion, a multitude of forms of collusion materialize, availing aestheticizations of risk embedded in cloisters of wealth.

Turning to the runway for aestheticization of risks, there is an overwhelming sense of introspection, mirroring the inversion of indulgent consumers that are turned away from risk. Demna Gvasalia, creative director of French luxury brand Vetements, and Alessandro Michele, the head of Italian fashion house, Gucci, are spearheading this turning inward by the fashion elite. Emboldened by self-referentialism and uncertainty amidst diminishing sales, Gucci and Vetements haven attracted customers by subverting fashion norms whilst embedding themselves in the logic of opulence, appropriating corporate imagery and quotidian aesthetics alongside embellished details and deluxe fabrics. Vetements' garbs are misshapen, often asymmetrical and wrinkled to look pre-worn. Gucci's are littered with details of luxury; embroidery, texture, and hemming that evoke a nostalgia for antiquity. The two are at odds: Gvasalia seeks to upend the fashion world with irony and appropriations of aesthetic banality; Michele stands opposite, reinforcing artisan aesthetics reminiscent of bourgeois antiquities. This inwardness avails a branding of edginess to be consumed by customers.

Gvasalia and Michele have found success for their attention of shifting individual preferences, positioning themselves at the forefront of fashion (Fury 2016). Conceiving of their garments as separate entities to be reappropriated by consumers, Gucci and Vetements target the indulgent individual who seeks to amass clothing as a means to cultivate identity and self-express (Fury). In an interview between Alessandro Michele and Demna Gvasalia, the two took note of these shifting consumer preferences amidst tragic individualism. Of the total look, Michele said "I think that customers are ready to decide by themselves what they want to mix and match. It's not the idea of total look. It's not fresh anymore, I don't think." Gvalia followed, adding that "because we're so globalized and everything is so out there right away, I think there

is this desire and need for being a bit different. That's why the individuality matters much more" (Fury). Central to their discourse is the need for consumers to "buy into a brand" in order to cultivate a personal aesthetic.

Gucci, operating as long established fashion house, epitomizes apathetic responses to risk. When risk threatens to disparage material conditions, clutch onto your pearls and run to shelter. Gucci invites its consumers to turn inward and make beauty; to clutch onto opulence in response to uncertainty.[10] Gucci's Fall 2018 show, titled "Cyborg", evoked cliches of a cosmetic surgery lab: PVC walls, LED lamps, and panic hardware (Mower 2018). Models walked the runway in amalgamations of global aesthetics and myriad cultural imageries: New York Yankees logos smacked upon dresses with floral imagery iconic to Japan. A press release for the show sited Gilles Deleuze's concept of assemblage; the outfits "become an assemblage of fragments emerging from a temporal elsewhere: resurfacing epiphanies, entangled and unexpected." (Mead 2017). Models trotted down the runway with replicas of their own heads underarm, evoking aesthetics of posthumanism in which we exist to produce ourselves using clothing and cosmetics. In "Cyborg", the closet of the global elite becomes a laboratory for self-customization. A year prior, in the Fall 2017 show, titled "The Alchemists Garden," Michele utilized floral prints and illustrative embroidery to amass conglomerations of global aesthetics. Nature, as an aesthetic image, becomes another accessory to amass with others.

According to Michele, "the purpose of fashion is to give an illusion. I think that everybody can create their masterpiece, if you build your life how you want it. Just to create that illusion of your life—this is beautiful" (Fury 2017). At Gucci, any texture, any cultural heritage,

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[10] This reflexive drive inward in response to risk, as compelled by Gucci, is echoed most boldy at the Fall 2018 show of Calvin Klein.

becomes an accessory through which one may construct an identity. Beauty is to be invented, assembled through the fruits of nature and humanity's shared cultures. Gucci pairs lace dresses with headdress identifiable as pagodas and display burkas on white models. The aesthetic cosmopolitanism evoked in "Cyborg" is detached from the power structures underlying globalization–the very structures of capital and race that Gucci profits from. This cosmopolitan opulence, indifferent to blatant cultural appropriation, is emblematic of consumer apathy in response to risk. Consumers and producers who indulge in this self-cultivation, amassing global cultures and their imageries, are part of a contingent that turns inward in response to risk. Rather than accept accountability or aspire for change, this nonchalance signals a marriage to luxury and indifference to suffering.

If unapologetic indulgence, as embodied by the creative vision of Gucci, is a form of apathy, then luxury brands seeking to subvert their counterparts whilst conforming to problematized norms is to practice denial. Vetements, translating to "clothes" in French, utilizes irony to provide commentary on the current state of fashion. Gvasalia has sought to subvert its norms through his career at Vetements, disobeying the calendar of fashion seasons, converging womenswear and menswear into singular runway shows, and ditching the runway entirely for photographic campaigns (Mower 2018). Aesthetically, too, Gvasalia uses irony to appropriate working class culture; to them, the aesthetics imprinted by material inaccess is another source of inspiration, alongside the logoism of corporate domination. Much of his frustration stems from a disenchantment with the creative cycle of fashion that demands a certain output from designers along rigid timelines. Gvasalia considers the result to be 'soulless' (Fury 2017). Citing the lacking relationship between the creative vision and the commercial vision, Gvasalia utilizes his

company's independence to seek out collaborations. The Spring 2017 campaign was made entirely with other brands, such as Levi's, Comme des Garcons, Reebok, Canada Goose, *etc.*, relying on other manufacturers and supply networks. The line was presented as being so subversive that the runway show was in a department store, during regular hours (Mower 2016).

In 2017, Vetements embarked on a campaign, vaguely familiar to the H&M recycling program, in which customers were invited to donate clothes to Harrods, a Parisian department store. Massive piles of garments filled their display windows; behind were television monitors showing images of landfill and incineration. Utilizing the brand's independence to be an outspoken critic of its own industry, Vetements presented a vaguely anti-capitalist image. Of the Harrods campaign, Gurum Dvasia, who operates the brand's sphere of business, said "In a world where fashion is so fast today, the windows are like a wake up: 'Hello, slow down, people—it's too much!' (Mower 2018). But, obfuscated by this awareness campaign is the fact that Vetements, in accelerating the aesthetic cycles of fashion, partakes in this sphere of indulgent consumption, failing to recognize its own partaking in commodity fetichism. How oppositional to the fashion industry can one be while selling a reworked pair of Levi jeans for thousands of thousand dollars? This is denial.

Looking at runway shows following the 2016 U.S. election, as echoed by public reproductions of dystopian fashion, it is apparent that anxiety has subsumed the cultural zeitgeist. Aestheticizations of risk, adorned on the runway, highlight elite responses to risk. Demonstrated by the apathetic self-importance of Gucci's opulence and the subversive, yet misplaced social commentary of Vetements, we can see a desperation of the fashion elite to maintain their position as the avante garde, but granted the inability to imagine something non-apocalyptic,

non-reactionary, they no longer are the avant garde. The apathy of affluence in the face of risk signals a desire to maintain what one already has. As long as those in control of the means of production simultaneously hold the relations of definition, elite spheres will inform conceptions of risk, despite their unknowing of most civilian experiences against manufactured uncertainty.

Faced with uncertainty and institutional ineptitude, the cultural climate has become saturated with dystopian imagery. Of this collective anxiety, Beck writes, “in place of the re-emergence of politics, an apocalyptic imaginary now dominates the public sphere, serving as an ‘effective prophylaxis meant preemptively to prevent overly strong traumatic shocks from the ‘premeditated’ catastrophe” (2016:37). Though such defeatism speaks as if a premonition of what is yet to come, aestheticizations of risk that constitute such an apocalyptic imaginary offer more than just to absorb the social shocks of catastrophe by inviting such anxieties into the field of aesthetic visibility. Such aestheticizations, when not succumbing to nihilism but aspiring for survival, avail new ways to conceptualize and communicate risk, offering to reconstruct the relations of definition through which risk is determined by granting voice to subordinated social actors.

Risk is a symbol of unity, offering to incite an empathetic consciousness that may facilitate an economic restructuring while redistributing resources and power across global agents and local spheres. Risk becomes a wakeup call in reaction to the failure of government institutions to recognize the complexity and risks that underline a globalized world in a climate crisis. Beck writes “a global public discourse does not arise out of a consensus on decisions, but rather out of disagreement over the consequences of decisions” (Beck 2009:59). Aestheticizations of risk facilitate localized collectives while generating engaging in an aesthetic

discourse on manufactured uncertainty. The climate crisis is a crisis in culture and imagination (Ghosh 2016:4), demanding that we think in images to illustrate the violence, unpredictability, and dislocation of climate change that surpasses the bounds of our accustomed logocentrism (Ghosh 2016:83). To imagine the anthropocene is to think in images, requiring a departure from accustomed logocentrism.

Aestheticizations of risk seek to transform; they are visual manifestations of political and aesthetic devices that offer expressive resources in the negotiation of power and agency amidst the Chthulucene. The aesthetic device of dress offers to rearticulate the *semantics of risk*–the present thematization of future threats (Beck 2009:4). Shifting between spheres of public and private, real and imaginary, dress is an effective space to rearticulate risk perception. The vernacular of dress operates in a field of visibility through which agents may express dissent in a safe, accessible arena. Though risk is invisible, clothing is a tangible artifact. Clothing avails discursive instruments for individuals to engage symbolically in a field of oppositions. Despite subscribing to capitalist modes of production, the transformational potential of dress is promising in normalizing the discourse on risk.

The Yeezy filtration mask, though rooted in models of capitalism, marks a transformation in dress. In providing an aestheticized response to the risks of the climate crisis, Wang enables the possibility of countering ecological violence against the self whilst upholding aspiration for style. Further, aestheticizations of risk, like the air-filtration mask, bring risk and ecological degradation into the quotidian, disrupting barriers between those affected and those unaffected. Climate change is upon us; people are choking; the carbon economy must be disempowered.

Epilogue

This project began with an investigation of my own closet. A friend recommended that I read Beatriz Colomina's *Domesticity At War* over an academic break when I had a bit of free time to get into the Military-Architecture complex. Colomina considered the camcorder that galvanized the nation in 1992 and caused the Los Angeles riots one of an array of handheld devices that restructured individual agency in a political vacuum. Civilians who have turned away from the protection of the state and civil bodies manufacture portable security systems through commodities. Aside from cell phones and cameras that establish the individual as an agent of media, clothing seemed like an obvious platform through which civilians may amass protection. For example, after the recent mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, sales of bulletproof backpacks roseas families became increasingly aware of omnipresent risk (Golgowski 2018).

Considering clothing as an apparati of protection, I considered my own wardrobe as a survival bunker in itself. Comforted by the predictability my middle-class upbringing has afforded me, I had never considered myself to be at risk. But then I see a gas mask that I purchased in middle school; though there was a time I used it to protect against spray-paint fumes, it sits in my closet as a reminder of my own perception of risk. I have clothing for about any climatic condition, but the volume of textiles in my closet–the myriad compositions of each fabric type–is a firm reminder that I produce risk more than I face risk.

Not long ago I wanted to design garments. I learned to sew, to cut, but I never made more than alterations to clothes that I had already obtained. Confronted with existential fear of what is yet to come in my lifetime, I sought out rationales, even justifications, to allow myself to reap additional things from the earth and perpetuate cycles of fashion. And that is what this body of work became: a desperation to justify what I have come to know as 'the consumption of dissent.' Months of research and writing have led me to give up on my aspirations for making garments because I struggle to imagine garments that remedy alienation from nature (human and nonhuman) or effectively articulate a generative conceptions of risk.

I do not consider this to be a failure of imagination. Rather, it speaks to the hegemony of capitalism. Its logic is pervasive, informing social relationships with humans and certainly with the lifeforms that we do not see as beings, as they become means to economic ends, and not much more. Someone along the way said that it is easier to imagine the end of the world that the end of capitalism (Jameson 2003). As an artist, I have aestheticized risk. In seeking to unfold the relationships between human sensorium and degraded landscapes, the most exciting and challenging part of sculpture is not just finding materials that speak to the question at hand, but obtaining such resources in ways that facilitate my dialogue. Does the work suffer when the artist indulges in capitalist modes of production to oppose the very capacities of violence availed by capitalism?

This became my crisis with making clothes. If I were to make a garment the way I make an image or sculpture, I would go out in search of free textiles that would be obtained through negotiation or recycling what another considered waste. But to generate clothing, aestheticizations of risk, through capitalist modes of production, the designer loses control over

material randomness. In making clothes, one is at the whim of globalized structures of production, consumption, and waste. To make a living from designing clothes, you must sell a lot of them for low prices, or sell a few pieces for high prices.

Denialist responses to risk are most explicit, most destructive, when emitted from the platforms of public officials and bodies of power. The blue business suits Donald Trump and Scott Pruitt, of oil executives, nuclear safety regulators, and business leaders, perhaps epitomize denialist aestheticizations of risk. But to perceive oneself as radical for generating thousands of garments is, too, a form of denial. In search of transformative aestheticizations of risk, I gave up on the runway as a generative source. Independent designers–civilians isolated from institutional assemblages of capital and labor–however, have regenerative potentials of dress, granted that the artifacts of their production are not subjected to the globalized structures of commodification that render most garments invaluable.

What if we did not divide technology, nature, *etc*. into human and nonhuman actors, but instead modeled them together (alongside other various elements) in a total system that links each actor or source of influence? What if we spent all the money we do on clothes, accessories, and perfumes on research and regenerating lost ecologies? This begins by challenging the notion that the free pursuit of individual interests is a means to a greater good (Ghosh 2016:135). Sacrifices are in order for the affluent West who have over-consumed carbon reserves.

Luxury brands, given their immensely concentrated grip on fashion industries, have substantial resources and platform to instigate change and enact leadership in an industry apathetic to destruction. The main goal, directly or indirectly, communicated to clothing designers is generally about increasing sales by providing a continuous renewal of products for

sale to shops, resulting in increased consumption and accelerated fashion cycles (Clancy 2015). Mass production is essential to the textile industry, even in its upper echelons:

> Versace, Marni, Stella McCartney, Lanvin and Maison Martin Margiela have all done collections for H&M. Isaac Mizrahi, Missoni and Prabal Gurung have designed for Target in the United States, and Jean Paul Gaultier and Karl Lagerfeld both spent time as creative director for Coca-Cola. Famous couture houses rely more on sales of perfume and bath oils for their profits rather than $50,000 dresses. Mass-produced sunglasses, 'It bags', boxer shorts, cosmetics, designer t-shirts and jeans with the word 'couture' printed on the label make up the majority of profits for the 'high fashion' industry (Hoskins 2014:3).

Moving forward, the fashion industry needs a restructuring of all sectors: design, production, consumption, use, and waste. But implementing sustainability rhetoric into fashion houses will be its own form of denial of violence. Rather, the very barriers imposed between designer, manufacturer, and consumer must be brought down. Consumers and producers must converge, and the modes of production must be localized so that garments are not commodities that seem like magic. The obfuscation of nature and production must end, and in its place we need a new social infrastructure rooted in local exchange (Akenji 2014:19). Inviting consumers into the role of designer and producer will redistribute tasks of sewing and making and produce an emotional bond with the textile. If clothing producers and consumers had the same conceptions of dress, clothing would be bought and produced at a much slower rate of dilapidation (Hoskins 2014:40).

Localized textile communities have the potential of coupling textile production with nature: repairing one's own clothing from resources that are available and biodegradable will further opportunities for ecological education (Orr 1993:274). Making the invisible visible (Berkowits 2005:252), textile production based on local resources (including recycled and discarded textiles) creates a sort of ecological pedagogy that is necessitated to ameliorate the

alienation from nature that clothing has long facilitated. What if, instead of tearing cotton from the earth and then painting it with floral prints, we assembled dresses and accessories with actual flowers and plants? Now that would be beautiful.

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