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Introduction: Fashion in Utopia; Utopia in Fashion

In the famous account of his two-year experiment of a simple life away from the distractions of society, *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, Henry David Thoreau wrote that “a man who has at length found something to do will not need to get a new suit to do it in; for him the old will do, that has lain dusty in the garret for an indeterminate period.”¹ Since its first publication in 1854, *Walden* has had as many critics as adherents and, till now, Thoreau’s attempt at a life of self-sufficiency in harmony with nature has divided views. Despite this, the above quote embodies a dilemma that is as salient in the current crisis of our unsustainable model of fashion consumption as it was in the nineteenth century, when the stark contrast between the sweated labour of garment and textile workers in the industrialising world and the extravagance of those who could indulge in fashion’s luxuries was first more widely recognised.

The collapse of the Rana Plaza building in April 2013 highlighted the sad truth that long hours of low-paid labour in unsafe working conditions still underpin the fashion trade. Located just outside Dhaka, Bangladesh, Rana Plaza housed five clothing factories that produced garments for major international brands, including Benetton, Bonmarché, Primark, Walmart, Carrefour, and C&A.² 1134 people were killed, and hundreds were left with debilitating injuries that left them unable to support their families. Bangladesh, Pakistan, Cambodia, Malaysia, India and China, are among the countries to which the majority of the textile and clothing production of the global north was moved by the end of the twentieth century. This shift enabled international brands to outsource not only labour, thus cutting production costs, but also the adverse environmental impacts of textile and clothing manufacture. It is now a widely known fact that the industry belongs to major polluters and has a considerable energy and water footprint. Producing one kilo of cotton (equivalent to a man’s shirt or a pair of jeans), for example, requires an average of 10,000 to 20,000 litres of water.³ Further to this, water-intensive dyeing processes exhaust water supplies in countries where water is scarce and pollute local rivers and streams with toxic wastewater and intensive energy and water usage is not limited to the production stage. Clothing maintenance requires further water and energy, and so most environmental impact is often attributed to the use stage of clothing due to laundering and drying processes.⁴ As is discussed in greater detail by the authors of one of the contributions to this special issue (Brooks et al.), the laundering of polyester garments also leads to the release of microscopic plastic particles, which pollute rivers and endanger fish and other aquatic species.

In the current fashion system, designers are pushed to meet increasingly faster trend turnarounds, sometimes being left with as little as twenty-five minutes to produce a design.⁵ Fashion consumers, on the other hand, often claim to be frustrated by low-quality garments⁶ and uniform styles,⁷ trapped in what Chapman calls “the endless cycles of desire and disappointment”.⁸ It is estimated that every year 350,000 tonnes of used clothing end up in landfills in the UK alone⁹ and, according to the *Valuing our clothes* (2012) report produced by the Waste and Resources Action Programme, the average lifetime of a garment is just under two years and three months.¹⁰ Consumption patterns associated with fast fashion, however, often reduce the active lifetime of a garment to less than a season.¹¹ Why, then, do we keep buying all these new clothes?

Fashion is characterised by frequent changes in styles. But why shouldn't our old clothes, as Thoreau suggests, serve us just as well as anything new that we might purchase? They will, generally, protect us from the elements just as efficiently as any new garments, and we can surely rely on them to safeguard our modesty. Based on this very brief overview of the damaging impacts of fashion production, it would seem to be stating the obvious to claim that reducing our consumption of clothing would bring multiple benefits on environmental, social, and individual levels.

Utopian 'social dreaming'¹² often imagined societies whose inhabitants made do with relatively few material possessions, including, of course, clothing. Less intensive use of natural and human resources has been integral to numerous utopian visions, including the key text in the history of utopian thought – Thomas More's *Utopia*. As last year was the fifth centenary of its publication we celebrated 500 years since its first publication,¹³ it seems appropriate at this point in time to look back and consider how clothing and fashion were viewed by More.

In *Utopia*, the island described to More by the traveller Raphael Hythlodæus, people are said to be content with a very modest wardrobe. Thus, they save the considerable amount of labour and materials needed for clothing production. In Book 2, More writes:

Now, sir, in their apparel mark (I pray you) how few workmen they need. First of all, whiles they be at work they be covered homely with leather or skins that will last seven years. When they go forth abroad they cast upon them a cloak which hideth the other homely apparel. These cloaks throughout the whole island be all of one colour, and that is the natural colour of the wool. They therefore do not only spend much less woollen cloth than is spent in other countries, but also the same standeth them in much less cost. But linen cloth is made with less labour, and is therefore had more in use.¹⁴

More does not spend too much time describing Utopian clothing but, from what his brief descriptions give away, the dress of Utopia combines simple construction with utilitarian materials to make a functional and durable garment. All Utopian clothes are of one fashion that never changes, and the same garments are suitable for both summer and winter and are made by each family at home.¹⁵ Utopians have little appreciation for the fineness of woollen or linen cloths; for them the only measure of refinement is the whiteness of linen and cleanliness of wool.¹⁶ Therefore, unlike the people of other countries where, as More comments, "four or five cloth gowns of divers colours and as many silk coats be not enough for one man",¹⁷ those of Utopia have no reason to desire more clothes, as they would not make them warmer or more attractive.¹⁸ A strong focus on utility and firm opposition to adornment of any kind means that the clothing needs of Utopians are easy to cater for. By relying on locally available natural materials and home production of their simple garments, the inhabitants of Utopia resolved the need for complex manufacture and imports of expensive materials, and the long hours of specialist craftwork needed to turn them into fine garments. Hence, there are no dressmakers or tailors in Utopia.

Similar to Thoreau's proposal to make do with an old suit, the utilitarian fashion of the Utopians may appear to be a straightforward solution to the social and environmental exploitation inherent in the production of fashion. Yet, as history has so often taught us, such one-dimensional answers to complex issues often cause more problems than they solve.

Reducing fashion to its materiality, to fibre and cloth, without acknowledging and fully appreciating its cultural significance “as an aesthetic medium for the expression of ideas, desires and beliefs circulating in society”¹⁹ can only ever be but a fruitless distraction from the complexity that underlies fashion’s agency on individual, social, and political levels.

The special issue

Our special issue comes at a time when the fashion industry faces a self-inflicted crisis that forces it to fundamentally rethink its own future. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the industry needs to be held accountable for major global environmental and social issues, which increasingly discredits it in the eyes of consumers on whose loyal support it so heavily relies. The absurdity of a system in which, as Lidewij Edelkoort – one of the world’s most influential trend forecasters – affirms, “a product that needs to be sown, grown, harvested, combed, spun, knitted, cut and stitched, finished, printed, labelled, packaged and transported” costs no more than a couple of euro, has taken its own toll on fashion’s ability to inspire and drive change. In *Anti-Fashion: a manifesto for the next decade* (with the telling subtitle *Ten reasons why the fashion system is obsolete*), Edelkoort repeatedly declares that the industry is “stagnating” and that fashion has become “old-fashioned”.²⁰

The desire to address the wrongs of the status quo and imagine alternatives and future possibilities has always been the driving force behind utopian thinking. The production of a special issue on ‘Utopia and Fashion’ at a time when the future of our relationship with fashion is being so widely discussed has not been motivated by a wish to find “a stick with which to beat contemporary fashion”, which, as fashion historian Aileen Ribeiro points out, has often been the case in utopian writing.²¹ On the contrary, this special issue is intended to be an initial contribution to what we hope could become a long-term dialogue on the role of fashion in utopian thinking, as well as on the potential of utopian thinking to re-imagine and inspire better futures for fashion.

Fashion, like utopia, is difficult to pin down in a single definition that embraces all of its manifold meanings and manifestations. Not unlike the concept of utopia, “fashion is coherent in its ambiguity”,²² in the words of Elizabeth Wilson. However, for the purposes of the discussion in this issue, the definition proposed by Anne Hollander provides some help, in *Seeing Through Clothes*, Hollander understands fashion to be “a whole spectrum of desirable ways of looking at any given time. The scope of what everyone wants to be seen wearing in a given society.”²³ This, she says, includes “all forms of anti-fashion and nonfashion”,²⁴ as well as the attire of people who insist that fashion has no place whatsoever in their lives.

At the same time, in this special issue we embrace Levitas’s conceptualisation of utopia as a method of exploring alternative scenarios for the future, while simultaneously staying alert to possible shortcomings and gaps in these contemplations.²⁵ It should be noted that the aim of such speculations is not perfection, but cultivating the possibility that there is a better way. Utopia as a method, Levitas claims, is highly relevant to the twenty-first century, as it

provides a critical tool for exposing the limitations of current policy discourses about economic growth and ecological sustainability. It facilitates genuinely holistic thinking about possible futures, combined with reflexivity, provisionality and democratic engagement with the principles and practices of those futures.²⁶

Somewhat surprisingly, the relationship between utopia and fashion has not previously received systematic scholarly focus. There has been little attention to fashion in utopian studies, and so the academic enquiry remains limited to more or less isolated but hence all the more important contributions of fashion historians, most notably by Aileen Ribeiro,²⁷ Elizabeth Wilson,²⁸ and the late Richard Martin,²⁹ who claimed that “the choice of dress is as crucial to a Utopian design as to any fashion victim in determining his or her wardrobe”,³⁰. Also deserving a mention in this context is the ambitious exhibition *Utopian Bodies: Fashion Looks Forward* hosted by the Liljevalchs gallery in Stockholm, Sweden, between September 2015 and February 2016. *Utopian Bodies* aimed to provide “a snapshot of what is possible today and where we can go in the future”,³¹ as demonstrated by the work of international and Swedish designers arranged around eleven curatorial themes – Sustainability, Change, Technology, Craft & Form, Craft & Colour, Resistance & Society, Resistance & Beauty, Solidarity, Memory, Gender Identity, and Love. Interestingly, the exhibition was accompanied by a comprehensive illustrated catalogue that included essays by a number of renowned fashion writers and academics from around the world.³² Among the contributors to this special issue are designer and activist Otto von Busch, whose work appeared in the Liljevalchs exhibition, and Professor Kate Fletcher, whose essay was among those included in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition.³³

In preparing this special issue we sought to combine perspectives from multiple disciplines. The backgrounds of the contributors to the ‘Utopia and Fashion’ issue thus range from social, cultural, art and design history, geography, ecology, and fashion design to art and engineering. Our aim was to cover themes that include but are not strictly limited to academic discourse; this involved embracing alternative and imaginative ways of approaching and writing about the topic, as well as including contributions from both academics and practitioners (with overlaps between the two in several cases). We believe that, at this stage of the enquiry, such an unorthodox approach is the key to opening up possible avenues for investigating how fashion was re-imagined in relation to the history of utopian thinking, and how utopian thinking can help to re-imagine the future of fashion.

Included in the issue are three articles with a historical focus that examine the role of fashion in selected utopian and dystopian texts, and also explore the more radical early-twentieth-century visions that promoted nudity as liberation from the oppression of dress. The other contributions engage with the critical issues surrounding fashion production and consumption. In addition to the essays in the ‘Articles’ section, we sought to include contributions from contemporary artists and designers whose practices, in different ways, challenge how fashion and clothing are currently used, experienced, and appreciated. By including the ‘Artist Statements’ section, we aimed to bridge the often unhelpful gap between theoretical discussion and practical implementation, and so complement some of the discussion in this issue with tangible examples of how fashion and our relationship with clothes can be rethought through art and design practice.

Articles

The first of our articles – *Dress, Ideology and Control: the regulation of clothing in early modern English utopian texts, 1516-1656*, by Jane MacRae Campbell – examines 23 utopian texts published in a period spanning nearly 150 years. Campbell begins by pointing out that the vast majority of these texts include some mention of dress practices, and almost as many

present more detailed accounts and descriptions of clothing in their narratives. The article's argument then focuses on Campbell's assertion that, although it remains largely unexamined, the role of clothing in these utopian texts reveals that their authors not only acknowledge the significance of clothing as a subject but, in the construction of their visions of new societies, exploit the ideological power and political agency of dress. Exploring three texts in which clothing is strictly prescribed – Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), Thomas Lupton's *Sivqila* (1580), and Balthazar's Gerbier's *Loix* (1654) – Campbell explains how regulation of clothing in these utopian visions functions as an effective extension of social control and governance.

The second article offers a detailed analysis of two relatively unknown nineteenth-century dystopian novels, the authors of which chose fashion as a tool for addressing some of the pressing issues of their time, relating to rapid technological progress and the rise of socialism, capitalism, and feminism. In *Fashion triumphant and the mechanism of tautology in two nineteenth-century dystopias*, Justyna Galant reviews several late-nineteenth-century dystopian texts with regard to their treatment of fashion, before focusing more specifically on J.L. Collins' *Queen Krinaleen's Plagues; or, How a Simple People were Destroyed. A Discourse in the Twenty-Second Century* (1874) and Walter Besant's *The Inner House* (1888). Galant argues that both of these works stand out from other utopian and dystopian texts because of the vital role that fashion plays in their plots. She approaches the two novels through the theories of Roland Barthes and Jean Baudrillard, highlighting how both Collins and Besant portray a dystopian scenario in which fashion becomes a dominant force in society, resulting in the "semiotization of people and the reduction of their status to that of signs".

The author of the third and last of our historical essays examines how fashion and the discontent that it engenders features in the utopian aspirations of those who, in their response to the social and cultural crisis of the interwar period, rejected clothes altogether. Annebella Pollen's *Utopian Bodies and Anti-Fashion Futures: The dress theories and practices of English interwar nudists* offers a rich analysis of the philosophies and contradictions that underpinned the complex nature of English nudism in its early years during the 1920s and early 1930s. Pollen notes that among the supporters of the movement were radicals whose solution to all social problems involved a world without clothes, while those at the other end of the spectrum promoted light sunbathing outfits for reasons relating to health and well-being and argues that – somewhat ironically – many of the debates conducted by intellectuals who were attracted to the experimental nature of nudism in this era involved deep and sophisticated reflections on fashion and dress. She therefore concludes that, although collectively, the English nudist experiments of the interwar period showed that a better world cannot be brought about by nudism alone, "when developed as a conscious endeavour", undressing can "communicate our deepest expectations of our dress and ourselves".

The fourth article was co-authored by researchers from King's College London, London College of Fashion, and the University of Surrey – Andrew Brookes, Kate Fletcher, Robert Francis, Emma Dulcie Rigby and Thomas Roberts – and is the first of three essays that focus on some of the critical issues relating to fashion production and consumption. *Fashion, Sustainability and the Anthropocene* questions the viability of the currently popular ecomodernist approaches to reducing the environmental impact of the fashion industry, as exemplified by closed-loop recycling. The authors argue that such approaches are

underpinned by flawed logic that does little to challenge the politics and business interests that are at the root of the environmental crisis, and that these solutions invariably offer a technocentric ‘magic bullet’; the promise that business will carry on as usual and the planet will be saved. In support of their argument, the authors draw on the concept of the Anthropocene, which in geology refers to the epoch associated with significant human impact on the environment. With a particular focus on the changes in laundry practices in Britain since the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the article demonstrates how the process of mass manufacturing clothing and the resulting changes in consumption patterns have impacted the environment over time. The central claim of the article is that the classic dichotomy between nature and the human-made world is unhelpful in addressing the current environmental crisis, as it ignores the long and complex history of human-nature interaction. The authors of the article argue that the concept of the Anthropocene can be used to enhance our understanding of the ways in which agricultural and industrial activities have shaped our ecosystems, and thus help us to respond more effectively to the current environmental challenges.

The last two essays experiment with formats that are different to that of a traditional academic article. Authored by designers who also hold full-time faculty positions, both contributions offer creative visions of how revised attitudes to fashion, accompanied by practical actions on an individual level, could shape alternative, sustainable fashion futures. The first – *Fashion suX: a story of anger as (un)sustainable energy* – by Otto von Busch, stems from the author’s ongoing project to document an imaginary, underground movement whose philosophy is in radical opposition to the dominant paradigm of “consumerist sustainability” characterised by “a utopian vision of environmentally friendly egotism”. His artistic research into the practices of the Sustainable fashion straight-edge movement (suXers) has been fuelled by his curiosity regarding the alternatives to what he calls the “do-good” attitude of contemporary sustainable fashion. “Opposition needs other motivations than pure virtue”, von Busch claims as he unfolds his narrative about suXers, whose lifestyle choices are closely related to the rebellious spirit of straight-edge hardcore (sXe) and crust punk. Fashion historians such as Ribeiro and Martin³⁴ have previously noted the general lack of vision exhibited by utopian writers with regard to clothing – an observation that can easily be ascribed to the fact that utopian writers are generally not equipped with design skills. In this respect von Busch’s narrative about suXers is quite unique, as the author is able to accompany his fictional ethnographic descriptions with artefacts, including the clothes, accessories, patches, and posters that he produced for members of the suX culture. His account of this imaginary movement thus becomes “a designerly tool for imagining another shade of sustainable fashion” to help us, as he says, “unleash wider creative as well as critical visions around the ethical economy of care”.

In the final contribution to our articles section, Timo Rissanen takes on the challenge of re-conceptualising fashion education futures. In *Possibility in Fashion Design Education – A Manifesto*, Rissanen, who has spent 15 years as a fashion educator in Australia and the United States, proposes a number of starting points that invite fashion educators and students to rethink their creative roles as designers in the wider context of personal social responsibility. Rissanen’s manifesto also claims a more universal relevance to all users of fashion who make daily choices about which clothes they wear (or do not wear) and decide when and how to launder their garments, as well as when and how to discard them. In

framing his argument, Rissanen draws on John Wood's *Design for Micro-Utopias: Making the Unthinkable Possible* and Manfred Max-Neef's taxonomy of fundamental human needs. Like Wood, Rissanen claims that designers' familiarity with simulation, in designing solutions for the near future, makes them well equipped to envision even more long-term scenarios spanning the next decade, or even century. The considerable social, environmental, and economic challenges currently associated with fashion are, to Rissanen, opportunities for an "abrupt renewal" of the fashion system, as well as a chance to move beyond the disciplinary model of design and towards an approach that includes collaboration with economists, chemists, biologists, and psychologists, among others. In Rissanen's vision, fashion is considered in much greater depth, and the satisfaction of Max-Neef's fundamental human needs is the central goal of fashion design. The keyword for Rissanen's manifesto is 'possibility' and, although he acknowledges that this can sometimes be "slippery and it may seem out of focus", he insists that "neither should stop us from giving possibility more shape, more definition." Rissanen's contribution echoes the arguments raised by Brookes et al. and von Busch, who point out the limitations of the current "eco-efficient" and "less bad" – primarily symptom-based – solutions. Like them, Rissanen is adamant that a more holistic approach to sustainability in fashion is urgently needed.

Artist Statements

As previously mentioned, in addition to the articles described above, the issue includes an 'Artist Statements' section, in which three practitioners present their current and recent projects and explain the stories and motivations behind their work. The first, *Imagining a future of sonic fashion* is by artist and designer Vidmina Stasiulyté, and introduces her research into sonic value and identity in fashion design. It also proposes a shift away from the currently dominant visual perspective on fashion and fashion design education that, she believes, neglects the significance of other elements of perceiving clothing associated with sound, touch, and smell. Stasiulyté's experimental project therefore focuses on the possibility of replacing the visual perception of fashion with sonic alternatives and her 'Soundtopia' imagines five speculative outcomes of a utopian scenario in which textiles, garments, and accessories are "sound-oriented" rather than "sight-oriented". She discusses how each of these scenarios may impact fashion, people, and spaces, and suggests the possible future directions for this kind of enquiry. Stasiulyté's project fits into the wider context of the "sensorial turn"³⁵ in the humanities, social sciences, and arts, which has highlighted the significance of the multi-sensory character of human perception. Research shows³⁶ that acknowledging the role that our senses play in everyday life can provide invaluable insights in relation to social and design interventions, and so sensory approaches are increasingly being used in design anthropology. Although their application in fashion research is a relatively new phenomenon, sensory methods are being introduced to projects that explore the concept of emotional durability in the context of sustainable fashion.³⁷

In the second statement, intriguingly entitled *Mending and Anatomy: Making Your Hands Knowledgeable*, artist Celia Pym describes her textile practice in connection to her experience of the 'Parallel Practices' residency at the Department of Anatomy, King's College London. Co-organised by the Crafts Council, United Kingdom and the Cultural Institute at King's College, this residency brought together makers and medical and scientific academics to demonstrate the mutual benefits and value of such collaborations. Pym, whose background combines sculpture, textiles, and adult nursing, begins her statement by

describing the personal history behind her interest in textile repair, and offers a thoughtful account of the parallels between her repair work and medical students' training in anatomy, suggesting that both rely on tenderness, care and the tacit knowledge acquired through working with one's hands. Her concluding remarks about the ability of garments to hold the shapes of the bodies of their owners are once again reminiscent of a passage in Thoreau's *Walden* "Kings and Queens who wear a suit but once [...],..., cannot know the comfort of wearing a suit that fits. [...] Every day our garments become more assimilated to ourselves, receiving the impress of the wearer's character".³⁸ Thus, both Pym and Thoreau provide a useful reminder of the fact that, amidst the grim statistics of fast and disposable fashion, many of us have experienced the reassuring familiarity of a piece of clothing whose relevance to us goes on without any relationship to past, current, or future fashion seasons.³⁹

This also links Pym's contribution to the work of Ryan Mario Yasin, whose statement opens with a depiction of his vision of long-lasting garments that transform throughout our lives. Such a scenario, Yasin argues, is in direct contrast to the current model of fashion consumption, which reminds him of a subscription scheme with low fees and frequent turnaround of items. Yasin's work imaginatively combines his background in aeronautical engineering with a recent degree in global innovation design, and echoes Rissanen's hopes for a multi-disciplinary future for fashion education. Yasin's statement introduces his graduation project *Petit Pli*, a design concept consisting of children's clothing that grows bi-directionally by up to seven sizes through the use of auxetic fabrics that can expand along both the warp and weft. As Yasin explains, the project is his response to overconsumption and excessive waste, caused by the fact that young children outgrow their clothes within weeks. For Yasin, *Petit Pli* approximates a (currently distant) utopia in which one garment lasts a lifetime, and has the ability to clean itself, protect its wearer from inclement weather and change in response to the wearer's desires and needs.

Conclusion

By entering what is still under-researched territory, the 'Utopia and Fashion' issue almost inevitably raises more questions than it provides answers. Nevertheless, what all contributions to the issue each, in their own way, establish, is that the clothes we wear – or, for that matter, decide not to wear – facilitate much more than simple protection from the elements. As Elizabeth Wilson puts it, "garments, like the detritus of the everyday, far from hiding, or distracting us from, life's important matters, expose the eternal in the ephemeral and a society's most treasured beliefs."⁴⁰ Therefore, no truly holistic thinking about better futures should disregard the importance of clothing.

While inevitably limited by the space available, the historical essays in this issue cover utopian visions that include clothes as well as those that would rather do without them. In line with observations by Ribeiro and Martin,⁴¹ they exemplify the fact that, although clothes and adornments exist and often take on great significance in utopian societies, fashion – associated with incessant changes in styles – is generally portrayed in negative terms that make it the subject of dystopian, rather than utopian, visions. There is little mercy for fashion in utopia.

It is also important, however, to remember that, as utopian scholars have repeatedly pointed out, utopian visions are products of their own times and as such need to be understood "as provisional, because no man or woman can think him- or herself out of his or her own

time.”⁴² Utopian imagination, therefore, has always been (and always will be) inevitably confined to the currently conceivable. This also means that the perceived wrongs of the status quo – fashion included – often tend to be replaced by their exact opposites. As an example, More’s concerns about the greed, moral decline, and social injustice perpetuated in his society by the desire for fine cloth and luxurious, fashionable clothing were translated in *Utopia* into utilitarian clothing of *one fashion*, made from inexpensive materials. Moreover, if we return to *Walden* once more, Thoreau famously contrasts what he sees as an obsession with new, unpatched clothing with old clothes that are, in fact, much more suitable in most cases than any new ones: “I say, beware of all enterprises that require new clothes [...] If you have any enterprise before you, try it in your old clothes”.⁴³

It may not be difficult to see what led both authors to such propositions, and even agree with their views. However, with the benefit of the experience of someone who, like myself, grew up in the Eastern Bloc, I dare say that a place in which clothes differ but a little, utility rules the day, and colours have been subdued is a rather bleak one. Hence, I here argue that if utopia is to be a “radically improved place”,⁴⁴ as opposed to simply a *different place*, it does need (a radically improved) fashion.

At the same time, and as is outlined above, this special issue sets out to provide some initial clues regarding how utopian imagination may help us in negotiating what Fletcher calls “post-growth fashion”.⁴⁵ The understanding of utopia as a method for facing the challenges of the twenty-first century, as proposed by Levitas,⁴⁶ informed the selection of articles and artist’s statements that make up the second half of this special issue. There is no arguing with the fact that the history of fashion, like the history of utopian thought, has been stained by suffering, exploitation, and even totalitarianism, but despite their deficiencies and faults, both have also fuelled human imagination, encouraged aspiration and innovation, and provided hope of a better self and an improved, more inclusive society. Thus, discarding fashion is just as unhelpful as discarding utopia.

A world without fashion, like a world without utopia, would be a very sad one. Through this special issue we therefore propose a dialogue between the two: One that embraces the significance of fashion in utopian visions, and exploits the potential of utopian imagination to re-think and inspire better and more sustainable fashion futures; one that is fuelled by the belief that positive social change is both possible and desirable.

While writing this Introduction, it was announced that Parsons School of Design, New York, has just introduced a course that was inspired by the process of writing one of the contributions to the ‘Utopia and Fashion’ issue. Timo Rissanen’s ‘Fashioning Micro-Utopias’ is a new programme, open to 50 undergraduate students, that filled immediately. If this issue goes on to inspire similar projects in the future, it will have done more than we could have hoped for.

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- ¹ Henry D. Thoreau, *Walden* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 23.
- ² “Clean Clothes Campaign”, Accessed August 22, 2017, <https://cleanclothes.org/safety/ranaplaza/who-needs-to-pay-up>.
- ³ “Valuing Our Clothes: the cost of UK fashion” (WRAP, 2017): 14, Accessed August 22, 2017 http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/valuing-our-clothes-the-cost-of-uk-fashion_WRAP.pdf.
- ⁴ See e.g. Sohail Yasin, Nemeshwaree Behary, Giorgio Rovero and Vijay Kumar, “Statistical analysis of use-phase energy consumption of textile products,” *The International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment* 21 (2016): 1776-1788, accessed August 22, 2017, doi: 10.1007/s11367-016-1129-2.; Kirsi Laitala and Casper Brooks, “Sustainable clothing design: use matters,” *Journal of Design Research* 10 (2012): 121-139. Accessed August 22, 2017, doi: 10.1504/JDR.2012.046142; Jacob Madsen, Bryan Hartlin, Shahila, Perumalpillai, Sarah Selby and Simon Aumônier, “Mapping of Evidence on Sustainable Development Impacts that Occur in Life Cycles of Clothing: A Report to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.” Environmental Resources Management (ERM) Ltd. (London: Defra, 2007).
- ⁵ Timo Rissanen, “Slow down! We are creative!” (keynote lecture presented at The Second International Conference for Creative Pattern Cutting – Creative Cut, University of Huddersfield, February 24-25, 2016). Accessed August 22, 2017 <https://timorissanen.wordpress.com/2016/02/26/slow-down-we-are-creative/>.
- ⁶ Kirsi Niinimäki, *Sustainable Consumer Satisfaction in the Context of Clothing* (Sheffield: Greenleaf Publishing, 2014).
- ⁷ Sophie Woodward, *Why Women Wear What They Wear* (Oxford: Berg, 2007).
- ⁸ Jonathan Chapman, *Emotionally Durable Design: Objects, Experiences and Empathy* (London: Earthscan, 2005), 17.
- ⁹ “Valuing our clothes: The true cost of how we design, use and dispose of clothing in the UK” (WRAP, 2011): 2, Accessed August 22, 2017 <http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/VoC%20FINAL%20online%202012%2007%2011.pdf>
- ¹⁰ Ibid, 23; the 2017 “Valuing Our Clothes: the cost of UK fashion” report shows that this is now 3.3 years.
- ¹¹ “Design for Longevity: Guidance on increasing the active life of clothing” (WRAP, 2013). Accessed August 22, 2017 http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Design%20for%20Longevity%20Report_0.pdf.
- ¹² Lyman Tower Sargent, “The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited,” *Utopian Studies* 5 (1994): 1-37.
- ¹³ Commemorated also in the special section of this issue.
- ¹⁴ Susan Bruce, ed., *Thomas More: Utopia*, Francis Bacon: New Atlantis, Henry Neville: The Isle of Pines (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 57-58.
- ¹⁵ Ibid, 54.
- ¹⁶ Ibid, 58.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, 58.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, 9.
- ²⁰ Lidewij Edelkoort, *Anti-Fashion: a manifesto for the next decade* (Edelkoort, 2014). See also: “Anti-Fashion: A Manifesto for the Next Decade at #BoFVOICES”. Accessed August 25, 2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LV3djdXfimI>.

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- ²¹ Aileen Ribeiro, “Zippypyjamas and Buskins of Green Diamonds: Dressing Utopia throughout the Ages,” *Vestoj: The Journal of Sartorial Matters* 6 (2015):72.
- ²² Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, 14.
- ²³ Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 1993 [1978]),350.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Ruth Levitas, *Utopia as Method: Imaginary Reconstitution of Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
- ²⁶ Ibid, xi.
- ²⁷ Ribeiro, “Zippypyjamas”, 70-81; Aileen Ribeiro, “Dress in Utopia,” *Costume: The Journal of the Costume Society* 21 (2017 [1987]), 26-33.
- ²⁸ Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*.
- ²⁹ Richard Martin, “Dress and Dream: The Utopian Idealism of Clothing,” *Arts Magazine*, October 1987, 58-60; R. Martin, L. Leibacher-Ouvrard and N. Smith, “The Deceit of Dress: Utopian Visions and The Arguments Against Clothing,” *Utopian Studies* 3-4 (1991): 79-84.
- ³⁰ Martin, “Dress and Dream”, 59.
- ³¹ “Utopian Bodies: Fashion Looks Forward” (Stockholm: Liljevalchs, 2015),15. Accessed August 25, 2017 http://www.museea.com/ub_museum_deck_full.pdf.
- ³² Among others, Professor Elizabeth Wilson, Professor Christopher Breward, Professor Kate Fletcher, Kaat Debo, Professor Barbara Vinken and Anja Aronovsky Cronberg.
- ³³ Additionally, as part of last year’s *Utopia 2016: A Year of Imagination and Possibility* – a year of events celebrating the fifth centenary of the publication of *Utopia* – Somerset House London featured a five-day exhibition, *Fashion Utopias: International Fashion Showcase 2016*. The exhibition presented the work of emerging fashion designers from 25 countries and was (perhaps ironically) a part of the official London Fashion Week official programme. Among the accompanying events was a half-day symposium called *Fashion Utopias: Then & Now*, which included papers from members of the History of Dress Research Department at the Courtauld Institute of Art and several contributions from curators and designers.
- ³⁴ See Ribeiro, “Zippypyjamas”; Martin, “Dress and Dream”.
- ³⁵ David Howes, *Sensual Relations: engaging the senses in culture and social theory* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2003), xxii.
- ³⁶ Sarah Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (London: Sage, 2015).
- ³⁷ See e.g. Vibeke Risberg, Anne Louise Bang, Laura Locher and Alina Breuil Moat, “AWARENESS: Tactility and Experience as Transformational Strategy,” In *Proceedings of Shapeshifting: A Conference on Transformative Paradigms of Fashion and Textile Design*, Auckland, New Zealand, 2015. Accessed August 25, 2017 <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/56365023.pdf>; Mila Burcikova, “Satisfaction matters: Design that learns from users’ sensory and emotional responses to clothing,” In *Proceedings of PLATE: Product Lifetimes and the Environment Conference*, Tu Delft, 2017; in press.
- ³⁸ Thoreau, *Walden*, 21-22.
- ³⁹ See also e.g. Kate Fletcher, *Craft of Use: Post-Growth Fashion* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016); S.E. Schultz, R.E. Kleine and J.B. Kernan, “These are a few of my favourite things: Toward an explication of attachment as a consumer behaviour construct,” *Advances in Consumer Research* 16 (1989): 359-366; Michael R. Solomon, “Deep-Seated Materialism: The Case of Levi’s 501 Jeans,” *NA – Advances in Consumer Research* 13 (1986): 619-622.
- ⁴⁰ Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, 277.
- ⁴¹ As Martin noted in his ‘Dress and Dream’ with regard to utopian thought; “the most likely factor to invalidate clothing is fashion, the capricious mutability of clothing styles” (p.59).

Ribeiro similarly argues that utopian writers invariably denounce fashion as being incompatible with “perfect and timeless society” (“Zippypyjamas”, p. 72).

⁴² Ruth Levitas, “More, Morris, Utopia ... and us,” *The Journal of William Morris Studies* XXII (2016): 16.

⁴³ Thoreau, *Walden*, 23.

⁴⁴ Gregory Clayes, *Searching for Utopia: The History of an Idea* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2011), 59.

⁴⁵ Fletcher, *Craft of Use*.

⁴⁶ Levitas, *Utopia as Method*.