The Fashion of Global Warming: Between Counterculture and Trend, Discursive Translations in Post-consumerism

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The article reflects on the translation mechanisms operated by fashion and the transformation of countercultural discourses and practices into their mainstream versions. By exploring the recent boom of products, advertisements, and lifestyles utilising the communication of sustainability as a strategy, the work utilises Landowski's socio-semiotic theory to analyse the absorption of post-consumerism by commodity capitalism, understanding the process of commodification as a transformation in the regimes governing interactions between subjects. Supporting the discussion with literature debating the countercultural critique—in politics, economics, and fashion—and the contemporary commentary about post-consumerism and the environmental crisis, the work concludes that fashion operates a narrative simplification of countercultural discourses, transforming its regime of risk and sense production, causing a transition from intricate webs of relations between subjects to a set of values that can be exchanged.

Starting in the second half of 2019, the discussion about global warming and the climate emergency propelled an increase in the appearance of "eco-friendly" brands, products, and practices across diverse

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sectors, paired with an increased collective awareness of the problem of consumption and its environmental impact, and a hyper-production of online content about products, practices, and lifestyles in line with the needs for change in our manners of consuming. While the boom of this specific type of discourse centred around corporate practice and consumer culture can be partially linked to the sustainability-related academic production in the 2010s and the inclusion of this literature in Arts and Design Higher Education courses, the discussion about sustainability was born much earlier. Although the first appearance of the term as we know it today can be traced back to the *Brundtland Report*[2], the broader discussion about capitalism, commodification, and the impact of those systems on the planet and ourselves can be traced back to decades or even centuries.

Although consumer products perceived as environment-friendly, as well as vintage, remade, and recycled wearable fashion, have recently (re)entered the market with a flavour of novelty, those practices draw from narratives belonging to various anti-status quo movements that have been around for much longer than the idea of "sustainability" has, with contemporary "remixes" of old concepts—such as vegetarianism, spiritual detachment, or environmentalism—becoming the face of the 21st-century eco-friendly *ethos*. Because those ways of living are so visible right now, they can also become an "influence" in the production of discourses around corporate responsibility and advertisement, instigating a wave of iconic and verbal discourses that run in parallel with the life practices originating them.

Conceivably a problem of fashion—understood here as a cycle shaping changes of modes, ideologies, and information—both *what* we consume and our *manners* of doing so have changed, cyclically and rhythmically, from the 18th century onwards. Since then, careful (and predictable) transits through different regimes seem to condition our

2 *Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*, from 1987, is accepted as the first introduction of the term "sustainability" in relation to ozone depletion, global warming, and other issues of the natural environment that relate to the use of (natural) resources. Besides global warming, the report addresses many of the issues reappearing in the agendas of environmental movements, such as food security, ecosystems, animal welfare, use of water and energy, industrial production, and so forth. The term "Sustainable Development" that populates manuals of Sustainable Fashion and Design is also introduced by the document, meaning "...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

relationships with consumerism, constructing passages that can be read as alternations of syntaxes that affect, as a totality, many aspects of our culture and society: our presentation of self but, equally, our choices of leisure, food products, manners of living, as well as our engagement with discourses we "consume". In that sense, such passages not only mould choices in products or sartorial looks, but there is a rhythmic transformation governing the roles and competences embodied by different objects and subjects when it comes to the motivations for acquiring (or not acquiring) consumables, services, and experiences.

The quest for belonging to one's generation can determine cultural and social aspects linked to prescribed forms of consumption practices, shaping one's identity even more than national backgrounds do. In this context, new fashions derived from attempts at disrupting systems[3] can work towards consolidating new normative roles, regardless of their impact on our social and natural environments. In sartorial fashion, but also in all sorts of consumer objects, the late-18th century is the moment in which a prevalent programme of consumption is turned upside down: from a needs-driven model of consumption and production, Western civilisation was, for the first time, confronted with the existence of goods presented in advance, and at a vast supply, making consumerism almost a necessity to sustain emerging markets, shifting our collective behaviour to a desire-driven dynamic[4]. According to the journalist Paul Manson, the need to sustain a constant cycle of production-consumption—of material commodities or information—is one of the greatest challenges in sustaining capitalism through the waves of innovation it has produced, and possibly the aspect that will cause the system to eventually end (Manson, 2015).

The critique of the effects of consumerism is at the root of a recent shift in our modes of consumption, occasioning the emergence of a new buzzword in marketing: post-consumerism. An ideology stemming from the environmentalist backlash and concepts such as post-capitalism and post-growth, it can be linked both to the birth of new social values

3 Rather than a specific system, I refer to the semiotic mode of existence complementary to the mode of "process", which represent, respectively, the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes (Cf. Greimas & Courtés, 1993; Hjelmslev, 1968).

4 Although several contemporary works in Fashion Theory and related disciplines have discussed the phenomenon in passim, some of the core statements describing the transformations resulting from the Industrial Revolution appear in the works of Walter Benjamin (1938), Georg Simmel (1957), Werner Sombart (1967), and Thorstein Veblen (1899).

reaching beyond the existing gratifications of consumer culture—or a new form of *hedonism* (Soper, 2007, 2008). Equally, post-consumerism responds to the exhaustion of the sustainability paradigm—or the worn-out belief that small changes in materials, means of production, distribution, and consumer awareness are sufficient steps to stop a climate emergency. For Blühdorn (2017), those possibilities constitute *discourses of simulation* which help organise modern society's journey towards more inequality (and environmental destruction) by promoting sustainability principles without, however, disrupting the foundations of liberal consumer capitalism—a vision extensively discussed by Klein (2015, 2019).

In such a context, the ideology of *degrowth* behind post-consumerism can only emerge from radical opposition to consumer practices: an overhaul of the *system*, rather than the "healing" of isolated *processes*. Nonetheless, although such ideals emerge as anti-status quo movements, some of its principles seem to speedily enter the world of fashion and design, inspiring the creation of products and services that claim to be optimised for the environment. As such, the matter of post-consumerism, initially an ideological discourse aiming at the destruction of our consumer order, not only becomes part of the consumer order: it becomes *fashionable*.

This article aims at presenting a semiotic reading of this passage, from a radical anti-system movement to a "simulated" or "staged" post-consumerism which aims at fuelling consumerism, both via the consumption of material commodities and iconic and verbal discourses, through the consolidation of isolated and essentialised eco-friendly practices and objects as part of mainstream behaviours. The article will concentrate on the variations in the deep, "abstract" semio-narrative mechanisms enabling changes in the plastic formants and verbal structures "to surface", identifying how the cyclical apparatus of fashion examined in my previous work (Jardim, 2014, 2021a, 2021b) can be utilised in the reading of the "fashion of sustainability". The structural analysis of the anti-consumerist discourses transformation or translation into a fashionable form is of critical importance in our present context, as it supports an understanding of the deeper structures of meaning constituting a system and what such passages—from counterculture to fashion and back—enact in terms of semantic transformation in processes.

1. Junction and union: fashion rhythms

In *Passions sans nom*, Landowski (2004) presents a critique of standard semiotics and the limitations of its model grounded in a regime of junction. In that model, narrative syntaxes are limited by a series of *a priori* restrictions, where relationships between subjects can only be understood as mediated by objects of value: all transformations of state are limited to an inventory of exchanges in which subjects either acquire or lose objects of value—a set of relations Landowski names an "economy of intersubjective exchanges" (2004, p. 59), linked to relations governed by an approach of *domination* he approximates to the matter of *consumption*. In opposition, he substantiates the possibility of a second set of interactions linked to co-present and mutual relations: the regime of *union*. Rather than focusing on the junctive states of subjects and objects, the regime of union is concerned with what happens between subjects: a *mode of interaction* founded in the co-presence of objects and subjects and the possibility of a sensitive relation between them. The central problem becomes the existence of a space for mutual participation—rather than the model of unilateral domination present in the junctive relations of the standard narrative grammar (Cf. Greimas, 1970, 1983; Greimas & Courtés, 1993).

In place of a strictly economic set of relations—and their grounding in a regime based on the predictability of relations governed by *operations* and *manipulations*—Landowski's (2005) propositions about junction and union and the regimes of interaction also present tools to describe the "unexpected" and relations emerging from interactions that cannot be programmed. Such statements are pertinent to the description of roles and competences embodied by different actants in a fashion system, permitting analyses that examine the phenomenon of change beyond the superficial visual variations constituting a "look".

When regarded from the point of view of a continuity vs discontinuity category marking passages from the regime of junction to the regime of union, the transformations we associate with the superficial variations constituting "fashion changes" are stacked with the alternation of *conformity* and *confrontation*—or the desire to maintain a system [continuity] versus the desire to destroy it [discontinuity]. Although, in Fashion Theory[5], it is customary to separate the fashion system—

5 Some of the most influential works on fashion history and theory are well delimited into works about "fashion" and "anti-fashion", "subculture", or "counterculture".

understood as practices accepted as the "prescribed" vogue of a given time—from the manifestations "outside" of it, the results of my work show that the dance of culture and counterculture are part of the same system, forming a relation of solidarity in which the rhythm of change becomes possible. Such conclusions approximate Davis' (1992, p. 161) perception that "Antifashion is as much a creature of fashion as fashion itself is the means of its own undoing." Commercial fashion—in dress and material consumer objects but, equally, fashions of manners and ideas—changes in response to the latest manifestations of counterculture that often fuel the industry developments: to reference rebellion somehow ensures the feeling of "nowness" of commercial products, permitting their insertion in the present through communicating the and with the cultural context. Conversely, those cycles of countercultural incorporation into a commercial fashion system also force rebellion to change rhythmically, responding to the need to preserve its "anti" identity.

Such operations of appropriation of aesthetic traits constitute more than a search for inspiration: to transform counterculture into the raw conceptual material of commercial fashion requires a careful semantic and narrative translation once it is established that counterculture and mainstream culture constitute different syntaxes. Beyond the temporal split, in which fashion and anti-fashion try to be ahead of one another, those two sides are entangled in a relation of mutual presupposition, securing the continuity of both systems through the movement of constant renewal, where the attempts against the system provide it with the necessary tools for its continuity, and vice versa.

In Landowski's schema, the regime of junction is divided into two regimes: programming and manipulation. Starting with the former, it constitutes a mode of interaction marked by high regularity, in which the actants are operated by an Addresser and must comply with their thematic roles. In fashion, we identify this interaction with the long-established vogues of dress and manners that are continued almost automatically, hence constituting the full expression of *continuity* as a value. The latter, the regime of manipulation, moves away from thematic roles to relations occurring between subjects invested with an

One of the most important writings addressing this distinction problematised in response to the transformations occurring during the 20th century is certainly Steele's (1998) *Fifty years of Fashion*. On the other hand, a number of theoreticians addressed the "anti" from the 19th century onwards (Cf. Diederichsen, 2006; Hebdige, 1979; Kunzle, 2004).

enlarged agency, interacting through a set of modal competences that aim at making the other subject do [*faire faire*]. Rather than exchanging in horizontality, manipulated interactions follow an asymmetrical formula where an Addresser leads and an Addressee follows: this regime governs the negotiation of trends in the fashion system, in which a leading party—fashion houses, designers, journalists, influencers—determines trends, and the following party—the general public, but equally high street fast fashion brands and less influential designers—adhere (or not) to objects and practices. As a point of non-discontinuity, the regime of manipulation accommodates both the ephemeral and the space where new social programmes are consolidated. The regime of junction is the significant space of a commercial fashion system *par excellence*, where the control of bodies and subjects is enlarged through their adhesion to self-presentation programmes, and through literal economic exchanges of consumption.

The regime of union, in its turn, shelters regimes of interaction invested with higher risk, corresponding to the space of emancipation of subjects and the body. The anti-fashion practices and movements designate the narrative relations in which body and dress confront their accepted uses and roles, destabilising the alignment of function and social meaning the regimes of programming and manipulation facilitate. The regime of adjustment, marked by the suspension of economic exchanges—here, meaning the exchange of values between subjects—replaces them with interactions where the encounter between subjects becomes the value. Contrary to the regime of manipulation, the regime of adjustment promotes equality and balance between actants, which can both cause their mutual accomplishment or enact mutual destruction. In sartorial interactions, this regime corresponds to manifestations of dress denying established self-presentation programmes, reclaiming the body's agency as an equal actant in *esthesic* relations with its dress—instead of being *governed* by fashion.

Finally, the regime of accident governs a separation of narrative trajectories, untangling the programmes of body and dress or occasioning a random encounter of parallel trajectories. The opposition established between the regime of programming and the regime of accident corresponds to the narrative form of a fundamental category *continuity* vs *discontinuity.* While programming is about the *duration* of existing manners, the full expression of counterculture carries the value of *rupture*, marking a stance *against* the mainstream opposition to norms that are deeply encoded in our systems—of dress or otherwise—, but at the

same time sealing a relation of mutual presupposition with programmed "normality" or "normativity" corresponding to the mutual presupposition of programming and accident. As such, rebellion doesn't have a fixed look but a relational existence as "anti-norm" that creates fractures, constructing itself in opposition to what is consolidated as continuous regularity—or, as put by Melissa Richards (1998), anti-fashion too must change every time Fashion does.

Rather than constituting solely visual changes in what is fashionable (and what is not), those passages through each regime of interaction are trajectories of translation in which objects change syntaxes, consequently causing their positioning in a social context to change. Through those transformations, the transit of semantic values and narrative utterances manifests as changes in behaviours, lifestyles, and iconic or verbal discourses. The case for sustainability in products, services, or the production of communications can be analysed in the same framework, substantiated as a problem of fashion changes. Each of those manifestations can be understood as mainstream or countercultural—either working to sustain the system or to oppose it—constructing and continuing the mutual presupposition between both systems.

2. From accident to manipulation: essentialising rebellion

The positions forming the regime of union, accident and adjustment, correspond to anti-status quo movements *de facto*: rather than emerging as trends aiming at the production of commodities, countercultural groups and their objects and behaviours originate as the rejection of a consumption programme—the refusal of specific products, certain natural resources, commodities in general or, finally, the adhesion to ideological discourses directly or indirectly linked to consumption acts. While those stances can develop into "organised rebellion", they originate from personal choices invested with *esthesic* qualities—the denial of established programmes for the sake of what Soper describes as the "sensuous pleasures of consuming differently" emerging from the disenchantment with consumption (Soper, 2007, p. 211). Such seems to describe a contemporary feeling not distant from the disenchantment with culture in the 1960s and 1970s counterculture. Besides the reconnection with nostalgic things that do not exist anymore (or do not exist yet), one of the pleasures of alternative hedonism is grounded in the denial of consumer choices that became "tainted" with their negative side effects: a search for an adjustment is, in that sense, a search for

recovering the affective dimension of consumption lost in the process of commodification, which could mean a resemantisation of objects and practices from a past that was forgotten or trivialised, whether such past is remembered (an object from childhood) or imagined (the nostalgia for another era).

Currently, hyper-consumption and the things it stands for—ideals of subjectivity, identity, and notions of "the good life"—are a consolidated programme, as we seem to be moving closer to what Debord (1992) named *alienated consumption*: a machinic system of consumption-production to which we know we must submit or die. Consumer societies are not only marked by higher living standards, an abundance of goods and services, and a cult of objects linked to a hedonistic and materialistic morality: for such societies, the belief that the *new* is, by nature, superior to the *old* is ingrained, spontaneously held by consumers (Lipovetsky, 1994). In such light, *not* consuming is the most deviant act one can perform: whether that means not adopting new fashions, not owning property, subsisting through foraged and loaned items, growing one's own food or dumpster diving[6]. Hence, the (radical) core of post-consumerism resides in the notion that it is possible to exist *beyond* consumerism, adopting ways of subsisting that deny the prevalent programmes of consumption based on the economic acquisition of goods that are created by exploiting natural and human resources—and the consequent exchange of semantic values that accompany those acquisitions. Such an idea is not only a denial of our economic system and its chained monetary exchanges: it also challenges the practice of putting a price tag on nature.

The conversation about sustainable consumption is largely centred on changes in materials and processes constituting the plastic-visual level of manifestations, which include the nostalgic obsession with *recycled*, *remade*, and *vintage*. In wearable fashion, garments in which the "visible state of wear" becomes a premium reference the recent past of avant-garde fashion, as well as dandyism and its "repulse for the new". Geczy and Karaminas (2019, p. 23) remark that the visibly worn garment is a provisional entity "...haunted by implications of a better past." Similarly, Calefato (2019, p. 38) discusses visibly worn or

6 Among members of the Zero Waste community, the term no longer refers to the search of information in other people's rubbish, but the act of searching dumpsters—particularly the ones near commercial and supply centres, supermarkets and restaurants—for consumables which can be foraged for free, particularly food, but also furniture, clothes, and any other essentials.

remade garments and the time of *patina* as what "...gives back the best of the past". In clothing or other forms of consumer objects, the cult of visibly second-hand objects is central in the environmental counterculture, marking a double distinction from current fashion—both in style and in the state of wear—isolating the discourse of "objects with another life", "giving a second life" or the concept of "pre-loved".

Used side by side (and, sometimes, interchangeably) with figures of "harmony with nature" (biodegradable, natural, vegan) and "harmony with one another" (fairtrade, ethically made), the figures of recycled, remade, and vintage create a set of discursive components enabling the process of commodification of objects and practices. On the one hand, the "real" patina of an authentically vintage, reused object can be simulated in the manufacturing process (or DIYed by the consumer), but equally, thrift shops often feature a large supply of the newest fast-fashion trends, narrowing down the distinction between consumer culture and the "post-consumerist counterculture", almost permitting a simultaneous affiliation to both systems. Originally aimed at a post-consumerism *de facto*—a *reimagination of the system*—those themes and figures are captured by designers and businesses, occasioning their passage from anti-system to the proposition of a *different* consumerism "inspired" by post-consumerism: a transformation in the *process*.

Such a narrowing between rebellion and mainstream consumerism gives rise to the rebirth of past countercultural movements—veganism as a doctrine, extreme minimalism and detachment as a spiritual practice, or environmentalism as a political movement—but dissolving their value of *deviance* and *opposition* into the *bricolage* of 21st-century lifestyle ideologies: a generation of vegan (ish), minimalist (where it works for you), and zero-waste (as possible) individuals. Two manifestations of the same practices, each version communicates a distinct narrative syntax: while the strict versions of those behaviours preserve the value of opposition to established norms (discontinuity), their "milder" varieties manifest the movements that were already filtered by fashion, diluting the value of opposition and rebellion to the extent that their *commodification* is possible (non-discontinuity).

Floch (1995) identified a similar phenomenon of reversal, describing movements of fragmentation and reorganisation that mark the emergence of types that can be selected and exploited to create new significant structures—in his terms, a two-step process marked by the emergence of the syntagmatic over the paradigmatic, followed by the

retraction of the paradigmatic from the syntagmatic. In Fisher's (2021, p. 70) words: "The condition of our access to a commodity now is that we accept the struggle is something that has already happened, that has disappeared." From this perspective, once objects, lifestyles, and discourses transit from their countercultural existence (emergence of types) to their existence as commodified objects and discourses (selection and exploitation), what is removed from them is the struggle (retraction of the paradigmatic)—or, perhaps, their *esthesic* charge[7]—enacting a passage from being politicised, or even "revolutionary", to become an integral part of capitalism: a new emergence of the syntagmatic over the paradigmatic.

At the surface of discourses, this process manifests as the incorporation of specific badges of rebellion into the commercial fashion system. Nonetheless, the values invested in those objects at different moments of their semio-narrative trajectories are radically transformed in this operation: if the core ideas of a movement are incompatible with the mainstream, the only possibility for them to become a dominant vogue is through the loss of something. In semiotic terms, such an operation can be reinterpreted as a change of regime: isolating a look—a paradigm belonging to another system of ideas—and transplanting it into a new context. What Floch described as a reorganisation in the plastic level can be reinterpreted, in the semio-narrative level, as a *translation*, one in which a lot is lost: any ideology, sacredness, politics, or the very anti-status quo origin of that significant unit. Indeed, Calefato (2019, p. 42) notes the potential of fashion as endless possibilities of translation and adaptation—with the caveat that "...when we leave, we don't know where the translation will bring us…" While, from a market perspective, she remarks that translation means recognising common opportunities in the global world, the translation can

7 The concept of *esthesic charge* emerges from the literary analysis presented by Greimas (1987) in *De L'imperfection*: it describes a form of "subjectivation of objects" that become "pregnant" with significance—a notion he attributes to Fabbri's (n.d.) analysis of "world figures" described by Bachelard. In Greimas' work, this esthesic charge carries a potential for aesthetic commotion: objects capable of enacting a form of "dazzlement" that is described, in the literary text, through the suspension of aspectual markers (such as time and space), consolidating the emergence of *discontinuity* in discourse and a *rupture* in represented life. In the present analysis, we transpose this concept from its existence as a literary mechanism to the analysis of objects in their material and iconic structures.

also implicate a loss of *ethos* that, when it comes to the environmental movement, means that ideas are now working against themselves.

At the plastic level, this trajectory marks the passage from "disgust" of, or "curiosity" about, objects belonging to the category of *environmental-friendly* to a status of "desirable" that places those objects as the latest fashion. Second-hand, reusable, upcycled, biodegradable, vegan, natural, repurposed, recycled, ethically made, sustainably sourced, and plastic-free: beyond the core concerns of environmentalism, the pursuit of lifestyles considered "better" because they are fashionable creates new forms of distinction, generating demands and pushing a change of behaviours in existing businesses, as well as the appearance of new brands catering for the eco-fashion. Because fashions are also prescriptive of opinions, it has become unthinkable for corporations to ignore the climate crisis at the risk of inspiring (selective) public outrage and boycotts in response to practices out of tune with this new aspiration.

Nonetheless, the idea of "sustainable fashion" is a contradiction. A mainstream culture based on a fashion system is, necessarily, *unsustainable*, since the core of fashion is that it must never be *sustained*: its success depends on the fast *consumption*—or *extinction*—of trends, concepts, ideas, products, and even belief systems and political convictions that must always yield to the "next thing". Hence, the existence of a trend-based fashion industry dances in the bond of discontinuity and non-continuity: it must supply constant novelty, but the novelty must never eclipse manageable regimes of risk, in which subjects feel a certain degree of choice and autonomy, including *the right to rebel*—as long as it occurs in the confines of a commodity culture. Indeed, the climate crisis is increasingly becoming a form of "prescribed indignation": while subjects are in a position in which they cannot not care about global warming and environmental destruction, the appropriate tools and responses presented to do so are limited to options permitting the continuity of commodity consumerism.

Such absorption of rebellion that neutralises the confrontation potential of objects and practices is linked to an adaptation or a passage from a regime of union to a regime of junction. The radical premises of anti-status quo movements must suffer a process of de-complexification that "sanitises" looks, isolated practices, and objects to make them "palatable" to the masses and compatible with the logic of junction. To enter the mainstream, complex ideas must be turned into a slogan: a simple formula that can easily be repeated or *shared*. In Boltanski and Chiapello (1999), we find a similar critique highlighting capita-

lism's "unbelievable malleability" in gathering the most diverse aspirations, recovering ideas from the system's previous enemies—an ability that, for both sociologists, means that critique can never create victory. While their statements are focused on capitalism's incorporation of leftist critique into responses to workers' demands, in the micro space of fashion's responses, the same principle is applied through the reutilisation of opposing ideas that are transformed: from anti-consumerism to the generation of more consumerism which, as noted by Klein (2019), is not focused on sustaining the environment, but on sustaining capitalism.

In this process, the core objectives of an ideology are left out: the complex individual feelings and collective agendas must be simplified to a restricted set of objects emblematising a movement: its most generalisable clichés which, contradictorily, become what denounces the affiliation to the fashionable version of a group. Such transformation is nothing more than commodification: we can understand this process as a translation from "pregnant objects" (Greimas, 1987) with an *esthesic* charge to objects of value to be exchanged. For Debord (1992): a passage from things in their fluid state to a coagulated state; for Streeck (2014), capitalism's ability to destroy without being able to replace. Such operations show that, although capitalism might possess the ability to adapt in response to the mechanisms of critique against itself, such responses are never in the critique's terms—or semiotically located in a regime of union in which mutual participation and the transformation of subjects are possible—but in the system's terms—located in a regime of junction, grounded in an economy of exchanges and responding to a project of *domination*.

Finally, it is possible to utilise the same theoretical principles to analyse the production of verbal discourses. In the realm of corporate post-consumerism, one of the most irrefutable marks of mainstreaming and de-complexification of environmental issues is the shrivelling of eco-activism into one unique matter: *Climate Change*. That means that the countercultural movement and its complex agenda, which includes, beyond environmental preservation, ethical treatment of animals and humans, redistribution of income, and fairer working laws for the agricultural and manufacturing sector, are obfuscated by the giant of *Global Warming*, which becomes a slogan, and occupies almost the totality of the discourse. Such ubiquity—a successful global adoption of fashionable behaviours—is almost always paired with two anti-Addressers: *plastic* and *carbon units*. The acceptance of those anti-Addressers in the

mainstream discourses about sustainability are already the result of a successful manipulation: a contract has been enacted with governments (who are passing single-use plastic bans and accepting carbon offsetting as a viable "environmental" action); businesses (who regularly advertise their changes in single-use plastic and use their carbon offsetting practices as a unique selling point), and individuals (who parade their "ethical choices" and endorsements to brands planting trees for every purchase).

The process permitting the emptying of environmentalist ideals and agendas, enacting a passage from a logic of accident to a logic of manipulation, is nothing more than the reduction of complex coincidences of programmes to an inventory of exchangeable objects of value ("the environment") through specific utterances of doing ("stopping global warming", "stopping the climate crisis"). Furthermore, this process governed by a polemical structure involves a pair of presupposed actants of communication: an Addresser who communicates values and sanctions the action of subjects (individuals leading the eco-conscious trend, or corporate and governmental policymakers), and the anti-Addresser[8] invested with the same unilateral relation of mutual presupposition with an anti-subject, who opposes those values ("plastic waste", "carbon footprints"), to fulfil a narrative programme: "saving the Planet" by "stopping climate change". What is weaponised by the logic of manipulation is the set of objects and actants that co-incided, in the logic of accident, with the programmes of fashion—a reusable cup, for example, is a symbolic casualty: an object of need for the activist that can gain a resignified existence as an object of desire for consumer culture, preserving its ecological value but losing the rebellious one. Finally, this operation is what removes such objects from the order of "being", reinstating their existence as commodities in a world of "having": objects that can be sold, possessed, and consumed, losing their status of quasi-subjects to become mere things—which, possibly, will be discarded once their time as a desirable object has ended.

8 For the definition of Addresser [*Destinateur*] and anti-Addresser [*anti-Destinateur*], see Greimas & Courtés, 1993, p. 95. In the polemic structure, the presence of relations of Subject and anti-Subject presuppose the existence of an Addresser and anti-Addresser who grant the Subject modal competences, communicates values, and sanction the performance of subjects. In this passage, we mark the importance of discussing those instances—trend-setters, policymakers, as well as "plastic" and "carbon" themselves—in the level of communication and sanction of values.

The narrative simplification of "climate change" into the matter of "plastic waste" or "carbon units" is capitalism's response to the environmental critique, translating its demands into a language it can understand and in which it can operate without jeopardising its own continuity. Emblematising a complex issue into one single anti-Addresser fulfils a double role in the process of mainstreaming: on the one hand, it makes the discussion accessible to the masses, (supposedly) excusing them from the need to understand complex issues discussed in the cryptic words of experts prior to *taking action*; on the other hand, this simplification enables businesses to simultaneously adhere to the eco-fashion by tackling a narrowed-down problem (while categorically ignoring other environmental issues). Such reduction of the movements' agenda into one slogan permits the simulated adhesion to post-consumerism by both businesses and individuals, who can engage in localised action without, however, altering the system—in essence, the line between destroying fashion (rather than one trend) and following it (by adhering to trends that can construct the simulacrum of destruction without enacting it). Moreover, the need for a reduction permitting the translation of climate change into a syntax of exchanges is also the operation enabling a further reduction: the establishment of an inventory of roles and trajectories that will allow objects, subjects, and situations to be operated instead of negotiated—a not so distant future that will include plastic-conscious choices and carbon offsetting as the default, continuing to translate countercultural practices from trends into accessible, prescribed principles.

Conclusion

The analysis focused on mainstream and countercultural social practices, and the necessary syntax translation permitting ideas and objects to transit from *opposition* to the system, manifested as a process of "de-consumption", to their *integration* into the system as a fashionable part of consumerism. On the one hand, the proponents of post-consumerist ideologies as a social movement will preach a complete *disentanglement* with consumption, hoping for the (random, in the terms of Landowski's model) emergence of a new world order outside the predictability of existing programmes. Yet, the commodified discourse of post-consumerism begins to recognise that existing practices need to be fine-tuned with environmental issues: a discourse tapping into modal competences and mechanisms of manipulation to

entice the consumer into *acting through consumption*. Such a reduction of co-incidences of anti-status quo movements governed by the regime of accident to utterances of exchange becomes what permits subjects to enact contracts—to *act* and *make act*—but the outcome of those actions is filtered through mechanisms aiming at reducing the regime of risk. While the relative safety of the regime of manipulation is appealing to business practices aiming at a profit, it also effects a reduction in the production of sense.

What, in semiotic terms, can be described as changes in risk and sense production are paired with the almost "intuitive" perception of actors and objects in their mainstream or countercultural manifestations: the anti-status quo version of a garment, object, or text "emanates" something different that is inimitable to the commodity. However, the unpredictability anchoring the emergence of countercultural practices is not compatible with business models: instead of "expecting the unexpected" to *occur*, the world of commodities is happy to capture reduced and translated fractions of complex cultural movements, transforming the objectives of those manifestations in the process: from complete confrontation to integration with fashion, while preserving the faintest reference to the untranslated version.

This mechanism of translation is what permits the transformation of objects and practices into their opposite, even if discursive traits—visual and verbal—are preserved in the process. From that perspective, the insight presented in this article is relevant to understanding subcultural movements and their delicate dynamic with fashion but is equally pertinent to addressing a myriad of themes connected to commodification and the destruction of sense that accompanies it. That issue reaches beyond the problem of "material" commodities towards the discussion of commodification of knowledge, concepts, education, political views, and even anti-system riots that, today, are quickly absorbed by the movements of fashion.

Such invites the question of "controlled rebellion" or "prescribed indignation" and its utilisation in discourses, particularly in marketing, through the adoption of collective discontent that is already absorbed by the system when it becomes popular—thus, already emptied of its power of opposing (or enacting *real* change). Throughout the centuries, fashion has proved to be one of the most effective mechanisms of cushioning opposition, utilising syntax changes as a strategy for managing relations and situations. Before countercultural post-consumerism entered the scene, fashion had already managed to absorb other attacks

on mainstream culture: the blurring of gender lines, the dissolution of social class, and even the transformation of bad taste into good taste, the resignification of ugliness into beauty (Cf. Jardim, 2014, 2019, 2021a, 2021b). The capture of emerging subcultures and their transformation into emblematic objects and utterances is one of the strategies utilised by the fashion system to neutralise opposition by returning it back to the safety of its controlled space while also functioning as the creation of illusions: simulations of "newness" even when that means to simulate action and protest that will no longer be coerced but endorsed.

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