

threads of memory

affect, acquisition & attachment
in clothing consumption



clothing

is a

verb



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THREADS OF MEMORY

affect, acquisition & attachment
in clothing consumption

the undergraduate thesis
of
lily moskowitz



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photography by everett milloy

THREADS OF MEMORY

is an interdisciplinary project that blends theoretical analysis, auto-ethnographic study, and exhibition to characterize clothing as a conduit to foster intimacy between bodies and objects.



Drawing from the fields of affect theory, consumer studies, and critical fashion scholarship, this work urges an altered perspective of clothing that prioritizes memory, meaning, and sentimental value over trend, novelty, and commercial value.

My research roots a changed perspective of fashion within method of acquisition, suggesting that the way in which a fashion object is acquired can dictate the degree of connection between a garment and its owner. My findings particularly emphasize the circular consumption model's increased capacity to transform products to stories, objects to subjects, and transactions to narratives. In contrast to the sterility of an item bought-new, acts of secondhand, resale, vintage, and inherited acquisition embed history, lineage, and sentiment in the experience of ownership – effectively increasing object attachment and extending longevity of possession.

Foregrounded in the affective lens is an attention to extra-cognitive, irrational, and unconscious mind-body experiences. As such, this catalog serves as a stream-of-consciousness documentation of the feelings and emotions summoned while owning and wearing clothing. Approaching dress as a meditative act, I demonstrate the fluidity of energy between object and body – highlighting fashion's potential to function as vessel, souvenir, and talisman. Particular focus on material blemish and markings of defect seek to contextualize the object's ability to accumulate memory and meaning through physical usage and passage of ownership.

This project urges a reformation of both consumer behavior and embodiment.

To view fashion as an exercise of identity articulation, transformation, and becoming is to depart from the ethos of novelty and commodity that fuels much of clothing consumption.

Implied in this practice is a mediation of disposable purchasing and textile waste, as well as a limitation of the environmental consequences attributed to the fast fashion industry and the linear business model.

I propose that circular acquisition methods
broaden the scope of consumer consciousness,
kindle a mutual dialogue between garment
& wearer,
and herald intentional, thoughtful & enduring purchases.



THREADS OF MEMORY ultimately attempts to reorient the socio-cultural understanding of fashion from an act of consumption to an act of ritual.

From dressing to embodying:
shopping to clothing.

THE FOLLOWING CATALOG
FEATURES 15 OBJECTS
INTERPRETED THROUGH
THE AFFECTIVE ANALYSIS
METHODOLOGY ADOPTED BY
TIENHOVEN & SMELIK (2021).



EACH OBJECT IS
MADE SUBJECT
THROUGH THE FACTORS OF:

ACQUISITION

method of possession

linear (fast-fashion, bought new)

or circular (secondhand, resale, vintage, inheritance)

PROVENANCE

notable history, name of retail business, or previous owner

MATERIALS

physical & abstract components

AFFECT

instinctive or unconscious bodily reactions
to encounter & embodiment

PRECEPT

sensory experiences to encounter & embodiment
touch, smell, sound, texture, spatiality, kineticism

CONCEPT

each object is entitled/re-entitled with a concept
if clothing is the vessel for memory, meaning,
and feeling, then what is traditionally understood as
“blouse” can be re-framed as “joy”

LAUNDRY LIST

01 top	impulse
02 jeans	measurement
03 sun dress	nostalgia
04 blazer	definition
05 jacket	protection
06 skirt	knowledge
07 camisole	beauty
08 necklace	comfort
09 plaid dress	agency
10 pant	guilt
11 bra	compromise
12 underwear	(im)purity
13 socks	fulfillment
14 shoes	awareness
15 ring	oath

01 top



i m p u l s e

CIRCULAR / archival

Issey Miyake Ready-to-Wear 2007
What Goes Around Comes Around 2021
Polyester, Rayon, Restlessness.



AFFECT Taking this garment off the hanger, I feel an immediate tug of fascination. Awe. Wonder. The urge to play, to run the long silken extensions through my fingers and twirl them around my wrists. I feel a closeness with the garment. Putting it on I notice a hitch in my breathing and a fluttering sensation in my chest at the excitement I feel to be able to wear it. Freedom. Impulse. Lack of regulated movement. Wearing the piece I am overcome by the urge to sway, to lean, to move and dance. Windmilling my arms, I wrap the ties around my neck, fling them into the air.

In it, I become limitless.

PRECEPT First recognized in the tactile sensation of the garment on my body is comfort. The cotton of the t-shirt base is black and soft and stretchy. It rests against my skin with a sense of nonchalance, neither clinging nor draped. It is close to me like a light breath or a cool coating. I feel the extensions of my arms in the drapery of the ties pooling forth at my clavicle, around my forearms. Although they are long and cumbersome, they glide smoothly and airily as if floating. They do not feel 'in the way.' I register the contrast of the ties, red and cool gray, with the blankness of the garment's body.

The ties are just barely opaque,
and they feel like water
swirling with my limbs.

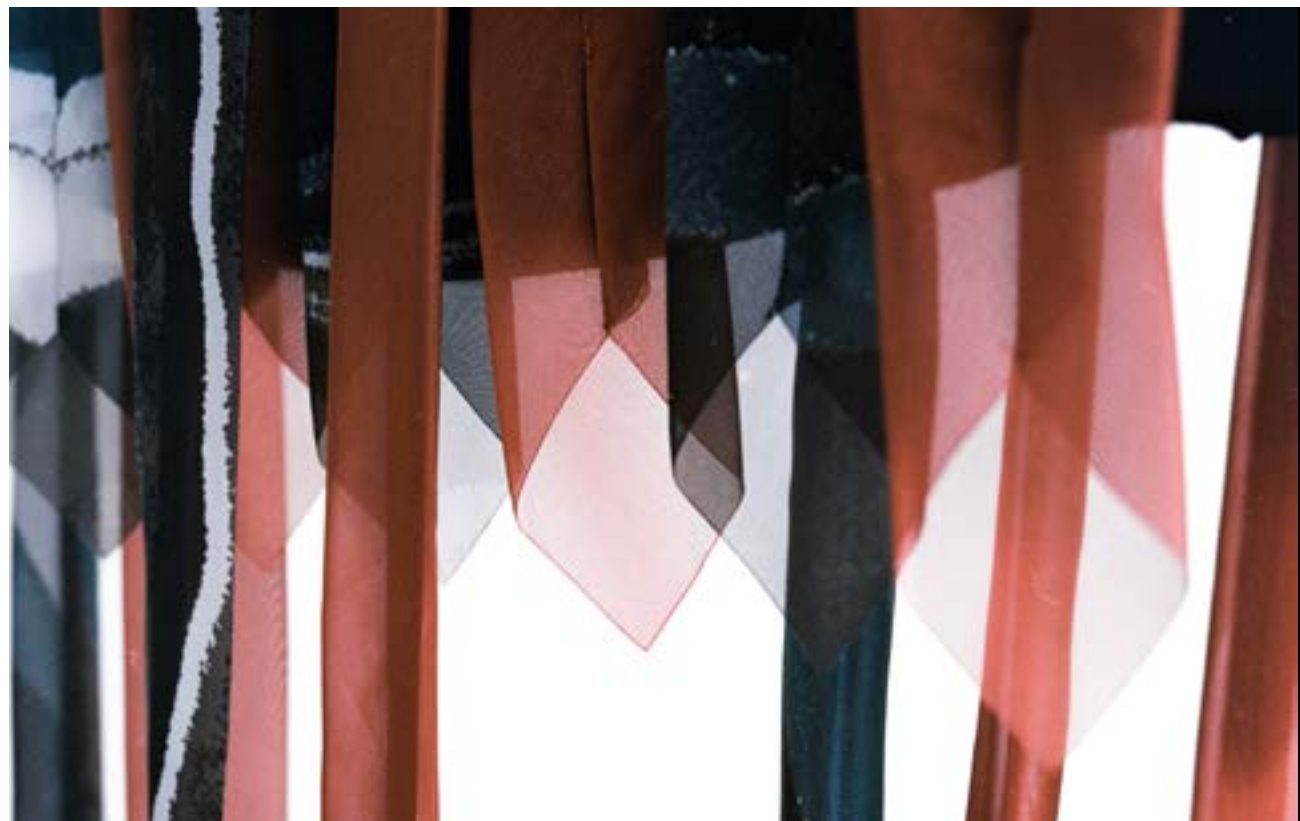
I am
swimming
in the
garment.

In it, I cannot stand still.

CONCEPT

I conflate the irrational impulse of purchasing this garment (a factor of its acquisition) with the unmediated impulse of movement that I feel in wearing it (a factor of its affect). Although I do not feel any regret in buying this piece, I know that it reflected an impulsivity of consumption that was at its core non-rational. I did not have the money to be spending as much as I did on its purchase. I merely felt so attracted to it that I gave in to the affect of pleasure it triggered in me upon seeing it in the store. My disappointment, anger, even, that I spent so much of my hard-earned wage on this garment only furthers the feeling that by wearing it, I am immune to authority.

When wearing it, I feel a similar lack of bodily regulation and a sense of limitlessness, as if there is no end to my movements and no constrictions to the contortions I may make within its arms.



The element of convertibility in the garment – the way that the ties can be arranged frontwards or swooped towards the back, tied up as if actual neckties or knotted around themselves – also contributes to the concept of impulse that I have derived from this analysis. Each time I put this garment on, I tap into a primal or extra-cognitive sort of urge that instructs me in how I want to wear it and move inside of it. The eerie similarity of the silken extensions to arms additionally represents an impulse to merge body with garment, or the desire to mimic and replicate the beauty of the human form in the material fashion object.



There is freedom to having so many arms, to duplicating the extremities in this way.

The deep pleasure that I feel wearing this garment stems from both my sourcing of the piece and the material sensation of wearing it. While the physical elements of the garment are inherently pleasing to me, I am equally admiring of its rarity and uniqueness. That I sourced this garment one-of-a-kind, that it had a life before me walking on the Issey Miyake runway, instills it with a sense of wonder and sacredness that increases its affect of movement, transformation, impulse.

02 jeans



measurement

CIRCULAR / vintage

Levi's Denim
Chelsea Market 2016
Cotton, Aluminum, Unidentified Stain



AFFECT

Familiarity. Comfort. Discomfort. Grounding. Small tug in my gut of apprehension. Tense fear that they will not fit properly. Urge to put my hands in the pockets, front and back. Relief.

Limbs
settling.

PRECEPT

Light wash faded blue. Soft cotton. Forgiving. Sturdy. Pliable. I notice two small blood spots at the inside seam of the crotch. The way I must give them an extra tug to pull them up over my hips. They comply. I enjoy the noise of the zip- it goes with ease. Big splotchy tan stain on the inner thigh, coffee probably. Discoloration on the shins and the seat, probably from kneeling and pattering about in grass. They cling to my inner thighs and cut straight against my ankles. Pucker at the knees. I take a twisted small pleasure in the half inch of room at the waist. Wearing them and considering my reflection, I am drawn to the hard lines of the seams, the extra fading lining them white at the edges. I feel the depth of the pockets and watch how far my hand is able to disappear until only my wrist is visible.

CONCEPT

My first instinct to put my hands into the pockets of the garment reflects the time that I have owned them, the nagging thought that I have left something forgotten: a note, a coin, a ticket stub, a spare dollar. The staining on the denim does not bring me any kind of displeasure- it only marks their debris, the feeling that they are loved. I have never attempted to wash away the blemishes. The underlying tugs of fear that I felt upon putting them on I attribute to my awareness of time and transformation, the apprehension that a day will come when they do not fit me. I think of the times that I wore them and they felt a little too tight, the year or two when they were too roomy and sat lower on my hips. The high waist fit of the pant I associate with safety. That I am tucked in. There is nothing of me spilling out or over, which brings pleasure.

Wearing them does not summon memories of the time I have spent in them as much as it summons the feeling of putting them on. As if putting them onto my body is a form of measurement, a check to see how I have changed or bulged or narrowed. This is unhealthy, I suppose, but rather than rationalizing this anxiety I see something nostalgic in it; the version of myself at sixteen, eighteen, twenty, still putting on these jeans and hoping that they will still do to serve me. I do not know who owned the jeans before me. I do not wonder about them so much as I wonder about the girl who I was the last time that I wore them. I bring them out only every once in a while when I need something absolutely reliable, classic, simple.

They appear to me as if the marks
penned onto the wall of a childhood home
to measure growth.

I'm not a kid but I am still seeking
a way to measure myself.

My mind goes to the classroom, to highschool, to the feeling of sitting at a desk and being told what is expected of me. In the jeans I know what to expect: the feeling of the fabric pressing into my stomach when I sit down, keeping me in. I arrive at the concept of measurement. Mode of acquisition influences this concept not because of where I bought them, but the conditions in which they entered my life. At an age where every growth required measurement. The attachment that I feel to them is an attachment to the validation that I can find in them when I put them on and they still fit. A gruesome, guilty attachment that is more ambivalent than the cut-and-dry pleasure of a garment that I love the feel of wearing. Jeans I regard with obligatory respect, a bit of repulsion.

They are gratification, assessment, measurement.



03 sundress



nostalgia

CIRCULAR / vintage

Buffalo Exchange 2021
Cotton, Acrylic, Sun, Grass, Salt.

AFFECT

Nostalgia. Longing.

Tug in gut,
lump throat.

Youthfulness.

Playfulness.

Joy, joy, joy.

PRECEPT

The cotton has a soft, loved, worn in feel to it. It is not coarse but sturdy. The flowers on the bodice are hand-stitched in sapphire and aqua and sunny yellow. Some of the strings have unspooled from their moorings and curl out as if 3D petals growing out of the dress. From the bust to the jut of my hip bones, it is smocked in this wonderful closeness that makes me feel hugged in. There is a bit of discoloration at the armpits and some odd stains at the back. My own back is bare and I can feel the air on my skin and the halter ties tickling my spine. The hem cuts off mid-shin in a line of quaint crochet.

I am made alive
in the color of
the red.



I feel long and lanky and like I should
always be barefooted. My breasts are
supported and I could be a mother or a
child. I feel pleasantly within my body,
aware of all of the shapes I can make
in it.



CONCEPT The dress summons images of sunshine spilling on skin. I am reminded of late afternoons in the springtime and grass stains and freckled cheeks. There is joy effusing from the fabric, mimicked in the bouquets of flowers sewn into its bust. It is soulful and childlike. I am prone to calling it my 'happy dress.' In it I smell lemons and sea salt and citrus perfume. The memories worn into the garment coat over the memory of its acquisition. It is a happy object by association. I wear it on days that I miss simplicity and gingham and Italian coasts. Wearing it brings me a pleasurable longing for lovers that I no longer love and days that are no longer so free. I see mud-died feet in the small wrinkles of its silhouette. It reminds me of sturdy denim and the sound of cicadas. It is an object of serenity and sweet mourning. It conjures two specific memories: the first, a day in the park, full of pleasure and strawberries. My hair is up and I am not wearing makeup and my curls fall out of their clip without care. I feel unencumbered. The second is a day in Liguria in a small field of lemon trees. My feet are flat on the ground and I walk to a stone pebbled beach. It is cold. I walk and the wind blows me and the dress into the water. I have never washed the dress, and I like to think that some of the smoke and the sea remain in it.

It is a souvenir of nostalgia.

04 blazer



definition

CIRCULAR / archival & gifted

Thierry Mugler circa 1980
From the personal collection
of Doris Raymond 2021
Silk, Stillness, Satisfaction.

AFFECT

Unease. Hesitation.
Distance. Caution.
Rigidity. Stillness.
Posture. Relief.
Pride.
Power.

Upon removing this garment from its hanger, I notice a sense of stillness and hesitation. A slowness to my movements, shortened inhalations of breath. I handle the garment gingerly and with a tenderness of touch. There is hesitation to put it around me, as if it is meant to live safely on its hanger. A complete halt of breathing: sliding my arms into the sleeves, snapping the buttons closed. Something stirring in my stomach as my body and the garment settle into place. A narrowing of my chin as I consider my reflection in the mirror. The straightening of my shoulders. The strict posturing of my spine. Pride tightening my abdomen and pulling in my navel. Exhale.



PRECEPT

I note the ease with which my arms glide into the sleeves, the delicacy of the silk maroon lining. A cautious texture. I admire the broad padding at my shoulders, the nip it takes at my waist, the uncompromising cut of the hip that extends outward. I see the severity with which it segments my body into parts, accentuating the femaleness of my form. I feel the stiffness of my body and the tightness around the slope of my torso. It is a comforting sort of tightness, the kind that is suctioning me in and expanding me out. It draws my gaze to the lines of the pattern: they accentuate the curve of my bust and the inflection beginning at my belly button. I caress the crushed black velvet lapels and stroke the delicate silk chiffon of the tartan on its body, on my body. I touch the garment the most at its peplums. They are just as silken as the rest but they are not so pliable, more rigid in their cut and unrelenting in their structure. The only bit without a satin interior.
Unlined.

CONCEPT

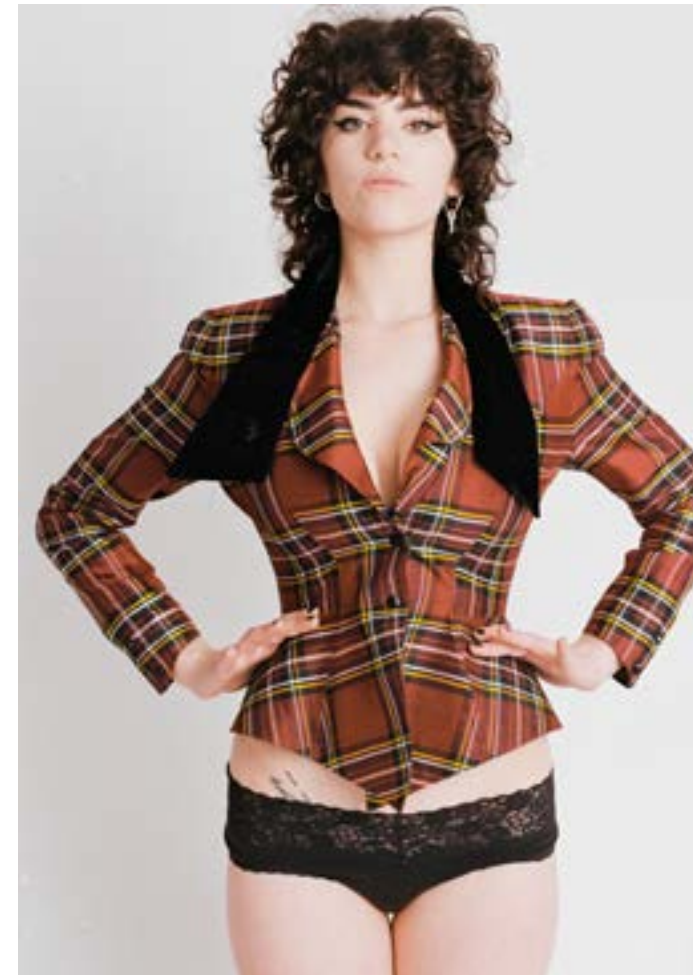
I deduce concept – definition – in this garment both from its aesthetic elements and its ontological associations. I see its physical and representational qualities as mirrors of my own self image that function to articulate my sense of identity. I relate the caution of my movements and my hesitation to put on the garment to my reverence for its history. My fear of wearing it stems both from the unforgiving fabric from which it is constructed and the underlying doubt that I deserve to own something so valuable. It is probably worth more than the life I have so far given it; it is of museum quality. The stillness with which I put it on and the slow, deliberate movements I must make while wearing it reflect the respect I hold for the garment's value. This admiration feels an inextricable part of who I am.

I worked for two months with Doris Raymond to document the contents of her archive and document the value of each garment for sale at auction. In return, I earned this piece, one that I wrote about then and write about again now. I am defined by my ownership of this garment, as it is a testament to my ability in the industry and a symbol of my passion actualizing itself. The affects of pride and power that fill me when wearing the garment reflect the gut-feeling that I am fitted, well-equipped, capable of creating the life I envision. Embodying my idealized self, I actualize my perception of both body and personhood. The pleasure I feel in experiencing the garment stems from its feeling of familiarity.

Perfectly tailored to my figure, the piece is a twinned composition of my own body.
A mimicry of my own form.

In it I am defined.

Its visual contrasts of gender further strengthen the degree of association and closeness I feel to the garment. The rigid structure juxtaposes with the fragility of the fabric, gesturing at the contrast of masculine and feminine aesthetics. Bold and unforgiving yet delicate and graceful. I resonate with the balance that these two embodiments strike in the garment, as I see them mirrored in myself.



I am the
romance of the
maroon and the
anger in it too.

I am made more
digestible by the
yellow veins of
brightness
that outline
my biceps,
my sternum,
my breast.

The pleasure that I find in the sensuality of the garment's silhouette feels to represent the agency and value I associate with my own sexuality. The piece is an affirmation and manifestation of my identity. In it I see not only the definition of my physical body but an echo of the way that I define myself: a wrestling of masculine and feminine elements, a confrontation of rigidity and tenderness, a conflicting brush between head and heart.

05 jacket



protection

CIRCULAR / gifted

Partner 2023
Leather, Love, Longing.



AFFECT Surprise. Comfort. Protection. Security. Small tug at the gut. Something of love, or belonging, or pleasure. Remembrance. The urge to finger the tassels. To sway with my arms in the air, to splay the tassels out like wings. To put my hands in the pockets. To tuck myself inside of it.

PRECEPT Removing it from the clothing rack, I am struck by the weight of the thing. It is so eager to fall off the hanger, to come loose. As it does, it retains its shape, mimicking a body though it is not filled by one. I smell the scent of the leather, all skin and a hint of tobacco. It makes a sound of heaviness as its sleeves and body relax into one another. The tassels make a pleasing fluttering noise and they fall against the surface, leather on leather. The clink of the zipper, the snap of the collar as I click it into place.

I visually take in details that I have not noticed before: the small lacing on the sides. The fading of the suede florals is not gray but blue, and yellowing at the edges. The leather is supple, wrinkling, malleable. Buttery and still with a bit of shine. The material is rigid and thick enough that the shoulder stays square even when I shrug mine down. The tassels are worn at their edges, the seams threaten to fray.

I note the sturdiness of the thing, the way there is no revelation of my own figure when I am inside it. The braiding cuts diagonally from the armpit to the navel and the tassels sprout from the shoulder seams, the undersides of the arms. There is staining at the back that rubs right off when I scrub it with the pad of my pointer finger. The inner lining is silky on my skin.

CONCEPT

I associate the heaviness of the garment with safety. I think of the reason why the garment was given to me, as an act of love and desire as bodily mimicry. I had given my partner my father's letterman jacket and he gave me his leather jacket in return. I think about all of the growing up he must have done in this jacket. I think about the other women who may have loved him in it. I associate the leather jacket's large roomy sleeves with his arms, which are equally sturdy and warm.

Wearing it is his embrace.

I associate my feeling of pleasure to the joyful mimicry of taking on his likeness and absorbing elements of his being in the act of loving him. I wonder how he stained it, what he was doing that frayed the tassels or left splotches of lightness on the dark shell of the black. I assimilate the calfskin with human skin, with the embrace of my lover. Wearing it, I feel pride that I am able to love someone and be loveable. There is pleasure in the way that wearing it summons the desire I feel for him, to envelope him, to consume him, to be consumed by him.

There is wonder at the layers of skin, so many layers. I think of the skin of the cow, how it died, if it was worth killing the animal for me and my partner and whoever first sold it to Buffalo Exchange to be able to appropriate its skin as our own. I respect the garment for this. That there has been some sacrifice in order to make it. The sacrifice of flesh, this, offering of symbolic skin to one's lover. A donation of body in order to clothe mine. Guilt oozes from this realization. But it is washed out by the lingering of the garment's weight on my body and the joy of this. My attachment to the garment I attribute almost fully to its acquisition, as I see it as a bodily extension of my partner, a synthetic or prosthetic likeness of his body. As who he is.

I protect the garment and feel protected by it.



06 skirt



knowledge

CIRCULAR / inheritance

Mother 2020

Polyester, Viscose, Safety Pin, Movement.

AFFECT

My first, quite unexplainable
instinct is to smell it.
It smells only of my
perfume. I scrunch the
fabric and feel its softness.



PRECEPT First compelling me to the garment in removing it from its hanger are all of the marks of wear.

A black tulle tutu used to accompany the skirt. The elastic waistband has completely deteriorated and stretched. I run my finger between the wide pleats. I see that it is less of a plaid and more of a houndstooth, really.

The tag says “Confezione di Lusso Made in Italy.”

I have the waistband cinched with a safety pin and it has begun to wear a small hole into the fabric, which is so soft that it feels like a child’s blanket. The garment is structurally so sound but for that waistband. Its hem is peeling completely off and small black threads tangle and jump out from the frayed ends. The houndstooth print is small and organized into even squares.

Stepping into the garment, I feel excitement. It hangs so low on my hips that it would fall all of the way off if not for the pin keeping it in place.

My tattoo peeks out from the top of the waistband. It is permanent and so is the life of the skirt. Neither are going anywhere. I notice the fall of the pleats, which bring me pleasure and nostalgia and pride. The way that they lay begs for movement.

CONCEPT Wearing the garment summons memories of reflection. My mother gave me this skirt. She bought it in Italy when she studied there as a university student in the 1980s. We both studied in Florence. I think of her coming to visit me and showing me the places that she would go, the piazzas and trattorias she would inhabit when she was my age. Passing onto me her knowledge. I think of coming-of-age and discovering myself. I associate the pleasure and the nostalgia of the pleats with my own experience in Italy, where I learned to hand pleat a garment. The pattern of the skirt resembles that of a schoolgirl, disciplined lines yet restlessness with movement. I associate the looseness of the garment with some kind of opening of the mind, the broadening of the waistband with the expansion of the brain coming into consciousness.

The unraveling threads as the garment unfurling to make room for new languages and countries and cobblestones.

The affect of attachment to this garment stems not only from my acquisition of the piece, but also from the acquisition of my mother’s– how she acquired it in a place that one day her daughter would also come to know. How, at that time, my mother had not conceived the idea of having a daughter or one day passing onto her this skirt.

Wearing the garment, I discover the knowledge of my own.



07 camisole



beauty

CIRCULAR / inheritance

Mother approx. 2018
Nylon, Lycra, Spandex, Perfume.

AFFECT

Familiarity. Ease. Beauty. Delicacy. Sophistication. Taking the piece off of its hanger, I do not feel much in my body but I feel a lot swelling in my mind. My first impulse is to put my hands inside of it, to see where in the lace I can see through to my skin.



PRECEPT

Peeling the straps off the hanger, I scrunch the lace between my fingers. I notice, as I always have, how the material is not itchy. This surprises me. It is lace all over. Creamy. It has never shown discoloration through the years that I have had it. I wonder if it was always this steady yellowish. If it began as white. It is probably thirty years old. I notice the flat scallops of the hems and the horizontal panels that give it shape in the bodice. Unlined. Stretchy. There are one or two small snags near the arm-pits, at the shoulder. One tear at the side seam, by the waist. I wonder if I put them there or if my mother did.

The actual pattern in the lace is floral, all teardrop petals and leaves like lily pads. On my figure, it is snug and well-fitted. I am pleased by the way that it suits my body, the way it supports and tapers off just below my belly button. I am mildly in awe of the way that it has always fit me since my mother gave it to me. It has always had a way of doing my body justice. I notice the way that the material is sheer everywhere except for the bust, which has an opaque panel to maintain the wearer's privacy. I am cold, and my nipples peek through the splits in the lacework. The tag says FORME.

CONCEPT

I remember my mother gave me this garment and told me it no longer fit her around the shoulders. That my father had bought it for her when they were traveling. Italy, maybe. I have kept it ever since. My mother gave me this garment before I knew how to become beautiful for myself. Wearing it used to make me feel like a woman who had real pajamas that weren't big old t-shirts but the pretty delicate things that real women wore when they were grown and desirable and knew who they were and what they wanted. The simplicity of the garment and the intricacy of its lace remind me of timeless things that will never show age. Wearing it now that I am grown and know who I am and what I want - now that I have lacy and silky things of my own - I feel a great surge of gratitude for my mother. She is good at being a mom. She has raised three girls. I am the youngest and I feel honored that it is me that she has chosen to give her pretty things. Of all her daughters, I am the most in love with beauty. I think that she knows this and I feel understood by her knowing, that she recognizes me in the things that once appeared beautiful to her, too.

I attribute the sensuality of the garment to sophistication. The lack of itch in the lace to an indication of comfortability in oneself. There is both innocence and desire in this piece, something beautifully cheeky about the not-quite-white. Something suggestive of girlhood and femininity in the combination of covered and uncovered skin, the sheer and opaque panels. Wearing it reminds me of sitting on the tile of my mother's bathroom and watching her take off her makeup in the nighttime. Seeing her survey her own body and hearing her bemoan the effects that three pregnancies have had on her skin, her suppleness, her size. She was never afraid for me to see what she thought was flawed— the invisible cellulite marks near her legs that she would use all sorts of lotions to eradicate, or the grays growing in at her roots that she would ask me to cover up with powders and sprays. I always thought she was so beautiful. I still do. I am twenty one and I still like to raid her closet.



There are many lace camisoles in the world;
the affect of this one comes purely from
its original belonging to my mother.

In giving it to me, she taught me beauty.

08 necklace



comfort

CIRCULAR / inheritance

Great-Grandmother approx. 2021
Amethyst, Brass, Years.

AFFECT

Holding the jewelry piece in my hands, I do not move. I allow it to just rest there. I consider it. My heart beats steady and slow. I am calm. I have no strong urges for movement. I merely look. Undoing the clasp, struggling to fit it behind my own neck into its enclosure, I am floored suddenly with the image of my great-grandfather fitting this very hardware piece into its fixing many years ago. I wonder who helped my great grandmother put it on- if she did it herself. If she ever wore it. There is a turn in my stomach at the thought of this. It feels wrong that she is not here to ask her about it, but that I have this thing around my neck that was once around hers.

PRECEPT

First I am struck by the weight of the thing. It is heavier than it appears and makes the wonderful soft clink-rattle noise that jewelry does when it folds in on itself. It is not cold or warm but something in between. The weight is centered on the three bulbous pendant pieces, which glint in burning pink and cool toned lilac clusters. I notice the way that the chains feel strangely soft, like a buttery sort of bronze. The pressure of it in my palm is comforting. Around my neck, the three bulbed jewels settle into the divet of my throat. They nuzzle sensually into the hollow underside of my collarbones and do not slide around when I move. They rise and fall with my breathing and the chains hug my flesh. Again, there is soothing pressure of the piece worn on my body.

CONCEPT

The piece is wholly a thing of pride and pleasure. I am proud to know a woman like my grandmother Mary, to learn from her and have her share with me the things that she has known and seen and collected. Even though it belonged to my great-grandmother, and though it was presumably worn by her, it reminds me of my relationship with my grandmother and for this reason the object brings me joy.

It summons memories of sitting at my grandmother's kitchen table, all curved corners and dark slatted shiny wood floors. White walls, open windows. Cold coffee in mugs. I think of my grandmother's library and all of the books that she has in those shelves, the ones that seemed so tall to me when I was small and would sit in there for hours imagining how long it would take me to read every book in there. How much I would know once I had done it. I think of my mother when she was small and wonder if she ever sat in her grandmother's library and looked in awe at the figure of her. If she ever saw my great-grandmother Bessie wearing this necklace and felt so much admiration and comfort and love that it spilled out of her chest. I never knew my great-grandmother Bessie. I was too young to remember her. There is a picture of me as an infant, resting on her lap and laser-focused on the necklace she wears. When I wear her jewelry I think about that picture. I wonder what she was like and what sorts of things we would have talked about. Instead I tell her about my life through some trace of her that lives in this amethyst object that senses when my vocal cords buzz and my breath quickens. She hears all of my words. I am soothed.

I deduce the concept of comfort in this piece due to where it has come from: the comfort in knowing who has come before me.





“there’s some
times a very big
differ ence
bet ween
shop ping
& clo thing”

09 plaid dress

agency



LINEAR / fast fashion

Urban Outfitters 2019
Polyester, Wind.

AFFECT Familiarity. Steady breathing.
A bit of nerves, queasiness. A tug in the gut,
a tightening of the stomach.



PRECEPT

Taking the dress off of its hanger, it folds in on itself. The fabric feels synthetic beneath my fingers, like it has that cast of polyester and the smooth plastic sort of hand to it. I twiddle with the puckers of black lace on the chest. I am momentarily hypnotized by the interlocking lines of black and green. I digest that I am drawn to plaids. That plaids seem to line my wardrobe.

The tag says "Urban Outfitters. Made in Vietnam."

There is a bit of displeasure in the feeling of the material. It is neither silky or soft, just still and smooth. I notice the darts in the bust that I have never noticed before. It is unlined. I take pleasure in the slits up the sides, the panel of black lace hanging off of the hem. This section is what drew me to it in the first place. There is a scratchiness to the lace, an itching.

Putting it on my body, I feel put at ease. Comfortable. I feel elongated. I love a long dress, the way it stretches me out. But the way it does not nip in at my waist has always bothered me, and it bothers me now. The cut of lace over my décolletage feels exposing in a way that airs me out. My eyes go to the triangle cut out over my sternum, the slitted opening of the sides, the image of my knees and the parting of my shins. Cast over in the shadows of the lace. I feel I can lean back. I enjoy the way that the garment frames my collarbone and there is pleasure in all of it except for the wish that it did not hang so gaping at my waist.



CONCEPT

The concept I assign to this dress stems from its role in my life as a talisman of transition.

I associate the garment with new moments.

I wear it as a 'good luck' dress.

Embodying the piece summons the times that I have worn it, all moments that felt grand and important and marked.

My first date with the boy I really liked in high school, how we went skateboarding and I skated in the dress and a pair of real chunky Doc Martens loafers.

The way that I fell off of the skateboard and scraped my knees and my underwear showed in the dress as I hit the pavement.

I think of wearing it when landing in Florence, with pants underneath.

Wearing it on my first day at my new job.

I see the dress as a symbol of owning everything that happens to me.

The plaid will not expire in time.

The back lace feels sophisticated and the slits of the garment are provocative but not too much.

There is a level of authority and steadiness in the pattern.

Interestingly, there are no signs of wear in the garment. It is immune to this sort of thing.

It does not appear to be loved, though it has been worn through so many versions of myself, so many instances of love.

Its brand new acquisition allows all of the associations that have accumulated within the garment to arise as fully and entirely my own.

There is agency here. Taking control of my own life. Decisive plaid. Pretty lace. New things and old.

10 pant



guilt

LINEAR / fast fashion

Urban Outfitters 2022
Polyester, Remorse

AFFECT Taking the pants off of the hanger, I recoil a bit from the feeling of the fabric in my hand. My lips turn down. I do not find the feeling of the garment appealing or attractive. There is a queasiness in my gut that is unpleasant. A tug of guilt for buying something so wasteful that I get no use of. Discomfort.

I want to take them off as soon as I put them on.

PRECEPT I find displeasure in the plastic feeling of the fake leather. I am momentarily pleased by the color of the green. More faded than an army, too deep for olive, but not forest green either. Yet even the appeal feels synthetic to me. I notice the way that the seams are coming undone with loose threads. The tortoiseshell of the button, so incongruous to the silver hardware on the pockets. The tag reads "Urban Outfitters, Made in China." I note the uneasy softness to the inside of the pants, as if a mock suede. The raw hems, so unfinished and careless. On my body the fabric feels clammy, like soggy carpet or scared skin. It sticks to me in a way that makes my flesh crawl. I do not like the shine of the material, dull and sickly. They gap at my waist and puck poorly at the crotch and come too high up and the bulge of the pockets shows through.

I am happy to take them off.



CONCEPT I associate the shade of green with something rotten. I wear them and remember the feeling of wearing them on a ten hour international flight, the way that they stuck to my skin and felt so claustrophobic. Sweaty. Close. Stuck. The way they made me want to claw my way out of my body. I am not so much detached to them as I am put off by them. The displeasure I feel while wearing them is not directly from their method of acquisition, but rather an ill-fitting symptom of their buying them online. I was not in-person when I decided to purchase them, and was therefore disconnected from the material experience of feeling them, of touching them and realizing that they feel wrong in all sorts of ways.

The bodily rejection to the object constructs them as an object of guilt.

1 1 bra



compromise

LINEAR / bought new

Soma Intimates 2015
Polyester, Nylon, Spandex, Skin.

AFFECT Pleasure. Dread.
Tucking, pushing, spilling. Erecting of
the spine. Sucking in at the navel.
A deep, deep breath.



PRECEPT I note the dusty lilac
of the mesh. I rub the silk mesh of the band between
the pads of my fingertips. It is smooth and well made.
I loosen and tighten the adjustable straps. I wonder
which setting is the one I like best. They always loosen
by the end of the day. This pisses me off without fail.
I shift my gaze to the cups, noticing the satisfaction I
feel in the translucence of the material. The way that
the tone of my skin peeks through. I have always ha-
ted the fluffy constriction of padded bras. I enjoy the
breathability, the airiness of the unlined cups. My eyes
follow the swirls of the lace applique, black leaves and
scalloped edges. The pattern is beautiful and hypnotic.

Putting on the bra is a method of ritual.

Circling the band around me like two arms in an
embrace around my waist. Fitting the hooks into the
tightest clasp – always the tightest – and scooting it
around me in a 360 so that the cups are in the front.
Wiggling my arms one at a time into the negative
space of the straps. Scooping out the breasts, one at a
time, to fill the cups properly. And an exhale. I feel the
underwire around me, fixing my form into place. I see
the teardrop of my breasts, their natural shape accen-
ted by petals and buds and lines. I feel the dig at my
ribcage and the pressure on my shoulders, the pressu-
re on the skin there of carrying my own weight. I am
physically encased and uplifted and it feels both
suffocating and soothing at once.

CONCEPT

Confronting this bra I am taken back in time to the day that I selected it, like pulling teeth from years. My grandmother invited me to go bra shopping as an incentive to wear bras more often. My small form of rebellion as a teenager was refusing bras- I preferred to let the boobs be. I have always had a big chest. It is something about me that often feels like it overshadows the rest, a burden I never asked for and do not particularly want most of the time. If my chest was going to call attention to itself I might as well steer into it, own it in some way. The adulting forces in my life never liked this much and wanted me supported, nipples tucked away and stuffed into a more acceptable shape. I agreed to go bra shopping on the condition that I would pick one I really really liked, one that was pretty and made me feel as such. I picked this bra. I have had it for almost nine years and it is odd that it still fits, has always fit.

There is freedom in it, and negotiation. Fine, it says. I will adapt to the social standard but I will do so on my own terms. In the mesh, I will let myself breathe. The lace says I will be beautiful but the dusky lilac says I will not be seductive. I will be something in between. I feel good in the bra. But I will always be happy to take it off, relieved of the imprisonment. I will always scratch at the red marks it has imprinted in my skin, scalding and marking my body in a tolerant mold. Its materiality brings me only a relational pleasure; I enjoy that it is more flexible than most bras in allowing my flesh to breathe and my natural figure to rest.



It is desire by comparison.

I am drawn to it in a way that I am repelled by the usual cupping and padding and rounding off and pushing up. Its contrast of pleasure and pain informs its conceptualization as compromise:

between self and other, body and world,
construction and constriction.

12 underwear



(im)purity

LINEAR / bought new

Brandy Melville 2021
Cotton, Blood.

AFFECT Guilt. Repulsion. Shame.
Girlhood. Something of rebellion. Queasy stirring
in my gut.



PRECEPT Holding the underwear in my
hands, I register the lacy frill of the waistband. The scalloped ed-
ges of white and the continuity of this hem that encircles its form
in a delicate circumference. I note the dimpled texture of the cot-
ton, the gestural flowers like pinpricks to breathe.

They smell clean like linen and dryer sheets.

The underside of the crotch is rubbed over with
texture.

Spotched with yellowish stains.

Hints of old blood.

Erratic, globular, brownish blots pooling at the
edges and spotting at the front.

They are soft and malleable, lax and loose with the shapelessness
of a kleenex, a crumpled paper towel. I step my feet into the leg
holes one at a time and tug them over my thighs, my hips. They
sit low on my body, a straight bikini cut. There is nothing sexual
about them. They are sturdy and full and pucker at the cheeks. I
feel them cling to my hip bones, gap at the small of my back.

They are ill-fitting, unflattering, and safe.



CONCEPT My impulse to hide the underwear away and the tug in my gut of shame mark this object as an expression of bodily function and abjection, the horror so often ascribed to the female body. These are my designated “period underwear”- I wear them when I am so bloated and bleeding that anything less substantial than this thick cotton undergarment would leave me feeling vulnerable. The affect of embarrassment that taints the item is on behalf of its blemish, its association with what is not tolerated in social visibility. The splotches are grotesque. I know that this piece of clothing is soiled and secret, something I would feel afraid to have anyone see.

They are the purity of girlhood – the bikini cut, the floral motif, the chastity of cotton – defiled by the marks of womanhood – the stains of sexuality and fertility. The object represents a kind of innocence lost, yet I am oddly connected to the way that they contain the guts of me.

They hold the innermost essence of my body, my core and blood. They are the bandage of my lifeline and the menstrual flag. They are vaginal discharge and peonies. Something in their discoloration is comforting. Wearing them I am free to make a mess. To be dirty and hungry and misshapen, disgusting and desirable.

The repulsion that I feel in acknowledging that they exist in actuality brings me closer to them, as I monitor and store and embody them with the closeness of attention that I would equally do with an object that I cherish and treasure.

In my closet, I am sure to bury them at the back of my underwear drawer, just as I am methodical in my habit of pushing the pretty lacy things to the front.

There is an awareness of the underwear that is both uncomfortable and comforting;

they straddle the lines between desire and disgust, the crack of the gut and the lining of the uterus. Putting them on my body arouses the feeling of resignation, that I have given up any and all attempts to avoid underwear lines or present my body as this seamless, unblemished thing of beauty.

They are clunky and obvious and abhorred.

They are purity made impure,
and for this they are made sacred.

13 socks



fulfillment

LINEAR / bought new

Target, Year Unknown
Cotton, Dirt.

AFFECT Pleasure. Satisfaction.
Gratification. Pride. A small laugh. Curl of the
lip at the absurdity of the thing.



PRECEPT I poke my finger in
the gape of the holes. Pull the absent spaces and widen
them. I see the tear at the heel yawning like a mouth. I
flesh out the strings unraveling at the seams. I feel the
pills of the cotton, the softness worn into the ribs of the
ankles. I twiddle the nubs of the fabric like tumors, like
maggots. Small protrusions of gray. I pick them off one
at a time, denuding each sock from its little barnacles.
I see the gray lining the heels, the smudges of indigo
shadowing the toes. I note the asymmetry of the pair,
once so twinned in whiteness and now so splintered
apart that the one has almost parted into two. Mutila-
ted, torn, the second sock so battered it has departed
entirely from function. The ankle panel twists apart from
the covering of the foot itself, joined only by the ball of
threads like hairs, like yarn, like nesting. Limp, pathetic,
shaped only by the force of my own foot. Pulling on the
socks, one at a time, I am caught in a comedic struggle.
My toes poke through the holes at the heels, snag on
the rips at the ball of the foot. The cotton strains over my
skin, my heel protruding like a skinned fish. The second
sock will not go on all of the way, caught at the juncture
of the two disparate panels so eager to release their hold
on one another. I feel childlike, juvenile, in the despera-
tion that it takes to tug on these cotton socks. As if I am
learning to wear them for the first time, I am as young as
they are old.

CONCEPT

I associate the dysfunction of the socks, their complete and total disrepair, with an odd sense of gratification. That I have lived them to the end of their life cycle. That their blue-gray tints encase the shedding of my skin, the pressure of my heels hitting the floor. Friction and force. The echoes of my steps. I see the disintegration of their form as the solidification of their own. The tread that wears them down, that erodes their structure, strengthens mine. We are equal and opposite, these socks and I. The activity, the distance that they encase is both their sacrifice and my vitality. They are calloused as my big toe and charred with the charge of my pace. I cannot think of a singular moment wearing them, indistinguishable as they are from my other pairs.

I imagine how many times these two socks have come to know one another- if their lone instances have been balled up with other matches, if they began together, if they have found their way back. I think of the forces that have brought them at one with one another, how strange it would be if their first time encountering one another was in this act of death. Meeting, never having met before, at the cemetery of their use. There is not much in my ownership that I have worn unwearable. The socks are the culmination of my force. They are productivity and efficacy, the trail of my footsteps and the final destination of my legs.

I do not mind parting with them;
they have fulfilled their purpose and can rest easy.



14 shoes



awareness

CIRCULAR / resale

Maison Margiela Tabi Ballet Flat
Depop 2021
Leather, Toe Jam, Pavement, Rain.

AFFECT Zing of pleasure down my ankles and through my toes. Relief at my arches. I am smiling a pleased little smile and tapping around, clicking my heels.



PRECEPT Holding the shoes in my hands, I bend the right one between my palms. The soles are worn completely smooth without a bit of traction. The letters and numbers etched into the soles – the size and the label and the ‘Made in Italy’ – appear chalked over, the leather bottoms softened into something like suede. The insoles are firm and sturdy, white leather with foot scum blurring over the branding and darkening the pores of the material like pepper in the grains. The little bows adorning the toes have become brittle and wiry. Hard little knots. The shoe itself is brown and chocolatey, with just enough sheen to look like a true ganache. Buttery, supple leather. Wrinkled at the heels and creased at the toes. The toes. Cloven, hoof-like. I bend them and separate them at the split down the middle. Here they are scuffed, scratched into a lighter brown. Reddish, almost. At the big toe the leather has eroded and the skin peels with the texture of sandpaper.

Sliding them on, I cannot help but wiggle my feet back and forth. My four split toes wave at each other, curling in on my heels. The spread of my toes is a familiar, peculiar feeling. Comfortable and pleasurable. Therapeutic. The leather molds closely to my foot, a skin-to-skin hug. The material is malleable enough to show the outline of my toes underneath as they wriggle against the carpet. I feel the utmost awareness that there is a ground that I am standing on. My feet lie flat against it. Each step I take in the shoes reminds me of the floor beneath. They root me to it. They curve with my arches and I am eerily aware that my toes are toes and that my feet stand on the ground.

CONCEPT

I associate the scuffed soles and the creased leather with miles. I wear them and can walk endlessly. I think about cities, pavement, sore shins. The chalky bottoms have covered such ground.

They have shed away upon rain puddles and packed dirt. Curved over cobblestone and slapped the blacktop. The blemish of the shoe is satisfying; the proof that they have brought me from here to there and back again. The abrasions summon the patter of footsteps on a rainy afternoon in New York City and the muffled stillness of a museum in Los Angeles. I think about where they have lived and what has been stuck between the toes: a lipstick, a dollar bill, five euros, a cigarette. I think about the four weeks they spent stuffed inside a suitcase in the basement of a small trattoria in Italy. I interpret the flatness of their form with a sense of steadiness, stability, calm. Wearing them brings grounding and comfort.

I take pleasure in the kineticism of their shape, their anatomical resemblance. The cloven toe, so phalangic and animal, startles me into remembering the obvious. I have feet and toes just as apparently as I have this apparatus to put them in. I recall reading somewhere that this style of shoe – the tabi – was designed to target the center of holistic reflexology. That separating the toes is psychologically proven to clear the mind. There is such clarity here in wearing them. I am tall in flat shoes and I will go anywhere. I have worn them into the exact shape of my foot. They are my wearable feet. This thought is endearing. I enjoy their strangeness and their uncanny likeness to my own extremities.

I am fond of their material feel just as I am fond of their symbolism. They are cult and covetable. I wanted a pair for several years before saving up to buy myself these little espresso slivers.

I laugh thinking about how many odd looks they have endured and how my most treasured shoes are merely a twinned reflection of my own feet.



15 ring



oath

CIRCULAR / gifted

Vivienne Westwood
Mother, 2020

Gunmetal, Water, Paint, Ash, Grime, Self.



AFFECT A chill. A closeness. The urge to clutch it to my chest or close it inside my palm for safety. Impulse to protect it. Keep it from harm. Pleasure.

PRECEPT Holding the ring in my hand, I notice its misshapen form. The way that the band does not form a circle but a lopsided ovular shape. The flattened bit on the right half of the band and the strange divet it pulls over to the left. The metal is cold against my skin. I notice the scratches and dents and the tarnished bits. The bold engraving of the Westwood insignia – a crowned saturn – unblemished by time. I trace the shape of it with my nail and follow the ring of it, a ring upon a ring. The stamped etch of this logo is the only portion that has retained its darkness. The whole thing used to be a deep charcoal gunmetal. This coating has worn away, now entirely silver but for this crowned planet etched on its face and the small spots on the underbelly of the band that remain shadowed. I notice the way that the metal reflects the light. I put it on and see the way that the band curves around my finger like a hug, the deformation of the band catered to the girth of my ring finger.

CONCEPT

The ring is the most worn and loved fashion piece in my belonging.

I associate the scrapes of the metal - no longer polished but battered with the acts of writing and folding and washing and bathing - with my persistence of self. The ring is marked with the endurance of my own body, my own hands. Despite the scratches on its surface and the flaws in its silver skin, the ring remains functionally sound. The intention of its message – the display of the Westwood insignia – maintains its definition. Similar to my own body, which has dimpled and scarred and taken the labor of the day upon its surface, the ring has not lost its central energy: the imprinted orb. Strong and clear. The symbol of punk. I look differently than I did when I received the ring. My body has gotten smaller and harder and softer and larger again, it has the sutures and freckles of wound and sun. Yet who I am, my centrifugal essence, remains unignorable. I see my own body in this object.

The pleasure, the emotion I feel in it is in part due to the sentimental nature of its acquisition – gifted to me by my mother – and in part to the memories that it has taken on in the duration of my ownership. It has endured in my wardrobe because it reminds me of my values, my passions. I see in it a conduit for what I have lost and gained. When I was 19, I bought my lover at the time a matching ring for her 20th birthday. Hers was not identical, but instead a convex rendition of the concave impression upon my own. Buying this ring for her was a promise that we fit together. When we ended things, she did not return the ring. I cannot see my own ring without thinking of her. Although I acquired mine before knowing her, the object has taken on the expressions of love and loss endured. I see the impression of the orb as the impression that she left upon me in our time loving one another. It is always there.



I wear it still as a promise to myself that I will not lose sight of my self-definition. I see the scratches as the symptoms of life and mourning and loss and grief and agony that endure. The blemishes, the love marks, the traces that have been left upon the thing are a lineage of all my own. The orb remains, untouched by the scratches surrounding it. It has been stamped deep enough into the surface of the silver that nothing can touch it.

This is the essence of myself. It will not wear away.

to my grandmother Mary
and her mother Bessie

for showing me the love found in telling stories





every morning you wait, clothes, over a chair, for my vanity, my love, my hope, my body, to fill you. I have scarcely left sleep, I say goodbye to water and enter your sleeves, my legs look for the hollow of your legs, and thus embraced by your unwearied fidelity I go out to tread the fodder, I move into poetry, I look through windows, at things, men, women, actions and struggles keep making me what I am, opposing me, employing my hands, opening my eyes, putting taste in my mouth, and thus, clothes, I make you what you are, pushing out your elbows, bursting the seams, and so your life swells the image of my life. you billow and resound in the wind as though you were my soul, at bad moments you cling to my bones empty, at night the dark, sleep, people with their phantoms your wings and mine. I ask whether one day a bullet from the enemy will stain you with my blood and then you will die with me or perhaps



it may not be so dramatic but simple, and you will sicken gradually, clothes, with me, with my body and together we will enter the earth. at the thought of this everyday I greet you with reverence, and then you embrace me and I forget because we are one and will go on facing the wind together, at night, the streets or the struggle, one body, maybe, one day motionless. every morning you wait, clothes, over a chair, for my vanity, my love, my hope, my body, to fill you. whether we and I forget maybe, , to fill you. legs, and windows, at opening bursting the my soul, at s and mine. r perhaps ether we and I forget maybe, , to fill you. legs, and windows, at opening my eyes, putting taste in my mouth, and thus, clothes, I make you what you are, pushing out your elbows, bursting the seams, and so your life swells the image of my life. you billow and resound in the wind as though you were my soul, at bad moments you cling to my bones empty, at night the dark, sleep, people with their phantoms your wings and mine. I ask whether one day a bullet from the enemy will stain you with my blood and then you will die with me or perhaps it may not be so dramatic but simple, and you will sicken gradually, clothes, with me, with my body and together we will enter the earth. at the thought of this everyday I greet you with reverence, and then you embrace me and I forget because we are one and will go on facing the wind together, at night, the streets or the struggle, one body, maybe, one day motionless. every morning you wait, clothes, over a chair, for my vanity, my love, my hope, my body, to fill you.