

The Emergence of the Fashion Industry and the Development of the Consumer Market in England during the Mid Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries

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Fashion has always been imbedded in society. As long as people have been wearing clothes there has been a minor sense of competition between one another. As technology expanded people began to be able to strengthen the competition and ability to wear new clothing. Mass colonization created a mechanism for the fashion industry to be successful and had the ability to sustain any social changes within England, which developed from stylistic competition and power assertion. Fashion developed from an elite pastime to a way of life for everyone. Due to British colonialism and sustained class power struggles, the beginning of the fashion industry is deeply tied to society today.

The history of the fashion industry had influenced both the economy and society. Socially, due to the artistic nature of fashion, individually developed personal style, which influenced others to purchase similar goods, like bonnets. The economic aspects derived from the factories, which created jobs and the fashion products then flooded the markets. The stylistic tie gave people personal stake in the economic outcome, leading the two factors to work hand in hand to create a successful industry, which still dominates the world's economy today.

Fashion and style have always revolved around societies, however it never became an industry until the mid-eighteenth century. This was due to a variety of factors including urbanization, technology, trade routes, colonization, and industrialization. As opposed to previous generations in England which revolved around individual shops and specializations such as tailors or cobblers, the newly emerged workshops opened producing multiples of the same items. Due to mass-production, prices were lowered which allowed individuals to purchase even more products than they would have previously.

There were a variety of factors, which allowed it to succeed especially the exploitation of the lower and working classes and the British colonization. Individuals put personal stake in what they wore and status was placed onto their wardrobe. While economically companies used this to their advantage to sell their newly imported goods to British consumers. British colonialism created a market, which fed off limited goods. Factories opened in larger cities and lower classes flocked to work in them in hopes of helping their economic situation. The upper classes used this to their advantage to exploit the workers in favor of keeping a fashionable edge with other people in their classes.

Through a breakdown of the different themes revolving around the social and economic aspects of the fashion industry in England it will create an intertwining picture of how it could be sustained. Beginning with the class divisions in England then transitioning into the British colonialism and how through trade and the exploitation of countries and classes; they were able to gain access to the raw materials, which created luxury goods. Then introducing the goods into the market led to competition within the classes. Eventually leading into how the economic success allowed for people to use excess income to advance their own style and competition with others.

Before the eighteenth century fashion tended to be reserved for the upper classes and royalty, this left the lower classes to use clothing for function rather than style. Not because of lack of fashionable knowledge but economic barriers. English history was filled with the class system. With royalty at the highest position followed by the upper class trickling down to the lower classes. The mass separation between the lower and upper classes began to dissolve with British expansion and colonization. A mercantile class began to emerge which in turn developed

a middle class in England. The home front industrialization led to the creation of the fashion industry in symmetry with the emerging middle class. This gave way for industrial jobs for the lower classes; the fashion industry simultaneously increased and made possible to decrease the class divides.

The industry began evolving before factories were even created. The more colonization the British did the more goods they brought back to England. This created a whole new market for luxury and unique goods. The competition was steep because many of the fabrics and fashion items were not available besides once imported. The development of fabric importation industry was described as, “The late seventeenth century also saw a spectacular growth in the popularity of the pure cotton muslins, chintzes and calicoes, printed with gay and colorful patterns, which the East India Company brought back from India.”¹ This shows how the demand for foreign fabrics and new fashion styles grew in the late seventeenth century. However not until the mid eighteenth century did the British economy see a surge of internal demand. This gave way for the industrialization of factories due to the popularity of these items and the public desire to wear new and exciting items.

Economic Aspects

While many of the social aspects of the fashion industry hold true today the economic aspects allowed for centuries of success. The British were able to use their international footing to import items and stimulate the economy from multiple standpoints in the fashion industry. Britain then was able to create a fashion industry, which exploited the lower classes to transform raw materials into fashionable items. They simultaneously created a luxury market for materials for the upper classes. They used the exclusivity of not having immediate access to foreign items to promote competition for luxury fashion items, which were deemed fashionable.

Due to the East India Company not only did new goods become available to British citizens, but also they became available on a regular basis. A whole new luxury market was created with the interest wealthy people held in obtaining these new items. The historic structure of British society gave way for this competitive market encouraging people to outdo each other with the best and brightest items. While the goods ranged from spices to animals, the new fabrics available became a source of competition for classes. Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger describe in their book, *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires, and Delectable Goods*, the influence imported goods had on British society. They focus on the fashion aspects, which the fabrics and foreign influences held by expressing; “Clothing is crucial to this argument because it was the element of plebeian expenditure most likely to embrace fashionable display.”² This shows how essential fashion was in determining a person’s class and the influence one’s wardrobe held. People, especially the upper classes were looking for any edge they could find to advance individuals style, and in turn their social merit. Fabric brought in by these companies gave way for a new manufacturing market.

¹ Clay, C. G. A. *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1700: Volume 2, Industry, Trade, and Government*. Cambridge University Press. 1984. 42.

² Berg, Maxine, Eger, Elizabeth, *Luxury in the eighteenth century: debates, desires and delectable goods*. Palgrave, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York. 2003. 104.

Not only were fabrics brought back from England's colonies, but raw materials as well. Cotton became a massive import and commodity for the Britain's central economy. Cotton was imported then was used to make into fabric in British factories. These factories, which sprang up, gave multiple ways to stimulate the economy. It first allowed for the creation of new jobs, which people living in the countryside then flocked to cities to hold. It also put new desirable goods into the market for people of the upper classes to purchase.³ Beverly Lemire asserts on this theory by affirming, "By 1800 'fashion and consumerism were inextricably linked to the future prosperity of the nation' something that was not true in 1660, and that the principle agent of this change was cotton."⁴ This shows how influential of a time the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was in the allowance of the creation of the fashion industry.

The economic prosperity, which Britain gained from colonization, was especially evident in in the increase of the luxury goods market, which the fashion industry capitalized on. *Luxury in the Eighteenth-Century* pronounces the value placed onto fashion and items by asserting fellow historians theory; "Uglow argues that the mass production of fine objects raised new questions about the nature of art, craft, and originality. From the perspective of production or consumption, a simple vase could carry complex meaning. Affordable luxury lay at the heart of a new sense of national identity."⁵ The British used these imported and factory made objects and fabrics to impose a sense of purpose and meaning into luxury goods. They created a story which people would place value in the fabrics detailing their origin or social significance. This turned the British consumer into a conscious consumer who valued the story of the products they were purchasing.

Luxury items also filled the market after the advancement of trade and technology. Before utility was a prime purpose for purchasing clothing for the lower classes, luxury items became more accessible. Bonnets and lace are two objects, which flourished due to the economic surplus of money and ability to buy frivolous clothing. Practically bonnets and lace hold no technical value. Lace does not keep a person warm or make any form of life different. Lace was extremely tedious to make by hand and this made it a luxury commodity. When a person was seen wearing lace the public then knew that they were able to afford such an expensive goods. Symbols like hats and lace were subtle ways of showing if someone was successful. In contrast to many pervious centuries these goods were now readily available thanks in large part to the East India Trade Company.

Lace was another popular item in England. Not only was it difficult to produce because it needed a massive amount of land power, but it also held no value in practicality. The lace industry developed all over Europe, however the styles of lace were extremely prevalent in England. Lace was solely created for differentiating classes. It held no value other than being

³ Lemire, Beverly. *Fashion's Favorite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660-1800*. 138.

⁴ Lemire, Beverly. *Fashion's Favorite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660-1800*. 138.

⁵ Berg, Maxine, Eger, Elizabeth, *Luxury in the eighteenth century: debates, desires and delectable goods*. Palgrave, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York. 2003. 118.

time consuming to make. Factories opened all over cities in Britain, this then further enhanced the class difference with the lower classes manufacturing goods for the upper ones. All classes craved lace because it showed economic prosperity by simply wearing it.

The textile industry further developed in the eighteen sixties when William Henry Perkins developed a chemical method for dyeing fabrics. This was revolutionary for the fashion industry because now fabrics could be transformed much more easily and rapidly into new styles and colors. This allowed for individuals to express their own personal style more, especially the lower and middle classes that had previously not had access to cheap colorfully dyed fabrics. Perkins was infamous for his development of the color purple for fabric dyeing.⁶ The more diversity available to the British public the more they were able to play with different styles.

Previous generations had used shells and other organic materials to create the color, however with his chemical invention dyeing Perkins was able to introduce the color to the masses. Benjamin Harrow summarizes Perkins technique by stating, “He found that the uneven color often obtained in dyeing on silk could be entirely remedied by dyeing in a soap bath. The use of tannin as one of the mordant made it applicable to cotton, and shades of various kinds and depths of any degree could be attained without difficulty.”⁷ This was incredibly influential for the fashion industry because it continued to make clothing more accessible to all classes.

The pressure, which was then placed on society to fall into fashion trends and the economic value placed on fabrics, led to a surge in theft. People were now stealing fabrics and clothing in order to sustain themselves economically. One court case from The Old Bailey describes how a man stole lace and silk from a store with the intention of reselling it.⁸ The desire to break out of one’s class became immense as people continued to strive to wear the latest trends. Fabric became an enormous commodity with different fabrics determining different social statuses. Clothing was now more accessible to all classes with fashion certifying one’s class. Society was eager to use this to their advantage to help break down the class structure.

Theft became massively prevalent in England due to the high demand for fashionable items. Fabrics especially held value because they could be taken to other businesses and used without much of a trace. Silk, cotton, and lace were three of the most influential fabrics due to their high demand. One man was caught stealing lace fabric from a store, his account states. “There was a Coat hanging up; I ask’d the Prisoner if it was his, and he said, Yes. I search’d the Pockets and took out this lac’d Head. Now, says I, this is plain Proof against you, and therefore you may as well confess.”⁹ This shows how the court functioned and the amount of items people were stealing. At times it was massive amounts however in cases like this it was only enough lace for his family, not enough to turn a massive profit on. Fabrics were essential to allowing the fashion industry to function due to their versatility. The Old Baily Court in England kept massive records of the individual cases, especially those of the lower classes stealing from the upper classes.

⁶ Harrow, Benjamin. *William Henry Perkin*. The Scientific Monthly. 1919. 237.

⁷ Harrow, Benjamin. *William Henry Perkin*. The Scientific Monthly. 1919. 238.

⁸ Old Bailey Proceedings Online. May 1733, trial of Thomas Adley (t17330510-19).

⁹ Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.2, 09 April 2015), May 1733, trial of Thomas Adley (t17330510-19).

People flooded into cities in search of factory jobs. Propaganda was released which described the mass industrialization that was occurring, and encouraged people from the lower classes to migrate into cities with the chance of making a better life. Factory work was not as life fulfilling as the propaganda described. It was extremely hard and dangerous work. Industrialization had just begun to develop and machines were not always safe. It did give a moderate amount of new freedom to women because they were able to hold some of the factory positions.¹⁰ The class divide grew between the emerging middle class, which took advantage of the new trade commerce, and the lower class, which struggled with the factory work. This was extremely clear in London where the East End became filled with factories and poor living conditions for the factory workers.¹¹

As the lower classes worked in the factories inventors took on the task of advancing the production. Sir. Edward Baines describes the success of the textile industry by describing the different materials taken from British colonies and how the British, especially silk from China and cotton from India and the Americas, used them.¹² He goes onto explain the use of these fabrics in British society by asserting, “Among all the materials which the skill of man converts into comfortable and elegant clothing, that which appears likely to be the most extensively useful, though it was the last to be generally diffused, is the beautiful produce of the cotton-plant.”¹³ Thus showing the demand for cotton in British society. Cotton had the ability to be used by all classes and its versatility was revolutionary for the fashion industry because of its availability. The British factories also made the cotton more uniform and easier to turn into workable fabrics, which allowed for the mass production of clothing.¹⁴

As opposed to seeing the industrial revolution as a time of technological boom the British citizens of the 1830’s saw it as the era of invention, which holds true to the advancements they made in the fashion industry.¹⁵ Baines furthers his point by describing how this changed the fashion industry by stating, “The two important inventions for spinning, of which the history has been traced, broke down the barrier which and so long obstructed the advance of the cotton manufacturer.”¹⁶ He goes onto explain how the advancements in the machines allowed for faster production and smoother textiles.¹⁷

¹⁰ Barker, Hannah, and Elaine Chalus. *Women’s History, Britain 1700-1850: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

¹¹ Adolphe Smith and John Thompson, *Street Life in London*. London. 1877.

¹² Baines, Sir. Edward. *History of the Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain*. London. H. Fisher, R. Fisher, and P. Jackson. 1835. 12.

¹³ *Ibid.* 12.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 60.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 113.

¹⁶ Baines, Sir. Edward. *History of the Cotton Manufacture*. 163.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 163.

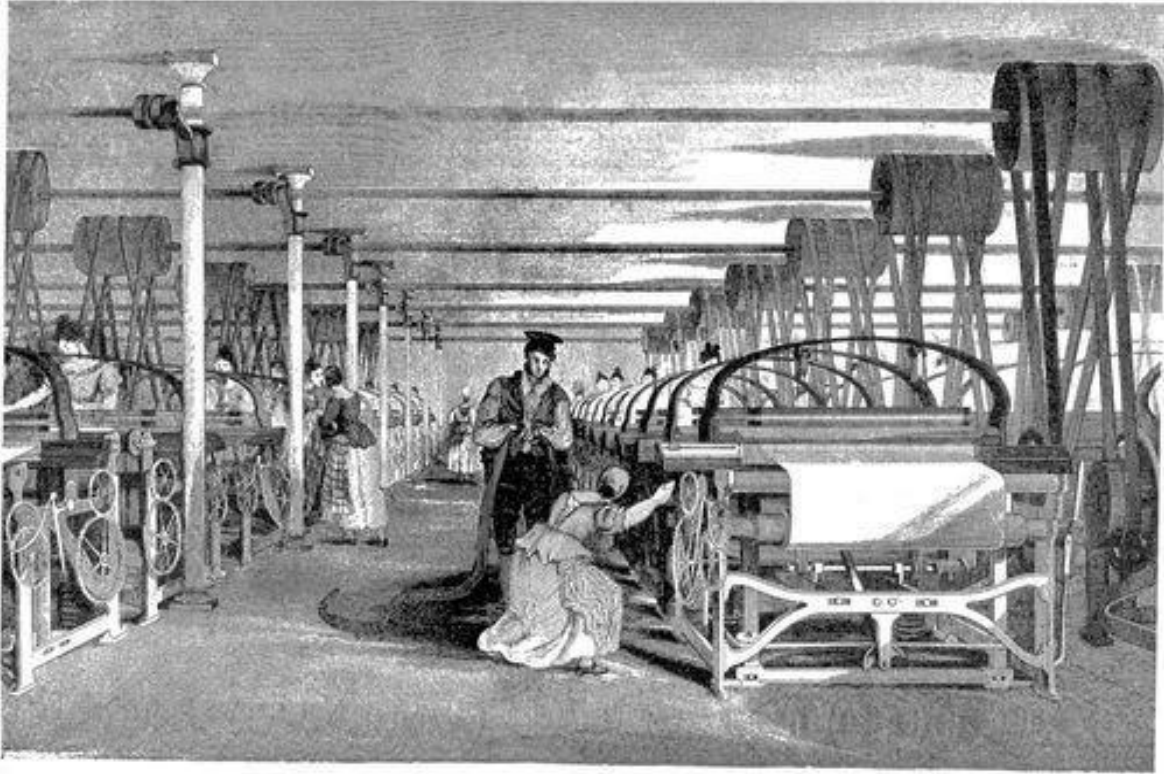
The mass production led to an overload of fashion items flooding the market. Mom-and-Pop shops were not as popular and larger stores opened. Street vendors also became a popular form of commerce due to the amount of goods in the market. The prosperity of the street market vendors was described by Henry Mayhew by affirming, “One reason why these gals buys free is that when the jewelry get out of order or out of fashion, they can fling it away and get fresh...”¹⁸ This developed into the throw away fashion still used today. Jewelry and clothing were no longer made to be sustained wear and tear for multiple years; instead only for the short time they would be in style.

As the middle class in London began to gain major political footing the working class also developed in order to support the middle merchant class. Many accounts explained what life was like including; *Street Life in London* from 1877, which described what it was like for the lower and working classes in London and how working at clothing factories affected their desire to stay fashionable.¹⁹ The working class created the clothing, which supplied the upper classes. This left little room for the lower, working class to become successful because of the majority of the economic prosperity going towards the upper classes. This then contributed to the success of the fashion industry because of the exploitation of the lower classes.

Propaganda filled society in order to help promote the mass-produced fashion goods as well as to help promote the production of these goods. Due to this marketing, people began to crave material goods that held no practical use. This was because of the marketing put in place by international trade companies to sell their exotic goods to people in England. Vast amounts of advertising were used to motivate people to leave their pastoral homes in favor of working in industrial cities. They would promise economic prosperity and individual freedoms, however the lower classes were not usually able to afford the clothing they were making. This led to an even greater gap in the lower and upper classes. With propaganda promoting the lower classes to work and the upper classes to purchase this economic difference led to the advancement of the fashion industry as a massive machine.

¹⁸Mayhew, Henry. *London Labour and the London Poor: Volume 1*. January 1. 1861. London. Griffin, Bohn, and Company. 293.

¹⁹ Adolphe Smith and John Thompson, *Street Life in London*. London. 1877. 10.



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The working class had poor living and factory conditions. London was one of the epicenters for producing goods due to the influx of raw materials they received. *Street Life in London* describes the living conditions after the streets flooded in the East End. Living conditions were so poor that once the conditions were disturbed it was difficult for them to recover, Smith and Thompson describe, “It would be difficult to conceive conditions more favorable to the growth of disease than those at present existing in the low-lying, densely populous quarters of Lambeth, that have been invaded by the floods.”²¹ As the wealthier classes exploited the lower working class for their goods, the lower class in turn worked in these unfavorable conditions. Diseases ran through the streets of the East End of London, which was the center of industry. By the upper classes refusing to give the lower classes positive working in the end the upper classes caused a less productive working class.

The mass amount of clothing, which was created, led to a surplus of clothing. Styles had an extremely fast turnaround from being popular to being out of fashion due to the mass production. Secondhand clothing stores opened which gave way for the lower classes to be able to afford some of the previous clothing they had been producing in factories. It shows how important fashion trends were becoming. It also displayed how desired different articles were, especially with articles like lace, which was a purely elite driven clothing²². Due to the mass

²⁰ Baines, Sir. Edward. *History of the Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain*. London. H. Fisher, R. Fisher, and P. Jackson. 1835. 238.

²¹ Adolphe Smith and John Thompson, *Street Life in London*. London. 1877. 11.

²² Lemire, Beverly. *Consumerism in Preindustrial and Early Industrial England: The Trade in Secondhand Clothes*.

increase in clothing production people were purchasing more than one outfit for certain occasions and beginning to change what they wore more rapidly to compete with one another. This led to a surplus of extra clothing once it was considered to be out of style. This allowed the lower classes to be able to afford more modern clothing. The idea of recycling clothing and having multiple people wearing one outfit gave way to new shops to open to sell these secondhand goods.

England, especially London was able to sustain a successful middle and upper class due to the exploitation of the lower working classes. However the lower class exploitation allowed for not only the upper and middle class success but also the creation of whole new neighborhoods in London. The West End could be sustained solely because of the amount in which the upper classes used the power dynamic of British society to continue to flourish. Fashion was at the center of this economy being sustained, Baines explains the power fashion held by declaring, “The first want of men in this life, after food, is clothing, and as this art enables them to supply it far more easily and cheaply than the old methods of manufacturing...”²³ Everyone had a personal stake in the fashion industry succeeding. While the upper classes were able to sustain their economy with the exploitation of the working class, the lower classes had access to more clothing and the ability to express themselves more readily through their clothing.

Social Aspects

Due to England’s longstanding class system society had long been attempting to one up another. The expansion of industry in England gave way for society to throw them in the fashion world. As cities expanded with the technological advancements and industrialization people flooded in and used the streets as catwalks. There was no better form of social competition than showing off one’s latest styles while walking around. Style immediately gave an indicator of class. Before even speaking to a person someone had the ability to know his or her social status. While this occurred for centuries in England now it was more readily accessible to the masses. The economic factors, which Britain created, allowed for even more competition between individuals due to the economic prosperity. People of all classes now used the fast pace changing styles to invoke their personality and social class.

As people began to have access to partially mass-produced clothing as well as luxury fabrics they needed new ways of displaying their fortune and style to others. The factories, which were built to sustain the fashion industry, also created gigantic urbanization in city centers. People began to use the streets as catwalks displaying their newest looks. In London shopping became a more popular activity. On Bond and Oxford streets men and women from the upper classes would flock to see and be seen.

The urbanization, which led to fashion street style, showed the classes divide even further with people strutting around down to show off their wealth. Fashion icon Beau Brummell described this new occurrence by asserting, “If people turn to look at you in the street, you are not well dressed, but wither too stiff, too tight, or too fashionable.”²⁴ In Brummel’s case he was

²³ Baines, Sir. Edward. *History of the Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain*. London. H. Fisher, R. Fisher, and P. Jackson. 1835. 213

²⁴ Kelly, Ian. *Beau Brummell; The Ultimate Man of Style*. New York. Free Press. 2006.

too fashionable. People, even today, aspire to show off their personal style in public. Brummell became known as Britain's premier fashion icon. He was known for his outlandish style, which promoted designers and people alike to adopt his style. He was also a unique case because he self-promoted his own style by going on different social outings in London from theater to different events in order to show off his style. Brummell also influenced lower classes style when he wrote a newspaper column describing what he saw as fashionable or not.²⁵ Due to people such as Brummell the fashion industry was pulled in the corporate direction as well as the individual direction that in turn helped to become as successful as it was.

The Lady's Magazine was sent out to women in the countryside, men and women closer to urban areas used newspapers as a source for lifestyle and fashion knowledge. While largely women wrote the magazine, men mostly wrote newspapers, especially the articles concerning fashion. Men used this as an opportunity to voice their own concerns on what women were wearing. In the Times magazine a monthly fashion article was released, this gave men a space to say what they thought should be in style for women and the different aspects they did not want their wives to be wearing.²⁶ In a spring article one man suggests the personal stake men held in women's clothing, saying coats changed from cloth to silk.²⁷ The widespread fashion industry simultaneously gave women new freedom to express their personal styles while at the same time continuing to confine them with the values of men.

Having what society considered a good fashion sense held a mass amount of value in British society. A writer for *The Lady's Magazine* described his aunt in this manner by testifying, "I have before given an account of my dearly beloved aunt as an economist, and the good-natured creature took the rub very kindly: I therefore venture again to display her, as a person of taste and fashion."²⁸ This shows how fashion defined a person's status and vice versa. If somebody was considered to be fashionable then they would also be considered successful. A successful person had value on what they wore, but as described above had more opportunity to determine their own style because it was already assumed to be successful. The fashion industry was successful because people bought into it. They agreed to place value on a person's character on the basis of what they wore.

The fashion industry did not originate in a bubble only in England. The key development of the British fashion industry compared to others is the rapid advancement of technology leading to the industrial revolution. It was also influenced by other cultures by means of British colonialism. It was also vastly influenced by the Parisian fashion industry. *The Lady's Magazine*

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²⁵ Ibid. 3.

²⁶ "To LADIES OF FASHION.-Princess Royal's Powder.-The above Powder was allowed to be." Times [London, England] 20 Feb. 1786: 3. The Times Digital Archive. Web. 4 Feb. 2015.

²⁷ *The Lady's Magazine 1770-1832*, University of Pittsburgh University Library System

²⁸ *The Lady's Magazine 1770-1832*, University of Pittsburgh University Library System. 291.

shined a bit of light on these views by stating, “In Paris the people of fashion only s’apprrocent: in London they dovetail. It would be intolerable in a fashionable assembly at the west end of the town if there was room for enjoyment.”²⁹ This shows how not only was the competition steep for the individuals within British society but they also were influenced by what was happening in neighboring countries. Britain’s colonial success however did create an international competition in the fashion world because of the success they had internally with fashion competition they then turned towards other countries.

There was also a shift from utility-based clothing to luxury items as well as an adaptation of styles. An author of the *Times* wrote in columns regarding, what he considered, the most popular styles of the day. The author even goes as far as to suggest that the more lavish and fashionable the clothing the more likely men will be to admire the women, he states; “to look as lovely as their genius will permit in the eyes of men.”³⁰ While this was a positive form some men it was a negative for married ones. These descriptions of everyday fashion help to set the scene for what it was like to live in 1785 and the competitive nature clothing takes on. Women did have a section of the paper where they were able to voice complaints and opinions. In the *Times* women had an advice column that allowed them to write in and ask on anything including the proper way to wear modern fashion items. Clothing trends changed so rapidly that at times people struggled to keep up with them and the luxury items demanded from them.

England’s class divide and advancement in fashion was evident to the outsiders as well. In a journal by a French woman Tristan she shared her opinion of London culture during the 1830’ s-1840. She explains that fashion in England moved in servile conformity.³¹ She describes how people in London rely on one another for fashion and that not many people have their own style, simply following what the crowd wore. England was a juxtaposition of people wanting to fit into the crowd while at the same time pushing the envelope of fashion. This furthered how lower classes wanted to break down the class structure while upper classes used fashion to separate themselves from the lower classes by all having the same goods and clothing.

The lower classes were eager to compete with the upper ones and fashion was the most accessible way of achieving this. Secondhand shops were not the only way lower classes purchased goods, which were lesser, but comparable to the upper classes. *Street Life in London* explains how the working class found ways of attempting to jump classes. “The modern ‘quasi’ jewelry sold in the streets is remarkable alike for its variety, its artistic beauty, it’s marvelous imitations of real gems and ornaments, and its fashionable designs. It is, indeed, necessary now-a-days for the street vendor of jewelry, to exercise tact and judgment in selecting such wares only as are supposed to be in vogue among the upper classes of society.”³² This shows how the lower classes craved to be of the upper classes. It also furthers how fashion was able to give the

²⁹ The Lady’s Magazine 1770-1832, University of Pittsburgh University Library System. 664.

³⁰ "Fashion." *Times* [London, England] 23 Feb. 1785: 3. The Times Digital Archive.

³¹ Dennis Palmer and Giselle Pincett, Flora Tristan’s *London Journal: A Survey of London Life in the 1830’s*. George Prior. London. 1980.

³² Adolphe Smith and John Thompson, *Street Life in London*. London. 1877. 29.

lower classes hope, which allowed the poor working conditions it, created to be sustained.

British society held massive value onto fashion. Clothing was an easy way to differentiate the classes while talking around the streets. Henry Feilding describes fashion as, “The greatest governor of this world. It perfidies not only in matters of drift and amusement, but in law, psych, politics, religion, and all other things of gravest kind...”³³ This shows how people thought of the power of fashion. Due to society handing power to fashion without fully realizing its economic power they in turn forced themselves to become slaves to it. The competition which fashion spurred was driven by individuals but largely by the economic institution which fashion created.

Style evolved from many different aspects. The dress pictured below is a prime example of different influences involved in British fashion. It was influenced by past fashion in the high neckline and patterned design. However the sleeves and bottom fluff are new innovations on the classic dress. Someone of the upper class would have worn this. It further shows how competitive people were when it came to personal fashion. They were willing to break out of the traditional fashion comfort zones to attempt to be fashion forward. Once a dress such as this was shown off the styles would trickle down to the lower classes and then into factory mass production trends.



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Propaganda through magazines and newspapers allowed people to voice their products while also adapting the fashion industry with their propaganda. This section from the Times is an advertisement disguised as an article regarding what perfume women should wear if they are

³³ Fielding, Henry. The beauties of Fielding: carefully selected from the works of that eminent writer. To which is added, some account of his life. First American edition. Philadelphia, Oct. 27, M.DCC.XCII. [1792]. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. UC Merced. 9 Feb. 2015 . True Patriot, p. 282.

³⁴ Dress. Victoria and Albert Museum. London. 1816-1821.

fashionable. “To the Ladies of Fashion—Princes Royal’s Powder—The above powder was allowed to be more fashionable and becoming on her Majesty’s Birth Day; it gives a richness and elegance to the hair...”³⁵ This only furthers the competition between women of the time against each other and the class structure. Advertisements had the power to sway men and women to purchase not necessarily the best or most popular well. Through propaganda they were able to promote different items to companies economies advantage.

In search of the newest fashion trends the middle and upper classes turned towards newspapers and magazines in search of stylistic inspiration. In this reappearing newspaper article women could write in with their daily problems, largely involving fashion and style and receive advice. Each section over begins with a different quote such as, “If to her share some female errors fall, look on her face, and you’ll forget ‘em all.” –Pope”³⁶ Not only is this association fashion with culture and poetry, but asserting that women are in need of assistance in the areas of fashion and culture and that they are not able to do it on their own. Women were reinforced as objects of man affection as they used manipulation of their fashion through newspapers to influence them.

The transition between personally tailored clothing to factory made was a rapid transition. The upper class still used seamstresses as their source of fashion entering the nineteenth century, however the emerging middle class did not have the finances to purchase completely custom items, which led to partially made clothing and then into purely factory made clothing. Lemire describes this beginning by expressing; “that from the early eighteenth century London shops sold ready-made gowns and that by the 1770’s they were being sewn up in Lancashire for delivery to the metropolis.”³⁷ This shows how available clothing was to the masses. The ready-made wear was not the same as today it was cut out fabric partially sewn who was then fitted to the consumer.³⁸ Partially made clothing allowed for tailors and seamstresses to still have jobs while factories were created and gave way for mass production for the middle classes. Fashion blended the line between economic prosperity and style, which is why it was able to be successful.

Fabrics were at the center of the emergence of the fashion industry. For the middle classes they relied on the factory made clothing. However for the upper classes they still largely used seamstresses and tailors to have an edge in modern fashion of the nineteenth century. The painting below by Charles Baugniet in 1858 depicts a woman sewing a wedding gown for a British bourgeois. This is a prime example of day-to-day life for lower classes supporting the upper classes. This painting does an excellent job of portraying the luxury fabrics, which were of

³⁵ "To LADIES OF FASHION.-Princess Royal's Powder.-The above Powder was allowed to be." Times [London, England] 20 Feb. 1786: 3. The Times Digital Archive. Web. 9 Apr. 2015.

³⁶ *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (London, England), Saturday, June 29, 1776; Issue 1148.

³⁷ Lemire, Beverly. *Fashion’s Favorite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660-1800*. 3.

³⁸ Lemire, Beverly. *Fashion’s Favorite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660-1800*. 3.

high demand from the upper classes. The fabrics were those which developed in the working class run factories with raw materials gathered from the British colonies.



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Propaganda influenced lower classes to flood into cities with the hope of improving their economic situation. Colonialism gave Britain a surplus of raw materials, which they were able to transform into goods, including clothing. *Street Life in London* describes the vicious cycle of lower classes not being to break their economic shell by stating, “Sometimes, it is true, when the labor is all over, and the money has been shared, there is some feeble attempt at rejoicing. But even then the guy must not be burnt; its clothes are too precious, the spangles might be used again next year.”⁴⁰ This enforces the double-edged sword, which the fashion industry created. It gave hope to lower classes, which in turn exploited their labor, health, and time. However the surplus of clothing did give them the opportunity to break the economic shell, simply not as often as anticipated.

British society became obsessed with material goods, fashion at the forefront. The mix of individual competition for the upper classes and struggle to make ends meet for the lower classes led to a fracture in society. The mixture an economically driven social industry allowed for its success. British society as a whole became entranced with consumer items with fashion as the easiest form of self-expression. The balance between the artistic side and consumer side created the powerhouse of the fashion industry to have as much pull as it did in society. The British

³⁹ Baugniet, Charles. *The Seamstress*. London. 1858. Oil on panel. Victoria & Albert Museum

⁴⁰ Dennis Palmer and Giselle Pincett, Flora Tristan’s *London Journal: A Survey of London Life in the 1830’s*. George Prior. London. 1980. 78.

society functioned in such a way that readily allowed for the fashion industry's success. People were extremely invested in the class system attempting to break their class mold which gave them personal stake in fashion items success.

Second hand stores opened and stimulated the economy in a number of ways in the eighteenth century. These stores gave way for the lower classes to have access to the clothing they had once produced. While secondhand clothing existed for decades, stores opened and popularity grew as the upper class fashion industry expanded.⁴¹ Lemire describes the reason for the surge in secondhand stores by stating, "The notice that this trade attracted in the eighteenth century can be attributed directly to the vastly greater quantity of merchandise, in addition to the more visible numbers of traders and their patrons."⁴² This shows how quickly fashion moved from being in style to out for the upper classes and the trickle down to the lower classes. The lower classes now had access to more clothing than one or two outfits. They could financially afford to own multiple sets, raising their social status in their ability to have variety.

Overall the fashion industry had many negatives and positives. From the elite British standpoint it furthered their international prosperity. This viewpoint existed because of the colonialism and creation of a competitive market other countries attempted to emulate. On the other hand the lower classes in England struggled to make ends meet because of the elite exploitation. Today similar ideas are reflected in the fashion industry. Fashion has the ability to allow people to express their own personal style, however at the same time it forces people to judge one another before even speaking. Britain also opened up the international trade market for fashion. People from all over exchanged ideas about style and how to execute different outfits. The industrial expansion gave people the ability to wear multiple outfits, which only furthered their personal connection to deciding what to wear on a daily basis.

Now the fashion industry is a massive machine, which is largely designer, based. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries companies dominated the market determining what was fashionable in accordance to the luxury goods, which they had, access to. It is important to track the history of the fashion market because it directly influences what people wear today. Some of the high-end goods, which made their way into the English market over two hundred years ago, still hold value today. While fashion is used more currently as a way for one to express them, it continues to be a way to determine class, especially with name brand designers. Fashion still holds tremendous value whether people realize it or not. No matter what an individual wears it shows where they stand economically in life. By understanding how the market was created it helps to understand the fashion market today.

⁴¹ Benjamin Harrow. *The Scientific Monthly*. Vol. 9, No. 3 (Sep., 1919) , pp. 234-245. American Association for the Advancement of Science. 2.

⁴² Lemire, Beverly. *Consumerism in Preindustrial and Early Industrial England: The Trade in Secondhand Clothes*. 3.

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