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Trained to Consume:
Dress and the Female Consumer in England, 1720-1820

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ABSTRACT

The impact of burgeoning consumerism and a new ‘world of goods’ has been well established in scholarly research on eighteenth-century England. In spite of this, we still know surprisingly little about the consumer. This thesis seeks to recover the figure of the consumer and establish its position as a key economic and social player on both the domestic and international stage. It argues for a significant shift in conceptual and practical attitudes to the consumer over the course of the eighteenth century. The consumer became a positive and productive economic force, and increasing emphasis was placed on training and cultivating this figure throughout a person’s lifecycle.

This thesis focuses on the female consumer of dress. Women of the elite and middling sort were often the agents through which concerns about luxury and commercial corruption were raised. They also regularly engaged in the production of the items they consumed, bringing into question the artificial division placed between production and consumption in scholarly work. In order to tackle the nuanced character of the female consumer of dress, this thesis adopts an interdisciplinary approach, combining traditional archival research with an examination of contemporary literary, visual, and material culture. This approach paints a picture of a skilled and knowledgeable consumer, whose economic and material literacy was trained from childhood, and maintained throughout the lifecycle.

DECLARATION

This thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BA: Bedford Archives

BM: British Museum

BOD: Bodleian Library, Oxford

DRO: Derbyshire Record Office

ERYA: East Riding of Yorkshire Archives

GA: Gloucestershire Archives

GYBA: Great Yarmouth Borough Archives

KA: Kent Archives

LLIU: Lilly Library, Indiana University

LA: Lincolnshire Archives

LRO: Lancashire Record Office

MOL: Museum of London

TNA: The National Archives

NA: Northamptonshire Archives

NRO: Norfolk Record Office

OBP: Old Bailey Proceedings Online

VAM: Victoria and Albert Museum

WCRO: Warwickshire County Record Office

WSRO: West Sussex Record Office

WYAS: West Yorkshire Archive Service

YCA: York City Archives

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INTRODUCTION

The *Rule Britannia* fan, now in the collection of the Fan Museum, might once have fluttered in a fashionable lady's hand amidst the glittering candlelight and material splendour of a London drawing room in the 1760s (Figure 0.1). Topical fan designs were a popular means by which women could use their power as consumers of fashion to celebrate and comment upon contemporary events and themes.¹ These elegant tokens might celebrate a royal occasion, declare political allegiance, or express popular contemporary ideas. The painted design on the leaf of the *Rule Britannia* fan concisely articulates the mercantile and commercial culture which has come to characterise eighteenth-century England. To the left of the leaf, a merchant ship, its British flag raised, sails across the sea, perhaps to India or China, to feed the British consumer's desire for foreign novelties and luxuries: from tea and sugar, to cotton and silk.² The opposite corner of the fan leaf depicts peaches and grapes, symbolising the prosperity and fruitfulness of this international trade and industry.

However, this industrial and mercantile affluence is not the key message of the fan, for it is the central cartouche to which the eye is drawn (Figure 0.2). Here, at the centre of the fan, we see a consumer. Specifically, a female consumer of dress, holding in her hand an image of the very same fan. She is accompanied by two female friends, who are being served by two obliging male shop assistants as they browse the colourful and diverse assortment of fabrics which fill the shelves behind them. This

¹ Elaine Chalus, 'Fanning the Flames: Women, Fashion, and Politics', in *Women, Popular Culture and the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Tiffany Potter (London: University of Toronto Press, 2012), pp. 92–112.

² Maxine Berg, 'New Commodities, Luxuries, and Their Consumers in Eighteenth-Century Britain', in *Consumers and Luxury in Europe 1650-1850*, eds Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 63–87.

fan celebrates the commercial nature of the culture from which it originated. It expresses ideas about the constructive role of trade and consumption in formulating a strong economy, and a positive idea of nationhood. In doing so, it foregrounds a figure who has become somewhat lost in scholarly work on eighteenth-century commerce and material culture: the consumer.



Figure 0.1. Fan, *Rule Britannia*, 1760, paper leaf with ivory sticks, Fan Museum, London, 1575.



Figure 0.2. Detail of fan, *Rule Britannia*, 1760, paper leaf with ivory sticks, Fan Museum, London, 1575.

My thesis seeks to recover the figure of the consumer from narratives of luxury, gender, and retail, which have dominated recent scholarly work on eighteenth-century England.³ The powerful vocabulary of the consumer is familiar, as is the importance of this figure as an active agent in the creation of both national fiscal wealth and personal material welfare. However, most work which considers the consumer paints them as a mature agent, whose genesis either lies buried in a distant past, or is simplified as the natural and organic product of nineteenth- and twentieth-

³ Such works include Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, eds, *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe 1650-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, eds, *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Nancy Cox, *The Complete Tradesman: A Study of Retailing, 1550-1820* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); Jon Stobart, Andrew Hann, and Victoria Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption: Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c.1680-1830* (London: Routledge, 2007); Ian Mitchell, *Tradition and Innovation in English Retailing, 1700-1850* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

century commoditisation.⁴ Work on consumer behaviour, motivations, and practise is rife, but we do not yet know enough about who the consumer was, how this identity was formed, and how it was shaped by contemporary political economy. By focussing on the act of consumption, as played out through retail and the broader debates on luxury, the identities of the individuals who were at the heart of these transactions – the consumers – have been overshadowed. We seem to know a great deal about consumption, but little is known of how the eighteenth century shaped the consumer.

In order to begin to recover the figure of the consumer, this thesis focuses on the female consumer of dress. As evidenced by the *Rule Britannia* fan, my choice is not random: women from the elite or middling sorts were routinely singled out in contemporary literature and graphic satire for their consumption habits.⁵ Their consumption of dress was regular and visible, setting it apart from the consumption of furniture (usually purchased as part of setting up a new household) and food (necessary, and increasingly conducted by servants).⁶ These women were predominantly derided for their materialism and lack of economic responsibility, particularly early in the century. Previous treatments of this figure have seen her as an obscuring stereotype, which must be overcome, rather than critically engaged with.⁷ My thesis reconceptualises the female consumer as central to developing historical understanding of the evolution of the figure of the consumer (both male and female).

⁴ Frank Trentmann, *The Making of the Consumer: Knowledge, Power and Identity in the Modern World* (London: Berg, 2006), pp. 4-9.

⁵ Kate Smith, 'Sensing Design and Workmanship: The Haptic Skills of Shoppers in Eighteenth-Century London', *Journal of Design History* 25 (2012): pp. 1-10.

⁶ For work on servants shopping for food, see Claire Walsh, 'Shopping at First Hand? Mistresses, Servants and Shopping for the Household in Early Modern England', in David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby, eds, *Buying for the Home: Shopping for the Domestic from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 13-26.

⁷ John Styles and Amanda Vickery, eds, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830* (London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 2.

The figure of the female consumer of dress acted both as a beacon for the productive, rational, and patriotic vision of the consumer, which commentators praised and encouraged, and as a vessel through which concerns about the frivolity, weakness, and immorality of women could be expressed. This ongoing dichotomy between consumer virtue and vice was bound up with contemporary ideas on gender and luxury, meaning that the vocabulary of the consumer was often highly gendered.

Female consumption as a whole received a great deal of attention, however it was women's consumption of dress which attracted particular comment. William Alexander, in his 1779 work *The History of Women*, lamented that 'among other subjects of popular declamation, the present luxury of dress affords a constant opportunity of endeavouring to persuade us, that our own times surpass in this article every thing that has gone before us; and that our own country surpasses all the world'.⁸ As the dominant male sartorial stereotype gained in masculinity and rationality, female dress was conceptualised as its counterpoint.⁹ Overindulgence in fashionable dress was characterised as feminine weakness.¹⁰ Dress was idealised as a legible visual and material articulation of personal attributes such as morality, taste, virtue, and character, as well as social station. John Gregory, a physician and newly widowed father, warned his daughters in 1761 that 'we consider dress as expressive of your

⁸ William Alexander, *The History of Women, from the Earliest Antiquity, to the Present Time, Giving Some Account of Almost Every Interesting Particular Concerning That Sex, among All Nations, Ancient and Modern*, (2 vols, London: J. A. Husband, 1779), 2, p. 96.

⁹ Michele Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1996); Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life 1860-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Tim Hitchcock and Michele Cohen, eds, *English Masculinities, 1660-1800* (London: Longman, 1999); Karen Harvey, *The Little Republic: Masculinity and Domestic Authority in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁰ Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 84; Chloe Wigston Smith, *Women, Work, and Clothes in the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 187.

characters' and that women must accustom themselves 'to habitual neatness' and 'an elegant simplicity', which will provide 'proof of taste and delicacy'.¹¹ Perhaps more so than a woman's consumption of china, furniture, domestic textiles, or food, dress was used to define, judge, and characterise the wearer through their consumption.

The ministering of how such judgement was to be reached was bound up with the cultivation of the consumer.¹² As political economist John Stuart Mill would famously come to say in the following century, the 'uncultivated cannot be competent judges of cultivation'.¹³ British economist Daniel Boileau wrote in 1811 that consumers could be 'divided into productive and unproductive', with the latter characterised by their idleness, and the former by their contribution to 'the community at large'.¹⁴ Before the consumer could take hold as an identifiable figure, the consumer themselves required careful training in order to be a 'productive' consumer. This training, I argue, occurred throughout the lifecycle, at both a state and domestic level, and as a continuous project which consumers had to cope with throughout their lives. This concept of the trained consumer directly counters the instinctive and organic realisation of a consumer public which has been assumed in much of the existing literature.¹⁵ In order to succeed as a 'productive' consumer, whose consumption worked in the public interest and to the benefit of the household and individual, education and the acquisition of the appropriate skills was key.¹⁶ Helen Berry and Kate

¹¹ John Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (London: Strahan and Cadell, 1774), p. 35.

¹² Trentmann, *The Making of the Consumer*, pp. 8-9; Thorstein Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1925), p. 49; Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 41.

¹³ John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1848), book V, ch. XI.

¹⁴ Daniel Boileau, *An Introduction to the Study of Political Economy* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1811), p. 365.

¹⁵ Trentmann, *The Making of the Consumer*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁶ Andrew O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child: Children's Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 5.

Smith, among others, have identified that skill was a core aspect of consumer practice in eighteenth-century England, yet we know little about how these skills related to consumer identity, and even less about how they were acquired and developed.¹⁷ This thesis situates the acquisition of consumer skill – manifested through economic and material literacy – and the training of consumer judgement, patriotism, and rationality as key to the development of consumer agency, and the creation of the active, knowledgeable, and self-aware consumer which dominates nineteenth- and twentieth-century consumer histories.¹⁸

The articulation of consumer skill cannot only be found within the retail shop. By positioning the history of the consumer within the framework of the history of retail, historical study has taken an unrepresentatively narrow view of the consumer. Consumption occurred when people interacted with, made, and used objects, not just when they were purchased. The consumer was therefore not only a recipient of goods, but also took part in their production. The production of dress is rarely considered as an artisanal craft alongside pottery, woodworking, or stonemasonry, perhaps due to its feminised nature.¹⁹ Yet the acquisition and expression of feminine skill was central to the figure of the female consumer of dress.²⁰ Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin have argued that eighteenth-century women engaged with all stages of the life

¹⁷ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter* (London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 19; Helen Berry, 'Polite Consumption: Shopping in Eighteenth-Century England', *Transaction of the Royal Historical Society* 12 (2002): pp. 375–94; Smith, 'Sensing Design and Workmanship', pp. 1–10.

¹⁸ Marina Bianchi, 'Taste for Novelty and Novel Tastes: The Role of Human Agency in Consumption', in *The Active Consumer: Novelty and Surprise in Consumer Choice*, ed. Marina Bianchi (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 64–87; Trentmann, *The Making of the Consumer*, pp. 1–27.

¹⁹ Anne Puetz, 'Design Instruction for Artisans in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Journal of Design History* 12, no. 3 (1999): pp. 217–39; James R. Farr, *Artisans in Europe, 1300–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Kate Smith, *Material Goods, Moving Hands: Perceiving Production in England, 1700–1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

²⁰ Freya L. Gowrley, 'Gender, Craft, and Canon: Elite Women's Engagements with Material Culture in Britain, 1750–1830' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2015).

cycle of the goods they owned: from design and production, to consumption, use, and recycling.²¹ Not only did these producer-consumers play an active role in the production process, contributing to design and attending fittings, many also developed the needlework and related skills required to make, alter, and mend garments themselves as independent, self-sufficient craftswomen.²²

The blurring of the boundaries between the producer and consumer reminds us that the consumer was not only a commercial creature. John Styles' work on servants as 'involuntary consumers' has been particularly effective in highlighting that plebeian consumption could be unmediated by the commercial market, countering models of emulative spending.²³ The afterlife of objects is an important framework for untangling the consumer from the commercial.²⁴ This framework allows the consumer to be reconnected with the dynamic and diverse engagement with material possessions, which occurred following an initial purchase. The wear, maintenance, remaking, and gifting of garments expands the borders of how historians consider consumption, and realigns the conceptual history of consumption with contemporary linguistic meanings.

²¹ Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin, 'Introduction: Materializing Women', in *Women and Things, 1750-1950: Gendered Material Strategies*, ed. Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Farnham: Routledge, 2009), pp. 1–16.

²² This will be considered at length in chapter six.

²³ John Styles, 'Involuntary Consumers? Servants and Their Clothes in Eighteenth-Century England', *Textile History* 33, no. 1 (2002): pp. 9–21. Although this thesis focuses on active engagement with consumer activity, rather than the passive receipt of gifted garments, this additional dimension is very important and must be acknowledged.

²⁴ Victoria Kelley, 'Time, Wear, and Maintenance: The Afterlife of Things', in *Writing Material Culture History*, ed. Giorgio Riello and Anne Gerritsen (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 191–98; Ariane Fennetaux, Amélie Junqua, and Sophie Vasset, eds, *The Afterlife of Used Things: Recycling in the Long Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2015).

Linguistically, the terminology of consumption evolved from the Latin *consumer*: a term for something being used up, or the physical exhaustion of matter.²⁵ The meaning behind ‘consumption’ underwent a metamorphosis in the English language in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, transforming it from a negative indicator of waste, disease, and decay, and into a positive and creative means of economic expansion. This positive consumer not only purchased products, but used, adapted, broke, mended, and disposed of them. In other words, the process of consumption not only happened in shops between consumer and retailer, but also occurred within the consumer’s home, and beyond.

The changing language of consumption and the consumer presents certain difficulties in terms of terminology. The arguments put forward by Trentmann, and echoed by other historians, such as Jean-Christophe Agnew, demonstrate the difficulties encountered when using this vocabulary.²⁶ Questions have arisen regarding whether one who consumes is automatically recognisable as a ‘consumer’, and whether the act of consuming necessarily meant that these individuals had a consumerist mentality, and indeed, how a consumerist mentality can be defined. The texts consulted in this thesis make clear and regular references to the consumer as both the end receiver of goods, and as users of goods. Early eighteenth-century works on political economy and periodicals specifically positioned the consumer and the producer or manufacturer as co-players in the commercial market.²⁷ Parliamentary

²⁵ Frank Trentmann, *Empire of Things: How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (London: Allen Lane, 2016), p. 2.

²⁶ Jean-Christophe Agnew, ‘Coming up for Air: Consumer Culture in Historical Perspective’, in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 19–39.

²⁷ Anon, *The Political State of Great Britain* (London: T. Warner, 1732), p. 416; *The London Magazine, Or, Gentleman’s Monthly Intelligencer* (London: R. Baldwin, 1749), p. 164.

debates, likewise, comfortably used the vocabulary of consumer and consumption in the 1730s.²⁸ Exactly who these consumers were is a more fluid issue, which will be discussed throughout this thesis.

The narrative which emerges through this thesis traces the consumer from around 1720 through to around 1820. These dates, although treated flexibly, provide a useful framework for charting the development of the figure of the consumer, which contextualises the consumer both culturally and politically. The Calico Act of 1721, which prohibited the use of calico, marked the culmination of a debate which had been brewing for decades.²⁹ Since the late seventeenth century, when the East India Company began to market large quantities of Indian textiles on the English market, the debate over the economic and national virtues of domestically produced wools over imported cottons had raged. It was the female consumer who bore the brunt of these attacks, and who was blamed for driving English weavers into unemployment.³⁰ In this context, women's dress was an incendiary topic. The offending calicos were torn from female consumers – termed 'calico madams' – and burnt in protest by angry mobs of weavers. These calicos symbolised a new, fashion-driven economy which had emerged following the Restoration, yet it was not until this brief episode from 1719 to 1721 that the significance and power of the female consumer of fashionable dress was so widely acknowledged as an economic and social force.

In spite of the 1721 act prohibiting the import of Indian cottons, the marketplace proved difficult to police in the following decades. Fashion's force was

²⁸ John Hervey, *The Reply of a Member of Parliament to the Mayor of His Corporation* (London: J. Roberts, 1733), p. 29.

²⁹ Chloe Wigston Smith, "'Calico Madams': Servants, Consumption, and the Calico Crisis', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 31, no. 2 (2007): pp. 29–55.

³⁰ Beverly Lemire, *Cotton* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 53–64.

strong, and the middle decades of the century became the stage upon which the debate between fashion, novelty, and luxury; and patriotism, rationality, and productivity was played out. From the 1750s, pocket books, which attempted to balance fashion with frugality, children's pedagogical literature, and the growing sense of patriotic nationhood all contributed to an evolving awareness that consumer mobilisation could be economically and socially positive.³¹ By the opening decades of the nineteenth century, a 'productive' consumer figure far more closely aligned to the active and knowledgeable consumer of the nineteenth century had emerged. As the long eighteenth century drew to a close, the female consumer of dress was a politicised figure, used to promote domestic manufacture and economically beneficial trade.³² Intertwined with the patriotic image of Britannia, and the formation of British nationhood, the consumer had become a key aspect of national and cultural identity.³³

0.1 Understanding Consumption

Consumption has come to serve as a key explanatory framework for economic, cultural, and social change in eighteenth-century Britain.³⁴ As Frank Trentmann has

³¹ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Yale University Press, 1992); Jennie Batchelor, 'Fashion and Frugality: Eighteenth-Century Pocket Books for Women', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 32 (2003): pp. 1-18; Evelyn Arizpe, Morag Styles, and Shirley Brice Heath, *Reading Lessons from the Eighteenth Century: Mothers, Children and Texts* (Lichfield: Pied Piper, 2006); Brigitte Glaser, 'Gendering Childhoods: On the Discursive Formation of Young Females in the Eighteenth Century', in *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Anja Müller (London: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 189-98.

³² Beverly Lemire, ed., *The Force of Fashion in Politics and Society* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); Chalus, 'Fanning the Flames: Women, Fashion, and Politics', pp. 92-112.

³³ Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, pp. 64-72; Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740-1830* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997); Jim Smyth, *The Making of the United Kingdom 1660-1800* (London: Longman, 2001).

³⁴ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 5; Jon Stobart, *Sugar and Spice: Grocers and Groceries in Provincial England, 1650-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 2.

put it, consumption has ‘stepped out of the shadow of production’, and now enjoys a widely accepted position amongst scholars as a ‘mirror of the human condition’.³⁵ Consumption’s influence on eighteenth-century political and moral economy is undeniable; the debates and discourses arising from this topic have inspired the application of an array of transformative phrases to characterise the eighteenth century. Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb’s 1982 *The Birth of a Consumer Society* has undeniably shaped the field over the last three decades. This study argued that the growing diversity of goods, and increased retailing skill, combined to form the birthplace of a consumer society. The appeal of these goods to an affluent middling sort satisfied a need to emulate higher social groups, leading to what has been termed trickle-down theory. In this model, consumers were directed by London’s fashionable elite, imitating and aping the latest modes.³⁶

Perhaps hyperbolically termed as a ‘consumer revolution’, McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb’s arguments paved the way for a rich and diverse historiographical literature, which continues to grow. Yet little of it deals with the consumer, whom one would expect to find at the heart of this revolution. By 1993, the edited volume, *Consumption and the World of Goods*, demonstrated the depth and range which had been covered by scholars, and the growing importance of the field within the study of the eighteenth century.³⁷ This expanding literature brought with it critics of the ‘consumer revolution’, who have questioned the model, primarily along socio-

³⁵ Frank Trentmann, ‘Introduction’ in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption*, ed. Frank Trentmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 1-19.

³⁶ Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and John Harold Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Europa, 1982).

³⁷ Other important early works on consumption include John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds, *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993); Ben Fine and Ellen Leopold, *The World of Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1993); John Brewer and Ann Bermingham, eds, *The Consumption of Culture, 1660-1800: Image, Object, Text* (London: Routledge, 1995).

economic lines.³⁸ In the 1980s Lorna Weatherill's study of consumer behaviour in the early century certainly revealed a greater material wealth in households.³⁹ However, Weatherill's focus on inventories, although fruitful, paid little attention to the individuals – the consumers – who brought these goods into the household.⁴⁰ It remained unclear how, where, and why these goods were acquired. In a similar vein, focusing on the household, Jan de Vries' work on the household economy has been particularly important. De Vries's sophisticated theory of an 'industrious revolution' urged researchers to look beyond a patriarchal view of consumption in order to engage with market participation within households.⁴¹ De Vries has argued that households increased their participation in the labour market in order to buy new consumer goods with the money they made.⁴²

De Vries' arguments have gone a long way to open up the economic debates surrounding consumption. However, consumption was not only an economic activity, it also relied heavily on cultural dissemination and social structures. De Vries has argued that cultural precedence moved away from traditional landed elites, and shifted to the new urban elite, with its own material culture.⁴³ Research over the last two

³⁸ Ben Fine and Ellen Leopold, 'Consumerism and the Industrial Revolution', *Social History* 15, no. 2 (1990): pp. 151–79.

³⁹ Lorna Weatherill, 'Consumer Behaviour, Textiles and Dress in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', *Textile History* 22, no. 2 (1991): pp. 297–310; Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (2nd edn., London: Routledge, 1996).

⁴⁰ Lorna Weatherill, ed., *The Account Book of Richard Latham, 1724-1767* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁴¹ Jan de Vries, 'Between Purchasing Power and the World of Goods: Understanding the Household Economy in Early Modern Europe', in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 85–132; Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behaviour and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁴² de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*, pp. 249-96; see also de Vries, 'Between Purchasing Power and the World of Goods'; de Vries, 'Luxury and the Golden Age in Theory and Practice', in *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, ed. Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 41–56.

⁴³ de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*, p. 44.

decades has demonstrated that material culture followed horizontally-defined social groups, and that the consumption of particular objects articulated membership of specific social strata. Amanda Vickery's work on 'genteel' society has shown that members of this social group, such as Elizabeth Shackleton (whose consumption is considered in this thesis), consciously shunned the extravagance and absurdities of high fashion.⁴⁴ This challenged and complicated the cultural and social sovereignty of the elites across Europe.⁴⁵

Hannah Greig has identified that membership of the London *beau monde* as an elite group was defined through fashionable consumption and social cachet, echoing Simmel's theory of fashion as a coding of objects which define membership and allegiance.⁴⁶ Greig's reading also reveals the complexity of this system, and the importance of aspirational spending. Consumption of certain goods not only articulated social position, but also helped to define and shape it. Through the example of the Straffords, Greig has shown that people on the cusp of membership the *beau monde* used their consumption of fashionable commodities to aspire and propel themselves towards membership of this elite group.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Amanda Vickery, 'Women and the World of Goods: A Lancashire Consumer and Her Possessions, 1751-81', in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 274-304; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 172-73; Vickery has explored similar themes in relation to the home in Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (London: Yale University Press, 2009).

⁴⁵ Bruno Blondé, 'Conflicting Consumption Models? The Symbolic Meaning of Possessions and Consumption Amongst the Antwerp Nobility at the End of the Eighteenth Century', in *Fashioning Old and New: Changing Consumer Patterns in Western Europe*, ed. Bruno Blondé et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), pp. 61-80.

⁴⁶ Hannah Greig, 'Leading the Fashion: The Material Culture of London's Beau Monde', in *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830*, ed. John Styles and Amanda Vickery (London: Yale University Press, 2006), 293-313; Greig, *The Beau Monde: Fashionable Society in Georgian London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Georg Simmel, 'Fashion', *International Quarterly* 10 (1904): pp. 130-55; Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, pp. 251-52.

⁴⁷ Greig, *The Beau Monde*, p. 36-47.

Research has established shopping as a key activity, which was as important as a means of social interaction and spectacle, as it was for making purchases.⁴⁸ Pleasure, as well as economic and social motivations, drove the consumer. Through the act of visiting the shop space, consumers could not only interact with the glittering diversity of goods, but also participate in public social interaction and cultural exchange. Berry used the phrase ‘polite consumption’ to describe this activity, and considered shopping as a pleasurable occupation for middling and upper class women.⁴⁹ Stobart, Han and Morgan’s work has pointed out how the built urban environment and the social dynamics of the town were shaped by the use of shops for both consumption and leisure.⁵⁰ Claire Walsh has produced a significant body of work, primarily focusing on the visual and sociable experience of shopping.⁵¹ She has highlighted the importance of the early eighteenth-century shopping galleries or exchanges, such as the New Exchange, crediting them for the increased expectation of cultural display and spectacle as part of the shopping experience.⁵² She has claimed that visitors to these galleries were more concerned with social display and the exclusivity of the venue, than the shopping opportunities it provided. Overall, this body of work has demonstrated that shopping could be a sociable and cultural activity. However, it has significantly detached the act of shopping from the act of purchasing,

⁴⁸ Stobart, Hann, and Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*; Claire Walsh, ‘Social Meaning and Social Space in the Shopping Galleries of Early Modern London’, in *A Nation of Shopkeepers: Five Centuries of British Retailing*, ed. John Benson and Laura Ugolini (London: I B Tauris, 2003), pp. 52–79; Claire Walsh, ‘Shops, Shopping and the Art of Decision Making in Eighteenth-Century England’, in *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700–1830*, ed. John Styles and Amanda Vickery (London: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 151–78.

⁴⁹ Berry, ‘Polite Consumption’, pp. 375–94.

⁵⁰ Stobart, Hann, and Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*, pp. 193–194.

⁵¹ Claire Walsh, ‘Shopping in Early-Modern London, 1660–1800’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis, European University Institute, 2001); Walsh, ‘Social Meaning and Social Space’; Walsh, ‘Shops, Shopping and the Art of Decision Making’.

⁵² Walsh, ‘Social Meaning and Social Space’, pp. 52–73.

and the shopper from the goods. We know a great deal more about the experience of shopping, and how the consumer prioritised consumption as an act, but we still know very little about who the consumer was as an individual.

Research into how consumers chose goods has gone some way to fill in the gap. Novelty, luxury, and a search for a good bargain have all been discussed. Berry's browse-bargain model has also made significant advances in reclaiming the agency of the shopper and in interrogating how choices were made.⁵³ This two-part system, in which the shopper first browsed available products, and then bargained with the retailer to obtain the best possible price, returns the middling rank female consumer to her position as manager of household 'œconomy'.⁵⁴ Berry's work primarily focuses on browsing as a means of gaining knowledge to support financial negotiation, recognising the importance of consumer agency in navigating the commercial market. The role of agency in consumption and shopping practise has been brought back into focus in the work of Marina Bianchi. Bianchi's research addresses how consumers choose goods, particularly when faced with the dichotomy of novelty and experience and knowledge.⁵⁵ Novelty is central to many readings of eighteenth-century consumption. Maxine Berg has argued that novelty calls for constant change, making it key to the progress of fashion, and to maintaining market activity.⁵⁶ Fashion's 'caprice and valorisation of ephemerality' was key to the energy behind consumption of fashionable, luxury goods.⁵⁷ The idea that the renewal of goods and thirst for novelty

⁵³ Berry, 'Polite Consumption', pp. 375-94.

⁵⁴ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 164.

⁵⁵ Bianchi, 'Taste for Novelty and Novel Tastes', p. 64.

⁵⁶ Berg, 'New Commodities, Luxuries, and Their Consumers'; Berg, 'From Imitation to Invention: Creating Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Economic History Review* 55, no. 1 (2002): pp. 1-30.

⁵⁷ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 250.

resulted from progressive dissatisfaction must, however, be considered in conjunction with Bianchi's argument that new goods would always need to be incorporated into the home, and existing systems of consumption.⁵⁸

Discussions of novelty go hand in hand with considerations of luxury. Elite consumers regularly sought new means of articulating and displaying their status through the conspicuous consumption of novel luxury goods.⁵⁹ Although this phenomenon was not new to eighteenth-century England, luxury remained an incendiary topic.⁶⁰ The anxieties surrounding luxury had traditionally focussed on the corruption of the elite; however, the eighteenth century moved beyond this.⁶¹ It was the development of new luxuries which coloured the debate in this period. These new luxuries were conceptualised as the product of the expanding commercial world, and could now communicate taste, as well as promote industry. This new luxury could be a positive influence on society. Berg has argued that it was the people who bought these 'new luxuries' – the consumers – who, above all, made this 'product revolution'.⁶² However, we still know very little about how the figure of the consumer and the product interacted.

Refocussing on the products themselves – the commodities that the consumer bought and used – has been key to recent developments in work on consumption. Berry's model side-lines the materiality of the goods being inspected, and assumes that shoppers primarily discriminated goods based on how low they could haggle the

⁵⁸ de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*, p. 32; Bianchi, 'Taste for Novelty and Novel Tastes'.

⁵⁹ Stobart, *Sugar and Spice*, p. 4.

⁶⁰ For work on seventeenth-century consumption, see Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁶¹ Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, 'The Rise and Fall of the Luxury Debates', in *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, ed. Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 7–27.

⁶² Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 6.

price.⁶³ However, developing this work on browsing, Kate Smith has specifically considered the importance of production and workmanship, how it was manifested in goods, and perceived by shoppers.⁶⁴ Focusing on pottery and ceramics, Smith has argued that consumers used touch to assess objects and to understand production, and that consumers of ceramics were interested in learning how their goods were made. In doing so, Smith has highlighted an important intersection between sensory history and the history of consumption, which places the goods back at the centre of the shopping experience. This object-led approach attests to the increasing importance of material culture in eighteenth-century research.⁶⁵

0.2 Material Culture: Approaching Dress and Fashion

Trentmann has critiqued historical material culture studies, arguing that they have been ‘more about the culture than about material’.⁶⁶ Indeed, there has been a great deal of trepidation and scepticism about the value of engaging with objects; and yet in recent years, the ‘material turn’ has led to objects being readily incorporated into historical, art historical, and even literary methodologies.⁶⁷ Concisely defined by Giorgio Riello and Anne Gerritsen as consisting ‘not merely of “things”, but also of

⁶³ Berry, ‘Polite Consumption’, pp. 390–391.

⁶⁴ Smith, ‘Sensing Design and Workmanship’; Smith, *Material Goods, Moving Hands*.

⁶⁵ Richard Grassby, ‘Material Culture and Cultural History’, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35, no. 5 (2005): pp. 591–603; Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*; Jennie Batchelor, *Women and Material Culture, 1660–1830* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Frank Trentmann, ‘Materiality in the Future of History: Things, Practices, and Politics’, *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 2 (2009): pp. 283–307.

⁶⁶ Trentmann, ‘Materiality in the Future of History’, p. 288.

⁶⁷ Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery, eds, *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture* (London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992); Jules David Prown, *Art as Evidence: Writings on Art and Material Culture* (London: Yale University Press, 2002); Grassby, ‘Material Culture and Cultural History’; Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*; Batchelor, *Women and Material Culture, 1660–1830*.

the meanings they hold for people’, material culture studies have come to be acknowledged as a fruitful means of reconsidering well-worn topics, borrowing from the disciplines of anthropology, archaeology, and art history.⁶⁸ The key questions which arise from material culture studies centre on the meaning of things: how they were used and made, who owned them, and why?

If we consider consumers as the human link between a ‘world of goods’ and the economic market, then approaching the figure of the consumer from the perspective of material culture becomes essential. The consumer was not only an economic and cultural figure, he or she was also the key author of the biographies of objects.⁶⁹ Objects, particularly garments, were not static. Throughout the consumption process they were fitted, altered, worn, dirtied, mended, and reused.⁷⁰ When studying the consumer from the perspective of material culture, it becomes clear that approaching them using a purely archival methodology narrows our understanding of this far more complex figure. Archival sources, although integral to historical research, do have limits – especially when dealing with a topic which so closely revolves around the goods themselves. Through delving into the visually and haptically engaging material world of consumer, the importance of material literacy becomes clear. Understanding goods in the eighteenth century was not only about names and prices, account books and inventories, it was also about look and feel.

⁶⁸ Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, ‘Introduction’, in *Writing Material Culture History*, ed. Giorgio Riello and Anne Gerritsen (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 1–13; see also Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, eds, *The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture of Connections in the Early Modern World* (London: Routledge, 2015).

⁶⁹ Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁷⁰ Fennetaux, Junqua, and Vasset, *The Afterlife of Used Things*.

Historians such as Amanda Vickery, John Styles, and Evelyn Welch, have all contributed to the increasing popularity of material culture as a historical methodology.⁷¹ More recently, Hannah Greig has successfully integrated historical and material culture methodologies in her work on diamond jewellery.⁷² The narrative which has emerged from some of this body of literature has painted a picture of a transformation in European material culture in the eighteenth century, both in the home, and in dress.⁷³ Textiles have been central to arguments surrounding this material change, primarily focussing on cotton.⁷⁴

Work using historical material culture methodologies to study textiles and accessories has overlapped with the expanding literature on dress history. Long ignored and overlooked, increasing partnerships and collaborations between academic and museum staff has brought the study of dress history firmly onto the academic stage. Dress history is now a thriving discipline, across fashion, anthropology, art history, literary and historical studies.⁷⁵ The field initially struggled to find its feet methodologically; however, the rise of material culture has meant that dress history

⁷¹ Evelyn Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance: Consumer Cultures in Italy 1400-1600* (London: Yale University Press, 2005); Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*; John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 2007); see also the essays in Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg-Roberts, eds, *Mrs. Delany and Her Circle* (London: Yale University Press, 2009).

⁷² Greig, *The Beau Monde*, p. 46-62.

⁷³ Jon Stobart and Bruno Blondé, eds, *Selling Textiles in the Long Eighteenth Century: Comparative Perspectives from Western Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁷⁴ Beverly Lemire, *Fashion's Favourite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Maxine Berg, 'Quality, Cotton and the Global Luxury Trade', in *How India Clothes the World: The World of South Asian Textiles, 1500-1850*, ed. Giorgio Riello and Tirthankar Roy (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 391-414; Beverly Lemire, ed., *The British Cotton Trade, 1660 - 1815* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009); Giorgio Riello and Parthasarathi Prasannan, eds, *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric That Made the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Lemire, *Cotton*.

⁷⁵ Charlotte Nicklas and Annebella Pollen, eds, *Dress History: New Directions in Theory and Practise* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

has received increased attention.⁷⁶ Dress history's roots lie in fashion theory, and the sociological work of Simmel and Veblen.⁷⁷ Fashion theory, generally speaking, engaged with the problem of how fashion was manifested in society, and the different functions of fashionable dress.⁷⁸ Other work, notably that of Elizabeth Wilson and Joanne Entwistle, focussed on the sociological role of the body through dress.⁷⁹ This work tended to see clothing as 'costume' used to adorn the body, rather than as practical, wearable clothing. Furthermore, this theoretical work remained decidedly distinct from object-based studies. Extant objects do not lead arguments in this body of work, but are rather used as illustrative of theoretical social frameworks.

In contrast to these studies, dress historians, usually based in museums, also developed object-led approaches which, conversely, only tentatively attempted to contextualise the objects they examined.⁸⁰ These 'hemline histories' have created a chronological database of changing styles and silhouettes, but, as with theoretical approaches, continued to fail to mesh dress with the realities of wearing clothes, and with the wider social context in which they were made, acquired, and worn. Ben Fine and Ellen Leopold termed this work as a 'wholly descriptive 'catalogue' tradition of

⁷⁶ For works exploring dress history methodology, see Lou Taylor, *The Study of Dress History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Lou Taylor, *Establishing Dress History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Valerie Cumming, *Understanding Fashion History* (London: Batsford, 2004).

⁷⁷ Simmel, 'Fashion'; Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*; Taylor, *Establishing Dress History*, pp. 44-5.

⁷⁸ C. W. Cunnington, *Why Women Wear Clothes* (London: Faber and Faber, 1941); James Laver, *Style in Costumes* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949); James Laver, *Costume in the Western World* (London: Harrap, 1951); Fred Davies, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Malcom Barnard, *Fashion as Communication* (London: Routledge, 1996).

⁷⁹ Elizabeth Wilson and Joanne Entwistle, *Body Dressing: Dress, Body and Culture* (Oxford: Berg, 2001); Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

⁸⁰ Norah Waugh, *The Cut of Women's Dress* (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis, 1968); Doris Langley Moore, *Fashion Through Fashion Plates* (London: Ward Lock, 1971); Janet Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion: Englishwomen's Dress and Their Construction, 1660-1860* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984).

costume history'.⁸¹ Anne Buck, and subsequently Aileen Ribeiro, however, began to academically interrogate dress using material and visual culture, in unison with archival and literary sources.⁸² This approach has defined the direction for dress history in the subsequent decades, leading to work such as Emily Taylor's thesis on Scottish women's dress in the eighteenth century, and Polly Hamilton's work on haberdashery items for dress.⁸³ From a methodological perspective, a study of the consumption of dress allows the historian to tap into the consumption of a greater proportion of people, and more consistently through the life-cycle.⁸⁴ Moreover, it allows us to consider individuals who were not involved in the setting up and maintenance of a home: widows, daughters, and spinsters, as well as wives and mothers.

Fashion theory and dress history have developed as different threads within the study of clothing, yet even – or perhaps particularly – within dress history, the distinction between fashion and dress must be drawn. The terms are often used interchangeably in modern parlance, but in the context of this thesis, and to the eighteenth-century women to whom it pertains, these words had distinct meanings. While dress was an umbrella term for clothing worn both by men and women, fashion was a more complex term. Fashion theory and consumption histories have generally associated the concept of fashion with modernity, change, and novelty, yet such

⁸¹ Fine and Leopold, *The World of Consumption*, p. 94.

⁸² Anne Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Batsford, 1979); Buck, 'Buying Clothes in Bedfordshire: Customers and Tradesmen, 1700-1800', *Textile History* 22, no. 2 (1991): pp. 211–37; Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe, 1715-1789* (London: Holmes and Meier, 1985); Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality* (Oxford: Berg, 1986); Ribeiro, *Fashion in the French Revolution* (London: Batsford, 1988); Ribeiro, *The Art of Dress: Fashion in England and France, 1750-1820* (London: Yale University Press, 1995).

⁸³ Emily Taylor, 'Women's Dresses from Eighteenth-Century Scotland: Fashion, Objects, and Identities' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2013); Polly Hamilton, 'Haberdashery for Use in Dress 1550-1800' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Wolverhampton, 2007).

⁸⁴ Styles, *The Dress of the People*, pp. 229-245.

definitions fail to fully historicise fashion as a concept.⁸⁵ Hannah Greig's study of the eighteenth-century *beau monde* has provided a much-needed contextualisation of the term, revealing its nuanced use as an indicator of rank, and as a term more closely affiliated to a social group than to the goods they consumed.⁸⁶ Articulating an awareness of these goods could define your membership of the fashionable elite, yet foolhardy mimicry could be easily spotted and ridiculed.⁸⁷ Although this thesis primarily focusses on the dress of middling consumers, and consumers of the lesser elite, the influence of fashion, and the fashionable elite, is acknowledged and explored. Chapter seven, in particular, which looks to the influence of *à la mode* French goods, engages with fashion and its conspicuous role in forging the character of the female consumer of dress.

To an extent, both dress and fashion studies have remained divorced from textile history. This artificial separation is, in part, due to a lack of scholarly attention paid to dress production (as opposed to textile production).⁸⁸ As Colin Gale and Jasbir Kaur have argued in an attempt to redress this separation, 'fashion, ultimately is dependent upon and could not exist without textiles; the reverse is not true of the much more broadly focused textile industry, but together the two industries create a cultural phenomenon greater than either of them'.⁸⁹ Dress in this period was not simply purchased fully made, but necessitated a collaborative process of design and construction between the retailer (or maker) and the consumer (or wearer). Yet, still,

⁸⁵ For examples, see Berg, 'New Commodities, Luxuries, and Their Consumers'; Berg, 'From Imitation to Invention'; Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*.

⁸⁶ Greig, *The Beau Monde*, p. 33; see also Greig, 'Leading the Fashion', pp. 293-313.

⁸⁷ Diana Donald, *Followers of Fashion* (London: Hayward, 2002), p. 60.

⁸⁸ An early exception would be Madeleine Ginsburg, 'The Tailoring and Dressmaking Trades 1700-1850', *Costume* 6 (1972): pp. 64-71; For a more recent examination of garment production in France, see Clare Haru Crowston, *Fabricating Women: The Seamstresses of Old Regime France, 1675-1791* (London: Duke University Press, 2001).

⁸⁹ Colin Gale and Jasbir Kaur, *Fashion and Textiles: An Overview* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), p. 29.

the consumption of textiles, ribbons, laces, threads, and trims are discussed as distinct from the consumption of dress.⁹⁰ Similarly, while the extensive literature on cotton, and smaller literatures on silk and wool, consider the retailing of textiles and their fashionability, few engage with the transformative process from flat textile to wearable garment.⁹¹ When textiles are considered in relation to the garments they were used to make, it is generally done in reverse, through fabric samples of known garments.⁹² Studies such as Riello's study on shoes and Kate Smith's work on ceramics have provided exceptions to this, plotting the relationship between production and consumption.⁹³ However, the distinctions between textiles and dress remain.

Further distinctions are evident in studies which use primarily visual sources. Ribeiro's training as an art historian is apparent in her work, which makes extensive use of paintings and prints.⁹⁴ Meanwhile, work on eighteenth-century trade cards has revealed the significance of the material and visual culture surrounding advertising.⁹⁵ Work in this vein, such as Diana Donald's work on graphic satires of fashion, provides visual depth to contemporary debate, linking economic and social texts with the visual experience of dress.⁹⁶ The latter part of the eighteenth century has been termed the

⁹⁰ Lesley Ellis Miller, *Selling Silks: A Merchant's Sample Book 1764* (London: V&A, 2014); see also various essays in Stobart and Blondé, *Selling Textiles*.

⁹¹ An exception to this would be Beverly Lemire, *Dress, Culture and Commerce: The English Clothing Trade before the Factory, 1660-1800* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997).

⁹² Jenny Lister, 'Twenty-Three Samples of Silk: Silks Worn by Queen Charlotte and the Princesses at Royal Birthday Balls, 1791-1794', *Costume* 73 (2003): pp. 51–65.

⁹³ Giorgio Riello, *A Foot in the Past: Consumers, Producers and Footwear in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Smith, *Material Goods, Moving Hands*.

⁹⁴ See, for example Ribeiro, *The Art of Dress*; Aileen Ribeiro, *Facing Beauty: Painted Women and Cosmetic Art* (London: Yale University Press, 2011).

⁹⁵ Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, 'Selling Consumption in the Eighteenth Century: Advertising and the Trade Card in Britain and France', *Cultural and Social History* 4, no. 2 (2007): pp. 145–70; Philippa Hubbard, 'The Art of Advertising: Trade Cards in Eighteenth-Century Consumer Cultures' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Warwick, 2009).

⁹⁶ Donald, *Followers of Fashion*.

‘golden age’ of English satirical prints.⁹⁷ These prints are key sources throughout this thesis, and provide a vital link between theoretical debates and the lived experience evidenced in archival research, and the extremely visual world of dress. Recent work by Amelia Rauser and Cindy McCreery has highlighted the key role graphic satire played, particularly in formulating and expressing public ideas about women, femininity, and fashion.⁹⁸ These images used women’s consumption of dress as a key indicator of social rank, wealth, and taste, making a ‘spectacle of difference’, to borrow a phrase used by Mark Hallett.⁹⁹ In doing so, they make explicit and implicit links between the material and moral worlds of the consumer.

0.3 The Gendered Consumer

Material culture and gender are topics which often sit side by side in historical enquiry.¹⁰⁰ This gendering of things can be ascribed to contemporary

⁹⁷ Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (London: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 1.

⁹⁸ Cindy McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze: Prints of Women in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004); Amelia Rauser, ‘Hair, Authenticity and the Self-Made Macaroni’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38 (2004): pp. 101–17; Amelia Rauser, *Caricature Unmasked: Irony, Authenticity, and Individualism in Eighteenth-Century English Prints* (Cranbury: University of Delaware Press, 2008).

⁹⁹ Mark Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference* (London: Yale University Press, 1999).

¹⁰⁰ Leora Auslander, ‘The Gendering of Consumer Practices in Nineteenth-Century France’, in *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, ed. Victoria De Grazia and Ellen Furlough (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 79–112; P. Kirkham and J. Attfield, eds, *The Gendered Object* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996); Moira Donald and Linda Hurbombe, eds, *Gender and Material Culture in Historical Perspective* (London: Macmillan, 2000); Amanda Vickery, ‘His and Hers: Gender, Consumption and Household Accounting in Eighteenth-Century England’, ed. Lyndal Roper and Ruth Harris, *The Art of Survival: Gender and History in Europe, 1450-2000 (Past and Present)*, 2006, pp. 12–38; Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 106-128; Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin, eds, *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles, 1750-1950* (Farnham: Routledge, 2009); Donald and Hurbombe, *Gender and Material Culture in Historical Perspective*; Gowrley, ‘Gender, Craft, and Canon’; Hannah Greig, Jane Hamlett, and Leonie Hannan, eds, *Gender and Material Culture in Britain since 1600* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

conceptualisations of gender identity.¹⁰¹ Dror Wahrman has argued that many of the constructions and characteristics that formulate modern conceptions of gender identity became salient in the eighteenth century.¹⁰² Anthony Fletcher argued that ‘an increasingly rigid and elaborate scheme of gender construction’ was laid down in prescriptive literature in the Early Modern period, which was especially directed at women.¹⁰³ The separate spheres model, which emanated from this research, has been criticised by scholars, such as Vickery.¹⁰⁴ Vickery has argued that this interpretation confuses rhetoric with reality, and that prescriptive literature was a tardy response to the independence evident in women’s behaviour, and did not necessarily provide effective control of it.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, women were not relegated to the private sphere of the home, but instead had the potential to be models of British patriotism, even if only in a limited way.¹⁰⁶

Scholarship has moved on from the separate spheres model, yet contemporary perceptions and conceptions of the consumer reveal inherent anxieties about the role of women, and these worries were projected onto consumers.¹⁰⁷ The desires and practices of the figure of the consumer, especially the consumer of dress, were situated

¹⁰¹ Michael McKeon, ‘Historicising Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1760’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28, no. 3 (1995): pp. 295–322; Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (London: Yale University Press, 1995).

¹⁰² Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 2004).

¹⁰³ Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination*, p. 296; Sara Pennell and Natasha Glaisyer, eds, *Didactic Literature in England 1500-1800: Expertise Constructed* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2003).

¹⁰⁴ Amanda Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History’, *Historical Journal* 36, no. 2 (1993): pp. 383–414; Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter*.

¹⁰⁵ Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History’, pp. 383–414.

¹⁰⁶ Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, pp. 237–81; Brett D. Wilson, *A Race of Female Patriots: Women and Public Spirit on the British Stage, 1688 -1745* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2011).

¹⁰⁷ Batchelor, *Women and Material Culture*; Chalus, ‘Fanning the Flames’, pp. 92–112; Wigston Smith, *Women, Work, and Clothes*, pp. 112–121.

within a discourse which was explicitly gendered. The unproductive, frivolous consumer was represented as the product of degenerate effeminacy, which itself was characterised as a disabling disease spreading over the country.¹⁰⁸ Clearly, men were also consumers, and consumers of dress, as Margot Finn has demonstrated.¹⁰⁹ Work by Vickery, Stobart, and Rothery has also shown that men were actively involved in consumption, especially for the home.¹¹⁰ This thesis does not wish to perpetuate this gendered stereotype of women as consumers. Instead, it draws upon the undeniable contemporary association between femininity and the consumer, and interrogates this gendered association. While the male (or masculine) consumer was seen as measured, rational, and economically responsible, the female (or effeminate) consumer was a more nuanced character. Constructions of femininity and masculinity undoubtedly take place in relation to one another, and a more rounded gender history has now emerged from women's history. However, in relation to the consumer of dress, attempts to defend the woman as a 'slave of fashion', who was the product of a misogynistic stereotype have, in fact, diminished female consumer identity.

The negative trope of the female consumer has been a persistent figure in historical enquiry, and is a focus of chapter two. The frivolous consumer has been seen as sexualised and dangerous – aligned with prostitution, female profligacy, and immorality.¹¹¹ Less extreme, but not less negative, have been representations of conspicuous leisure, which painted women as unproductive consumers, consumed by

¹⁰⁸ Elaine Chalus and Hannah Barker, eds, *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations, and Responsibilities* (London: Longman, 1997), p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ Margot Finn, 'Men's Things: Masculine Possession in the Consumer Revolution', *Social History* 25, no. 2 (2000): pp. 133–55.

¹¹⁰ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*; Jon Stobart and Mark Rothery, *Consumption and the Country House* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

¹¹¹ This view is discussed in Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, pp. 73-108; McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze*, p. 139.

idleness and casual desire, rather than material or economic practicalities. Thorstein Veblen's enduring image of the self-indulgent women of 1890s New York has haunted scholarly work on the subject.¹¹² Peter Borsay has argued that consumerism provided women with an opportunity for leisure, and more broadly, that if a pastime was perceived as a leisure activity, it was often automatically relegated to the realm of superfluity and frivolity.¹¹³ This gendered binary dominated contemporary portrayals of the female consumer, and of female work more generally, overshadowing more rational, positive portrayals, and camouflaging the nuance of lived experience.

The unproductive female consumer bares little relation to the productive household manager who emerges from archival research, nor the practically skilled seamstress and maker that emerges from the study of extant garments and textiles, as well become evident in chapters four and six. Work on women's skill in craftsmanship, and more broadly female accomplishment, has received serious interest only in recent decades. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's 2002 book, *The Age of Homespun*, paved the way for scholarly engagement with women's craft and skill as makers.¹¹⁴ Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg-Roberts' edited volume, to accompany the exhibition *Mrs. Delany and Her Circle*, held at the Yale Centre for British Art in 2009, provided an excellent survey of the exceptional craft skill of Mary Delany (1700-1788).¹¹⁵ In particular, Clare Browne and Hannah Greig's contributions on court dress, and Amanda Vickery's essay on female accomplishment reclassify women's embroidery and craft

¹¹² Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, p. 54.

¹¹³ Peter Borsay, *A History of Leisure: The British Experience since 1500* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 3.

¹¹⁴ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth* (London: Vintage Books, 2002).

¹¹⁵ Laird and Weisberg-Roberts, *Mrs. Delany and Her Circle*. The exhibition also travelled to Sir John Soane's Museum in London in 2010.

as expressions of individual skill and social value.¹¹⁶ In interrogating interpretations of women's handiwork and craft skill as part of the domestic confinement of women, this work has repositioned the handiworks of skilled women makers as powerful marks of self-expression, and not as proof of domestic oppression.¹¹⁷ This thesis situates itself within this new framework of women's skill and productive leisure, arguing that as producers and as consumers, women's engagement with dress was thoughtful, meaningful, and productive.¹¹⁸ The picture that emerges from a broader study of ego-documents, material culture, and accounts, is one of gendered skill and practise, which has been eclipsed by gendered rhetoric.¹¹⁹ By implying that the consumption of dress has been all about women, the nuanced consumer identity of women themselves have in fact been overlooked.

¹¹⁶ Clare Browne, 'Mary Delany's Embroidered Court Dress', in *Mrs. Delany and Her Circle*, ed. Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg-Roberts (London: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 66–79; Hannah Greig, 'Dressing for Court: Sartorial Politics & Fashion News in the Age of Mary Delany', in *Mrs. Delany and Her Circle*, ed. Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg-Roberts (London: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 80–93; Amanda Vickery, 'The Theory & Practise of Female Accomplishment', in *Mrs. Delany and Her Circle*, ed. Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg-Roberts (London: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 94–109.

¹¹⁷ Ann Bermingham, 'Elegant Females and Gentleman Connoisseurs: The Commerce in Culture and Self-Image in Eighteenth-Century England', in *The Consumption of Culture, 1660-1800: Image, Object, Text*, ed. John Brewer and Ann Bermingham (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 489–513; Vickery, 'The Theory & Practise of Female Accomplishment', p. 94.

¹¹⁸ This increased acknowledgement of women as skilled and productive craftspeople also intersects with work on women's work. See Hannah Barker, 'Women and Work', in *Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850*, ed. Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (London: Routledge, 2005); Hannah Barker, *The Business of Women: Female Enterprise and Urban Development in Northern England 1760-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Nicola Phillips, *Women in Business, 1700-1850* (London: Boydell Press, 2006); Wigston Smith, *Women, Work, and Clothes*.

¹¹⁹ Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*, p. 2.

0.4 Methodology and Sources

This thesis self-consciously merges methodologies borrowed from the historical analysis of consumption and retail, the historical and literary study of women, and the object-based material culture of art and dress history. The sources consulted are consequently diverse, including archival letters and accounts; publications, newspapers, and periodicals; and extant garments, fabric samples, and dolls. This wide-ranging source base is the chief challenge of this thesis; however, it presents the only viable strategy for engaging with the multi-faceted figure of the female consumer of dress. This multi-source approach benefits from the archival scrutiny of economic and social history, whilst also incorporating the material tangibility of dress and textiles, and the visual resonance of art history. Furthermore, employing the literary methodologies used by Jennie Batchelor and Chloe Wigston Smith, and the archival women's histories used by Amanda Vickery, I am able to mesh together a picture of the consumer that bridges the rhetorical and the real, the written and the material.¹²⁰

The principal actors in this thesis are women from the middling sort – what Vickery would term 'genteel' – through to the elite who were on the fringes of Hannah Greig's *beau monde*.¹²¹ Although the garments purchased and worn by a vicar's daughter may have differed in value and fashionability to those worn by a wealthy merchant's wife, or a lady on the fringes of the fashionable elite, these women had a shared consumer language and material vocabulary. Furthermore, it was these women who were targeted in contemporary portrayals of the consumer, whether in the form

¹²⁰ Jennie Batchelor, *Dress, Distress and Desire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Wigston Smith, *Women, Work, and Clothes in the Eighteenth-Century Novel*; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*.

¹²¹ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*; Greig, *The Beau Monde*.

of the frivolous shoppers who raided stores and purchased nothing, or fashion-hungry characters such as Austen's Mrs Allen in *Northanger Abbey*.¹²²

The middling and genteel female consumer of dress was utilised by contemporaries as a visible and identifiable conduit through which to contemplate the figure of the consumer. Graphic satirists, novelists, and moral writers of the eighteenth century used this character as a vehicle through which to consider ideas about gender, class, and wealth, as well as the consumption of goods.¹²³ As will be examined throughout the chapters of this thesis, contemporary ideas about who the consumer could and should be were played out through discussions of the female consumer of dress: the application of self-regulation and rationality to consumer spending, navigating and avoiding the ploys and tricks of the retailer, understanding production and the material properties of goods, and the power of consumer patriotism. In this way, the female consumer of dress offers a specimen figure through which to access these more broadly applicable trends in consumer traits across the eighteenth century.

However, while the female consumer of dress reflected a number of these broader consumer concerns, this thesis also paints her as a distinct character in her own right. The female consumer of dress shared in the development of the ideal consumer traits identified above; however, she was also identified as a distinct, identifiable figure: a specific consumer type. The destructive passions associated with excessive indulgence in luxury goods were explicitly characterised as intensely feminine, and, as Defoe wrote in 1725, it seemed to many male writers that 'the whole Business of the Female Sex were nothing, but...Extravagance in Dress'.¹²⁴ Beyond the

¹²² Smith, 'Sensing Design and Workmanship', p. 1; Jane Austen *Northanger Abbey*, ed. John Davie and James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 10.

¹²³ These representations of the female consumer will be considered at length in chapter two.

¹²⁴ Daniel Defoe, *Every-Body's Business, Is No-Body's Business* (London: T. Warner, 1725), p. 13.

hyperbolic rhetoric of these gendered tropes, the experience of individual female consumers of dress was also distinct from a generalised consumer practice: it was shaped by gender, the lifecycle, social position, and individual tastes. The methodological approach of this thesis – in particular the archival exploration of the consumption of individual female consumers of dress – goes further to identify the idiosyncrasies and exceptional qualities of the female consumer.

The consumption of dress provides a unique opportunity to assess consumption on an individual basis, as opposed to the consumption of a household.¹²⁵ For middling households, many goods, such as furniture, clocks, or ceramics – although arguably more archetypal eighteenth-century objects – would often have been consumed only as part of setting up home, and would have been special, premeditated purchases. By contrast, dress was a regular expense, requiring routine upkeep and updating throughout the lifecycle. Although there were certainly comparable trends and cycles in dress consumption – for example in similar investment consumption patterns prior to marriage – dress nevertheless remained a consistent focus of expenditure and consumption throughout middling women's lives.

A study of the consumption of dress also allows for the inclusion of women who never married or set up a household of their own, or who became detached from a traditional household, such as spinsters and widows. Women like Barbara Johnson, who is a key character in this thesis, provide evidence of a lifelong commercial engagement with dress, which existed and was recorded outside of traditional household structures. It is this consumer as an individual which the methodological approach of this thesis is uniquely able to access.

¹²⁵ For work examining household consumption, see for example Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour; Styles, Dress of the People*, pp. 229-45.

The thesis deals with the diaries, letters, accounts, and more unusual archival source material, left by eighteenth-century women. The women I have pinpointed have not been chosen at random: they are representative of key social positions, points in the lifecycle, and consumer practises.¹²⁶ Chosen from a broad archival survey of women's accounts, and alternative forms of consumer record, these women provide exceptionally rich records of their consumption as individuals, both within and beyond household structures. Most were in some way connected through familial links to mercantile, business, or trading interests. These connections, I argue, made them more commercially aware, resulting in the relative thoroughness and comprehensive accounting available to us of their expenditure and consumption patterns. It does not follow that their consumption was therefore unusual or atypical to that of their contemporaries, but rather that they were more self-conscious in recording their engagement with the commercial world. Socio-economically, these women all fit within the scale from Vickery's genteel middling sort to the lower ranks of the titled elite.

There are five key characters who appear within the thesis.¹²⁷ The first of these women, Elizabeth Forth (née Woodhouse, c.1770-1837), was the daughter of a prosperous York Grocer, who married John Forth, agent and chaplain to Lord Carlisle at Castle Howard, in 1791. The mercantile surroundings of her youth appear to have resulted in a keen sense of economic responsibility, reflected in the extensive accounts in her youth, at the time of her marriage, and throughout her adult life, providing an

¹²⁶ The archival methodology used here builds on the methodology of Amanda Vickery in her important book on genteel women's lives. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*.

¹²⁷ These five women are key players within the thesis, who left exceptionally useful records of their lives as consumers. However, their letters, diaries, and accounts are by no means the only archival sources used. Their experiences are interspersed and extensively supported by those of their contemporaries.

excellent insight into her changing consumption habits throughout her lifecycle, as she shifted from a regular consumer of new items of dress, to a careful maintainer of an existing set of material possessions.¹²⁸ Amanda Vickery has acknowledged the usefulness of the Forth account books as a source for accessing the consumption of a family throughout the life-cycle; however, Vickery's work has been limited to the family's consumption of household goods, rather than dress.¹²⁹ In line with the focus of this thesis on the female consumer of dress as a representative of an individual consumer figure, my reassessment of these accounts enables me to untangle Elizabeth Forth's personal consumption of dress from the consumption of her household. Furthermore, when read in conjunction with her accounts made before her marriage, a rich and unusually complete picture of her life-cycle as a consumer becomes apparent.

A nearby neighbour of the Forths, but who moved within the social circles of the landed gentry, was Lady Sabine Winn (1734-1798). Lady Winn was a Swiss baron's daughter who married into the now-titled, prosperous merchant family of the Winns. The Winns had been linen drapers to Elizabeth I, but now owned the extensive Yorkshire estate of Nostell Priory.¹³⁰ Although this link to commercial and mercantile interests was considerably more distant than many of the other women considered, Lady Winn's accounts provide a unique insight into the consumption of an elite lady residing continually in the country, but retaining links with the commercial hub of London. Always on the social fringes, yet intent on remaining fashionably dressed and supplied by London merchants, Lady Winn left an extensive archive of cuttings,

¹²⁸ YCA, Munby Papers, 54: 'Account books, receipts, and papers of Mr and Mrs Forth'.

¹²⁹ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 224-29.

¹³⁰ Christopher Todd, 'A Swiss Milady in Yorkshire: Sabine Winn of Nostell Priory', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 77 (2005): pp. 205-24.

scrapbooks, and letters and fabric samples from retailers, which provide an unparalleled insight into her habits as a consumer of dress, which continue into her later life, following her widowhood in 1785.¹³¹ While her peers may have been able to undertake such transactions in person in London, Lady Winn's retirement to the country means that these interactions are instead preserved through the correspondence.

Another widow who left extensive, detailed accounts of her consumption in later life was Martha Dodson (1684-1765).¹³² Dodson was the wife of a successful businessman, and member of the Tin Plate Workers' Company, who became High Sheriff of Berkshire in 1716, and it is possibly these close business connections which led her to maintain such careful records of her expenditure. Echoing Lady Winn, Dodson retained a preference for London retailers late into her life, as well as the cyclical routine of purchase and repair which characterised her rhythm of consumer engagement. Although Dodson's accounts are limited to her later years, they do provide us with an opportunity to reassess women's consumption of dress during this under-represented period of the life-cycle. Edwin Ehrman examined the accounts previously, and has highlighted their importance as a means of accessing consumption in old age.¹³³ However, my own reassessment takes into account new research on dress and age, in particular Vickery's article, and recontextualises the accounts within broader scholarship on old age.¹³⁴

¹³¹ WYAS, WYL 1352: 'Nostell Priory Papers'.

¹³² MOL, 80.71: 'Martha Dodson's account book'.

¹³³ Edwina Ehrman, 'Dressing Well in Old Age: The Clothing Accounts of Martha Dodson, 1746–1765', *Costume* 40 (2006): pp. 28–38.

¹³⁴ Amanda Vickery, 'Mutton Dressed as Lamb? Fashioning Age in Georgian England', *Journal of British Studies* 52, no. 4 (2013): pp. 858–86.

Finally, the records left by Barbara (1738-1823) and Jane (1706-1759) Johnson, respectively the daughter and wife of a vicar, are perhaps the most prominent in the thesis. Barbara Johnson's Album, containing fashion plates from pocket books and fabric samples from and notes about garments purchased by her, is a unique record of one woman's engagement with the consumption of dress, and provides the focus for chapter five.¹³⁵ Although the importance of the Album has been previously acknowledged in its facsimile reproduction, and accompanying essays, my own examination places it within the context of the rich supplementary records available.¹³⁶ Barbara's mother, Jane Johnson, was the author of extensive didactic materials for her children's education, including those referencing dress, and material and consumer literacy.¹³⁷ These materials, along with the large number of family letters preserved, mean that the Johnson archive provides an unprecedented insight into the lifelong training and articulation of consumer identity.¹³⁸ My analysis reunites the Album with its social and familial context, and reframes this source as evidence of economic self-regulation.

The methodological issues inherent to the study of dress from archival sources – specifically, that records of fabric yardage do not easily translate into the three-dimensional fashionable garments they became – makes the meshing of archival research with the examination of extant garments essential. Although Barbara Johnson's Album provides descriptions of the garments the fabrics were turned into, it is impossible to fully comprehend what these garments were, and what they say

¹³⁵ VAM, 1746-1823, T.219-1973: 'Barbara Johnson's Album'.

¹³⁶ For the facsimile reproduction, see Natalie Rothstein, ed, *Barbara Johnson's Album of Fashions and Fabrics* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987).

¹³⁷ BOD, MSS Don. c. 190, e. 193: 'Jane Johnson papers'; LLIU, LMC 1649: 'Jane Johnson's Nursery Library'.

¹³⁸ BOD, MSS Don. c. 191-2: 'Papers of Barbara Johnson'.

about Johnson as a consumer, without examining similar garments held in museum collections. My archival research undertaken into these women has therefore been supplemented by extensive object-based research.

My object based research has necessitated extensive surveys of collections of objects within museums, which were recorded in a series of databases, before selections of key qualitative examples were made. For example, for chapter three, my research into dolls was carried out primarily at the Museum of London, where I viewed over one hundred dolls and items of dolls clothing, as well as at the Victoria and Albert Museum's Museum of Childhood. The three doll's garments examined in chapter three were selected from this survey of over one hundred garments, not for their exceptional characteristics, but rather because they provided particularly clear examples of broader trends (for example, in the types of materials used, level of detail, or the quality of construction). For chapters four and six, I undertook extensive research into extant garments at the Museum of Fashion, Bath, the Museum of London, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Leeds Museum, the Snowhill Collection, and Hereford Museum. I approached these objects by taking patterns and extensive notes on construction, alterations, and materials, in order to ascertain the level of knowledge and skill required to judge, produce, or maintain such garments.¹³⁹ Around eighty garments were studied across these institutions, representing the full extent of the eighteenth-century gowns held within some of the smaller collections, and selected in collaboration with the curators as representative examples in the larger collections.

¹³⁹ Although I have developed my own working methodology for analysing these garments, it was influenced by Taylor, *The Study of Dress History*; Cumming, *Understanding Fashion History*; Taylor, 'Women's Dresses from Eighteenth-Century Scotland'; Nicklas and Pollen, *Dress History: New Directions in Theory and Practise*.

My examination of pocket books and periodicals balances material and literary approaches with archival research. My selection of these materials was based upon extensive surveys of the pocket books held within the British Library, as well as a number of regional archives which I identified to hold filled and used, rather than blank, examples of pocket books. In total, around 45 different pocket books were viewed in the course of my research, including both blank and filled examples from the 1750s to 1820s. This survey demonstrated a degree of idiosyncrasy in how these books were used; however, those examples selected were chosen due to the representative nature of the types of information recorded in their pages.

My examination of the pocket books bridged historical and literary methodologies. For example, the pocket book of Harriet Youell, considered in chapter three, was examined both in terms of the content of the published text, Youell's engagement with the book to record her diary and accounts, and her material engagement with the book through sketching, and other material and artistic personalisation.¹⁴⁰ Similarly Rudolph Ackermann's *Repository of Arts*, interrogated in chapter seven, received an interdisciplinary approach.¹⁴¹ My focus on the fabric advertisement pages and their accompanying text integrates a material examination of the textile samples, with visual analysis of the surrounding woodcut, and literary analysis of the accompanying text.

¹⁴⁰ GYBA, 1793-94, Y/D 87/51-52: 'Ladies Pocket Book'.

¹⁴¹ Rudolph Ackermann, *The Repository of Arts*, 1809-1829. Issues were examined in the Victoria and Albert Museum's National Art Library, as well as from the author's own collection.

Visual sources, in particular satirical prints, also form a key part of the source base for this thesis.¹⁴² The images, primarily from the British Museum, with supplementary sources from the Lewis Walpole Library and the Victoria and Albert Museum, provide the source material for a significant portion of chapter two, and were also used to provide cultural contextualisation throughout the thesis.¹⁴³ I was granted unprecedented access to view the Victoria and Albert Museum's entire graphic satire collection early in my research, and I also spent considerable time scouring the British Museum's collection, fruitfully resulting in the discovery of the previously unanalysed print, the *Unwelcome Customer*, which provides the first visual representation of the 'bull in the china shop', and is examined in chapter two.¹⁴⁴ Graphic satire articulated a growing desire for authenticity of appearances and, given the central role dress plays in formulating these appearances, provides a visual window into how dress was worn and perceived.¹⁴⁵

The methodological approach outlined above enables me to untangle consumption as an act, from the consumer as an individual. To an extent, consumption as a theoretical framework has been disembodied. Focussing on facts and figures on the one hand, and conceptual ideas and ideals on the other, studies of consumption are often distanced from lived experience. Consequently, a traditional archival approach – dealing solely with accounts – would not provide the richness of evidence required here. This thesis instead engages with the embodied consumer. How did the consumer

¹⁴² My approach is influenced by the work on Diana Donald. See Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III*; Donald, *Followers of Fashion*; more recent work by Cindy McCreery and Amelia Rauser has further contextualised these images within their social and cultural settings. See McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze*; Rauser, *Caricature Unmasked*.

¹⁴³ Engaging with such sources is not unproblematic, as will be considered in chapter two.

¹⁴⁴ James Caldwell, after John Collett, *The Unwelcome Customer*, 1772, British Museum, 1860,0623.22. Examined on pp. 92-96 of this thesis.

¹⁴⁵ Rauser, *Caricature Unmasked*, p. 56.

perceive themselves? What skills were required by the consumer? How did they try to train themselves and their children to be better consumers? What distinguished consumer choices through the lifecycle? Focussing on these questions enables the consumer to appear as more than a trope or economic pawn.

0.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into four sections. The first, consisting of chapters one and two, will initially take stock of the broad political, economic, and cultural context within which the figure of the consumer was cultivated. These chapters provide an extended introductory overview of contemporary perceptions of the consumer, both in terms of political economy, and in popular culture. The second section, made up of chapters three and four, focuses on how these consumers were cultivated. These chapters examine the cycles, rhythms, and routines undertaken to train and shape this consumer throughout the lifecycle. The third section considers the material experience of individual consumers, including the extended study of Barbara Johnson, and a reflection upon the impact that consumer knowledge and skill had on perceptions and practices of production. Finally, the thesis will step back to reassess the broader, international context in which this English female consumer of dress must be considered.

The first chapter of this thesis argues that there was a correlation between the recognition of the consumer, and the rise of a more liberal, free trade approach to the

national economy.¹⁴⁶ It tackles a number of the overarching concerns of the period, including tax, luxury, foreignness, and international trade, which will be relevant throughout the thesis. I argue that there existed an increasing desire to recognise, at state level, an ever more prominent and determined consumer. Engaging with the works of Adam Smith and David Hume, this chapter connects political economy with parliamentary legislation, painting in broad strokes the political and economic landscape within which the figure of the consumer was revealed. In doing so, this chapter also reveals the rebellious nature of the consumer, engaging with issues surrounding smuggling and customs, as well as tax and credit. The consumer that emerges within this chapter possessed significant economic and social influence, which, it was increasingly realised, could be utilised to benefit the national economy, or ignored at its peril.

The political and economic position of the consumer having been established in chapter one, the second chapter will take a more cultural view, focussing more closely on the female consumer of dress. Centring on popular representations of the consumer in satirical prints, periodicals, and novels, this chapter positions the female consumer of dress within the context of polite and fashionable urban culture. This chapter situates the unproductive consumer – a regular trope throughout the century – within a framework of commercial prosperity and polite sociability.¹⁴⁷ Through conceptualising the vilified consumer not as an obscuring stereotype, but as a product of the uncertain evolution of the consumer figure, this chapter is able to chart changing

¹⁴⁶ Kenneth Morgan, 'Mercantilism and the British Empire, 1688-1815', in *The Political Economy of British Historical Experience, 1688-1914*, ed. Donald Winch and Patrick K. O'Brien (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 165–92.

¹⁴⁷ James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 157–64; Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 76.

attitudes to browsing and under-consumption. Far from a simple stock representation of female frivolity, the vilified consumer captures a composite of various tensions, which pervaded eighteenth-century culture and society. In doing so, I observe the emergence of a recognition amongst retailers of the importance of browsing as a key characteristic of skilled consumer behaviour, and the emergence of a new figure: the ‘productive consumer’. The skills embodied in this figure incorporated both economic and material literacy, developing Berry’s browse-bargain model.¹⁴⁸

How this economic and material literacy was obtained and maintained is considered in the second section. Chapter three examines the childhood training of consumers. Early training of children to actively engage with the financial and material tasks inherent to consumption were key features of the didactic tools designed for the eighteenth-century child. This chapter argues that there was a conscious effort to shape the child into a rational, active, and productive consumer, which is evidenced in the design and use of their playthings. The materials for the education of the child consumer were prolific, and could take the form of pocket books, children’s stories, play dolls, and paper dolls, or they could be homemade by the mother or children. Morals, ethics, and economic and material literacy were significant elements of this childhood consumer education, as well as active engagement with the act of consumption itself, such as via play enactments of shop scenes. Material literacy was particularly emphasised, such as through the making of dolls clothes and the comprehension of what materials were used to produce consumer goods. This not only enabled the child to understand the material attributes of the goods they were to consume, but also, it was argued, furnished them with the knowledge and skills needed

¹⁴⁸ Berry, ‘Polite Consumption’.

to judge craftsmanship and quality; in other words, to be active, skilled, and knowledgeable consumers. From their dolls, toys, and stories, to their mathematical lessons, children were consistently encouraged to develop consumer skills – skills which would set them up to fulfil the role of the productive consumer.

This consumer education did not end with the dawning of adulthood, as is explored in chapter four. This chapter engages with the interplay between age, dress, and consumption in order to examine how middling and elite women were trained to consume fashionable clothing during the significant periods of their lives. It will begin by briefly considering broader conceptions of idealised femininity in the eighteenth century, as it relates to women's dress and consumption, as well as their economic position and habits. It will then consider the evidence provided in women's accounts of their consumption at different points in their life-cycle. Firstly, the accounts of young, unmarried women will be considered, in order to ascertain how young women were prepared for marriage through their consumption. This took the form of both beautifying consumption, and investment consumption. Secondly, the accounts of married women will enable me to explore the relationship between household accounting and the management of pin-money, and how the development of female property law influenced the married consumer. Finally, women on their own will be considered, whether widows, women of independent means, or dependant unmarried spinsters.

Moving into the third section, consisting of chapters five and six, I focus more closely on the material life of the consumer: how they understood and interacted with the goods they consumed. Chapter five will draw together many of the threads from previous chapters by examining the uniquely rich evidence left by a single consumer:

vicar's daughter Barbara Johnson.¹⁴⁹ The album of fabric cuttings, notes, and fashion plates, left by Barbara Johnson simultaneously act as a means of self-regulation, a consumer auto-biography, an ego-document, and as a consistent chronical of evolving fashions over a comparatively long lifetime. The album covers the years 1746 to 1823, consistently recording moments of garment consumption from age 8, up to Barbara Johnson's death nearly eighty years later. As such, it provides an unprecedented view of the consumer lifecycle of one individual. What is more, we also know a great deal about Johnson's childhood education through educational materials made by her mother, Jane Johnson.¹⁵⁰ These pedagogical tools provide a fascinating insight into how Barbara's attitudes to dress and consumption were trained and shaped in childhood. This chapter places the album in its economic and cultural context, providing a much needed reassessment of this important document. Furthermore, the album reveals the careful balancing act faced by female consumers of dress in the eighteenth century, between frivolous fashionable interest, and careful, rational, and productive consumption.

Chapter five having dealt extensively with the consumption of fabrics, chapter six will consider a key factor in the consumption of dress: production. Perhaps more so than any other fashionable consumer commodity, consumers were highly involved in the process of making up garments. This was the case both with garments that were made up at home, and those commissioned from a mantua-maker, milliner, or dressmaker. Although the second hand market was certainly growing in this period, the majority of middling and elite women still relied on custom-made garments to fill

¹⁴⁹ VAM, 1746-1823, T.219-1973: 'Barbara Johnson's Album'.

¹⁵⁰ BOD, MSS Don. c. 190, e. 193: 'Jane Johnson papers'; LLIU, Set 19: 'Jane Johnson's Nursery Library'.

their wardrobes.¹⁵¹ The material literacy discussed in previous chapters is key here. This practical, haptic, and visual skill provided the consumer with a means of judgement, meaning that she did not necessarily passively accept the continual round of commodities paraded as novel and exciting. Instead, she actively engaged with how things were made. Contextualising this within literature on feminine craft and skill, as well as philosophical work on judgement and taste, it becomes evident that engaging with making was a key and somewhat overlooked element of consumer identity which has been predominantly masked by a focus on retail histories. This ability to both undertake the work of garment construction, and judge the work of professional makers, meant that the consumer possessed an active role as assessor and adjudicator of taste, quality, and workmanship.

The final chapter steps back to reconsider the position of the figure of the consumer on the broader political, cultural, and economic stage of Europe. This chapter traces Anglo-French relations from the 1750s through to the Napoleonic conflict: an incredibly turbulent period in terms of both politics and cultural exchange. In doing so, this chapter charts the gradual dilution of the notion of French sartorial superiority, and the increasing popularity of the idea of the patriotic consumer. Exploring the key traits of Anglo-French consumers of dress, this chapter will use extant garments, graphic satire, and archival sources in order to knit together a picture of the English consumer on the international stage. Echoing the narrative from frivolity to rationality, which has been charted elsewhere in this thesis, this final chapter will

¹⁵¹ Beverly Lemire, 'Consumerism in Preindustrial and Early Industrial England: The Trade in Secondhand Clothes', *Journal of British Studies* 27 (1988): pp. 1–24; Miles Lambert, "'Cast-off Wearing Apparell': The Consumption and Distribution of Second-Hand Clothing in Northern England during the Long Eighteenth Century', *Textile History* 35, no. 1 (2004): pp. 1–26; Jon Stobart and Ilja Van Damme, eds, *Modernity and the Second-Hand Trade: European Consumption Cultures and Practices, 1700-1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

draw together the various threads of this thesis. The final figure who emerges at the dawning on the nineteenth century was a nationally and sartorially confident creature: the product of a mercantile urban elite and a representative of an economically and culturally productive nation.

SECTION ONE

THE CULTURE OF THE CONSUMER

CHAPTER ONE

Political Economy, Consumption, and the Consumer

Consumption has long been recognised to have been at the heart of many great economic or social changes, from Renaissance Italy to the Dutch Golden Age.¹ Its influence on eighteenth-century political and moral economy is undeniable; and the debates and discourses arising from this topic have inspired the application of an array of transformative phrases to characterise the eighteenth century.² Britain certainly rose through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to be one of Europe's most successful mercantile economies; and subsequently shifted away from this position of protectionist mercantilism, and towards more liberal free trade policies in the later eighteenth, and especially in the nineteenth century.³

These large economic shifts provided the backdrop for what has been termed the 'consumer revolution' of the eighteenth century, a period also referred to as the scene of the 'birth of a consumer society'.⁴ However, amongst this compelling, but often hyperbolic terminology of revolution, the individual – the consumer – has been lost. Their role and contribution to the process of consumption, and the nation's economy, is often assumed. As Helen Berry noted in her article on the rise of polite

¹ Richard Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300-1600* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993); Lisa Jardine, *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance* (New York: Norton, 1996); Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (Newark: Knopf, 1987).

² McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, *Birth of a Consumer Society*; de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*.

³ Morgan, 'Mercantilism and the British Empire, 1688-1815'; Anthony Howe, 'Restoring Free Trade, 1776-1873', in *The Political Economy of British Historical Experience, 1688-1914*, ed. Donald Winch and Patrick K. O'Brien (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 193–214; Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 5; Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor*; Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*, p. 1.

⁴ McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, *Birth of a Consumer Society*; see also Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (London: Guild Publishing, 1989).

consumption, goods have been seen to transport themselves from shops and into peoples' homes.⁵ While the 'flow of goods' has since been contemplated by numerous historians of shopping, these studies invariably consider the act of consumption, rather than the culturally and economically recognisable figure of the consumer.⁶ Consequently, the emergence of the consumer as a significant player has often been overlooked.

This chapter seeks to recover the figure of the consumer – in particular the consumer of dress – from the various debates surrounding luxury consumption and the eighteenth-century political economy. In doing so, it highlights the key role played by the consumer, adding nuance to the existing body of work on consumption, consumer culture, luxury, and trade. Frank Trentmann has observed that the individual players in the activity of consumption in the eighteenth century – customers, retailers, merchants, shoppers, manufacturers and advertisers – did not share a common understanding of the identity of the 'consumer' that is recognisable today, but that a shared language of commerce and products was instead at play.⁷ In this chapter, I suggest an alternate reading. I argue that alongside the development of retail strategies, marketing ploys, philosophical debates, and product innovation, there also existed a developing concept of the figure of the consumer. Over the course of the century, this figure became increasingly attractive for active mobilisation to promote trade and national industry. While I do not go so far as to suggest that this figure was influential

⁵ Berry, 'Polite Consumption'.

⁶ Cox, *The Complete Tradesman*; Walsh, 'Shopping in Early-Modern London, 1660-1800'; Walsh, 'Shops, Shopping and the Art of Decision Making in Eighteenth-Century England'; Stobart, Hann, and Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*.

⁷ Frank Trentmann, 'Beyond Consumerism: New Historical Perspectives on Consumption', *Journal of Contemporary History* 39 (2004): pp. 373–401; Trentmann, *The Making of the Consumer*; Frank Trentmann, 'The Modern Genealogy of the Consumer: Meanings, Knowledge, and Identities Before the Age of Affluence', in *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives: Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges*, ed. John Brewer and Frank Trentmann (London: Berg, 2006), pp. 19–70.

as a master category, as in the twentieth century, I argue that the consumer - both as a cultural type and economic figure - gained significant recognition as an important and recognisable player. This chapter will follow the focus of this thesis as laid out in the introduction, concentrating on women's consumption of dress as the ideal vehicle through which to explore these themes, however it will also consider the consumer figure more broadly. It charts the emergence of the consumer as a distinct type in eighteenth-century literature, and in the public consciousness. It begins by assessing how broader contemporary debate manufactured a recognisable incarnation of the consumer; before proceeding to consider how the concerns of political economy, such as taxation and international trade, influenced the developing figure of the consumer of dress.

1.1 The Rise of the Consumer

When, and in what terms, did the distinct identity of 'the consumer' arise? References to the consumer are evident in political economy texts from the latter part of the eighteenth century, and I argue that there was a correlation between the recognition of the consumer, and the rise of a more liberal, free trade approach to the national economy.⁸ From the seventeenth century, Britain had a mercantilist approach to its economic policies, which promoted overseas trade in order to make the country rich, and which was enforced through legislation based on tax and duties. Prompted by the Anglo-Dutch wars, the Navigation Acts compounded this approach, and the ongoing

⁸ Morgan, 'Mercantilism and the British Empire, 1688-1815', pp. 188-189; see also various chapters in Philip J. Stern and Carl Wennerlind, eds, *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

threat of the Irish textile trade resulted in a ban on Irish exports of wool in 1699. Mercantilism held strong until the latter part of the eighteenth century. Between the 1770s and 1830s, primarily driven by Smithian, Ricardian, and evangelical political economy, public suspicion of free trade gradually subsided.⁹ By the 1830s and 1840s, Free Trade Clubs, in various guises, sprung up across European cities, leading to more decisive state action, the repeal of the Corn Laws, and the subsequent dismantling of mercantilist policy.¹⁰ This change was not swift, but was a gradual evolution over a number of decades. Anthony Howe and Kenneth Morgan have both argued that this shift from mercantilism to free trade was partly due to changing international relations, and that it was the military and naval superiority over France, which Britain was able to achieve following the French Revolution, which began to change perceptions of British vulnerability.¹¹

How did this ideological shift away from protectionist mercantilism influence perceptions of the consumer? Adam Smith famously wrote in his 1776 *Wealth of Nations* that ‘consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production and the interest of the producer ought to be attended to, only so far as it may be necessary for promoting that of the consumer. The maxim is so perfectly self-evident, that it would be absurd to prove it’.¹² Smith’s consumer is here presented as a distinct and active figure. He is comparable to, and yet more important than, the producer, and their needs and desires are to be attended to above all else. There is no purpose in producing

⁹ Howe, ‘Restoring Free Trade, 1776-1873’, p. 200.

¹⁰ Frank Trentmann, ‘National Identity and Consumer Politics: Free Trade and Tariff Reform’, in *The Political Economy of British Historical Experience, 1688-1914*, ed. Donald Winch and Patrick K. O’Brien (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 215–44; Stern and Wennerlind, *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire*.

¹¹ Morgan, ‘Mercantilism and the British Empire, 1688-1815’, p. 168, 171, 173; Howe, ‘Restoring Free Trade, 1776-1873’, p. 195.

¹² Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations (1776)*, ed. Mark G. Spencer (Ware: Wordsworth, 2012), p. 658.

something if there is no one to consume it. Political economy has generally been seen to focus on a commercial, rather than consumer society, in which the merchant was the agent of commerce, and the consumer a necessary, but inactive player.¹³ Yet Smith's declaration that the role of the consumer is 'self-evident' promotes an assertion that the centrality of the consumer as a historical agent is implicit. A similar understanding was echoed in William Wright's *The Complete Tradesman* (1786) published ten years after Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776) in which the author declared that the consumer was the 'utmost end of all trade'.¹⁴ This, of course, can also be interpreted literally; commerce could not function without the consumer, and the consumer was the engine of wealth. Simultaneously, in France the Gournay circle discussed a rudimentary form of 'consumer sovereignty' – the notion that it was the consumer, rather than the state or the producer, who decided what goods were produced and in what quantities.¹⁵

I have argued that the consumer was seen as a distinct economic player from at least the 1770s, and that this was part of a broader ideological economic shift, but when did this figure of the consumer emerge? The eighteenth century has traditionally been seen as the site of a 'consumer revolution', implying that the century also played host to the rise of consumer culture, and consequently the figure of the consumer.¹⁶ However, a broader historiographical outlook challenges this view. Historians of seventeenth-century consumption have presented compelling arguments for a more

¹³ Trentmann, 'The Modern Genealogy of the Consumer', pp. 19-70.

¹⁴ William Wright, *The Complete Tradesman* (London: Dixwell, 1786), p. 79.

¹⁵ Michael Kwass, *Contraband: Louis Mandrin and the Making of a Global Underground* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 293.

¹⁶ McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, *Birth of a Consumer Society*.

drawn out evolution of the consumer.¹⁷ Linda Levy Peck's work on the consumption of foreign products, the appropriation of foreign skills, and the social and cultural implications of this, has situated the consumer as a significant player in the seventeenth century.¹⁸ In this culture of conspicuous consumption, dress was of particular importance, and not just in terms of luxury. Under James I, the domestic manufacture and trade of textiles was noted as a key feature of foreign policy.¹⁹

Peck is not alone in recognising the importance of the seventeenth-century consumer, especially in relation to dress. Negley Harte has used the political arithmetic of Gregory King (1648-1712) to interrogate seventeenth-century consumption patterns.²⁰ King, who was a pioneer of using political arithmetic to calculate demographic and economic statistics, used his approach to tackle the subject of clothing in 'Annual Consumption of Apparell, anno 1688', which appeared in a notebook from 1695-96. Through his study of King's calculations, Harte noted that clothing formed around twenty-five percent of household consumption in 1688. King's calculations demonstrate not only that the consumption of clothing was a regular and significant feature of people's lives, but also that the point of consumption deserved economic attention. King's work, in contrast to contemporary pamphlets such as *The Merchant's Ware-House Laid Open* (1696), pinpoints the importance of

¹⁷ Weatherill, 'Consumer Behaviour, Textiles and Dress'; Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture*; Woodruff D. Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability* (London: Routledge, 2002); Daniel Roche has made similar arguments in regards to French clothing in Daniel Roche, 'Between a "Moral Economy" and a "Consumer Economy": Clothes and Their Function in the 17th and 18th Centuries', in *Luxury Trades and Consumerism in Ancien Régime Paris: Studies in the History of the Skilled Workforce*, ed. Robert Fox and Anthony Turner (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 219-30.

¹⁸ Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, p. 3, 13.

¹⁹ Jacob Viner, 'Power versus Plenty as Objectives of Foreign Policy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in *Theories of Empire: 1450-1800*, ed. David Armitage (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 277-305.

²⁰ Negley Harte, 'The Economics of Clothing in the Late Seventeenth Century', *Textile History* 22, no. 2 (1991): pp. 277-98.

the consumption of clothing, as opposed to more mercantile considerations.²¹ This focus on the consumer, rather than the merchant, implies that the consumer, or at least the consumer as an enactor of consumption, was already recognisably important at this date.

Stretching back even further, Joan Thirsk has shown that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw an expansion of popular and diverse consumer industries.²² It is therefore not the concern of this thesis to pinpoint the origin of the figure of the consumer. It is evident that this figure rose and evolved, albeit unevenly, from at least the sixteenth century. However, what does become apparent in the eighteenth century is that a recognisable ‘consumer’ emerged from ongoing debates surrounding luxury, consumption, and political economy. This figure, who may have existed as far back as the sixteenth century, gained recognition as an economic player, and as a culturally significant agent.

1.2 Gender and the Consumer

The problematic way in which the figure of the consumer has been treated in regards to categories of gender is also a significant concern.²³ The consumer presented by political economists such as Adam Smith is gendered as a male figure. This was the result of a growing conceptualisation of the consumer as a figure of economic power,

²¹ J. F., *The Merchant's Ware-House Laid Open* (London: John Sprint, 1696); Harte, ‘The Economics of Clothing in the Late Seventeenth Century’, p. 290.

²² Joan Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects: Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

²³ Auslander, ‘The Gendering of Consumer Practices in Nineteenth-Century France’; Helen Berry, ‘Women, Consumption and Taste’, in *Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850*, ed. Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 194–216.

with a growing political identity. Consequently, tensions arose when this economically active consumer identity was denied to women, as was evidenced through the representations of the female consumer, which are the focus of the second chapter of this thesis. Maxine Berg has asserted that the figure of the female consumer was heavily influenced by ‘fictions, eroticism, and the male gaze’.²⁴ Women were often presented as incapable of navigating the economic world, and consequently were denied the identity of the ‘consumer’ in any serious sense, and were instead seen as flighty and irreverent.²⁵

This contradictory figure of the consumer was culturally, rather than economically constructed. The most influential result of the culturally imagined passive consumer, painted by a primarily male hand in graphic satire, novels, and moral literature, was that the consumer was chiefly gendered as female. These women were seen to participate in the social activity of shopping rather than the economic action of being a consumer.²⁶ The men who ‘shopped’, as well as those who worked in shops, were denounced as effeminate, and were detached from the economically influential characteristics of masculinity.²⁷ This gendered stereotyping presented women as driven to shop or consume by an impulse to gratify a sensory desire, and that this desire was also bound up in concepts of female sexuality.²⁸ They were depicted as compelled to indulge in fashionable frivolities, novelties, and trinkets, but above all, dress.²⁹ Contemporary moral writers were certainly prolific in expressing

²⁴ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 236.

²⁵ Smith, ‘Sensing Design and Workmanship’, p. 2.

²⁶ Walsh, ‘Shopping in Early-Modern London’; Berry, ‘Polite Consumption’; Walsh, ‘Shops, Shopping and the Art of Decision Making’; Stobart, Hann, and Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*.

²⁷ Thomas Alan King, *The Gendering of Men, 1600-1750* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p. 115.

²⁸ Werner Sombart, *Luxury and Capitalism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1967), p. 105.

²⁹ This representation of the consumer will be considered in greater depth in chapter two.

this view. In 1752, George Berkeley, the Bishop of Cloyne wrote that ‘it cannot be denied that Luxury of Dress giveth a light Behaviour to our Women, which may pass for a small Offence, because it is a common one, but is in truth the Source of great Corruptions’.³⁰ In other words, women, in indulging their innate desire for dress, were succumbing to temptation, and were corrupted by their consumption. This female shopping consumer was presented as intemperate, unrestrained, and uncontrolled. Irrespective of the importance of her consumption in terms of trade and the national and international economy, Berkeley presents the female consumer as a corrupted, negative figure in terms of personal and individual morality.

The issue of gender is also evident in the work of historians who have attempted to trace and quantify patterns of consumption, consumer behaviour, and material ownership in the eighteenth century, such as Lorna Weatherill.³¹ Similarly, Amanda Vickery’s work has honed in on the consumption habits of individual Lancashire women, and has specifically identified these women as consumers.³² To Vickery, to be a consumer was a claimable identity, characterised as a type of woman’s work.³³ These women, Vickery argues, have been assigned a socially and culturally constructed identity based on prejudice and stereotypes, which had traditionally been more prominently discussed than the actual consumption activity of these women, creating a disconnect between perceptions of the female consumer, and the practises and experiences of female consumers.

³⁰ George Berkeley, ‘An Essay Towards Preventing the Ruin of Great Britian’, in *A Miscellany, Containing Several Tracts on Various Subjects* (Dublin: J. and R. Tonson and S. Draper, 1752), p. 39.

³¹ Weatherill, ‘Consumer Behaviour, Textiles and Dress’; Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture*.

³² Vickery, ‘Women and the World of Goods’; Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter*, pp. 164-68.

³³ Vickery, ‘Women and the World of Goods’, p. 277.

1.3 Luxury and the Consumer

Vickery's consumers were not necessarily luxury consumers; and it was this intersection between luxury and gender – or rather between the female consumer and the types of goods she consumed – which fuelled the negative stereotypes. The explosion of work on luxury was most notably spearheaded by the University of Warwick's Luxury Project from 1998 to 2002, and the various resultant publications and edited volumes by Maxine Berg, Helen Clifford, and Elizabeth Eger.³⁴ This work, in particular that of Berg, has argued for the importance of products and the creation of commodities in propelling forward the luxury debate, and indeed luxury consumption itself.³⁵ Berg has also argued that it was the people who bought these 'new luxuries' – the consumers – who, above all, made this 'product revolution'.³⁶ This link between consumer identity and the products being consumed must not be overlooked. A consumer of bread may still retain economic significance, but their consequence and identity will inevitably differ from the consumer of luxury clothing. This is where the focus on luxury clothing is key to the arguments of this thesis. It is this juncture between femininity and dress which produces the contested figure of the female consumer.

The contradictory and problematic nature of many of the philosophical characterisations of the consumer of dress was voiced in a conversation in Robert Bage's 1792 novel, *Man as He Is*. In this novel, the character of Sir George states that 'I do not see what should provoke the bile of a philosopher, in the innocent luxury of

³⁴ Berg and Clifford, *Consumers and Luxury in Europe*; Berg and Eger, *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century*.

³⁵ Berg, 'From Imitation to Invention: Creating Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Britain'.

³⁶ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, p. 6.

dress?’ to which his companion replies, ‘Innocent! Sir George – true – in itself it is nothing: I arraign it only as the pander to those numerous follies of which we complain and with which we comply’.³⁷ This exchange centres on the canting consumer, who might bemoan the corrupting or dangerous potential of adhering to luxury consumption, but who nevertheless follows the example of their peers in complying. There are traces of the arguments put forward regarding emulation as a motivation for consumption, as postulated by McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb, in that there is a suggestion that people adhered to a particular mode of consumption, in this case luxury items of dress, because that was what everyone did.³⁸ In other words, it was a passive form of cultural submission. Bage has highlighted the absurdity and hypocrisy of a society which simultaneously condemned and complied with a cultural pressure to consume. This passive consumer was presented as the puppet of a society enthralled by mass consumption and new consumer goods.

It was, therefore, the motivation, influence, and corruptibility of the figure of the consumer, and the impact of their actions, which was feared and condemned. This consumer was the victim of luxury, and in becoming entranced by its charms, turned away from public affairs and responsibility. Alongside the Christian moral condemnation of luxury, voiced by Bage, also stood the Classical Republican argument, which saw luxury as the cause of Roman Imperial decline, and the mercantilist argument which saw luxury as damaging to the continuation of a low-wage economy.³⁹ The latter argument was particularly attacked by Smith who advocated the principle of a high-wage economy as being favourable.⁴⁰ Over the

³⁷ Robert Bage, *Man as He Is: A Novel*, (4 vols, London: William Lane, 1792), 1, p. 78.

³⁸ McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, *Birth of a Consumer Society*, p. 11.

³⁹ A. W. Coats, *On the History of Economic Thought* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 66.

⁴⁰ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations*, p. 69.

course of the eighteenth century, Smith's ideas gained credence as it became apparent that higher wages did not mean higher production costs, due to methods of ensuring increased productivity. In turn, arguments regarding luxury shifted away from concerns based on luxury as the corruptor of wealthy elites.⁴¹ Written a decade after Smith, Sir James Steuart's 1767 work, *Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy*, draws out the more complex processes, causes, and influences of the connections made between luxury products, and the corruption of the consumers of these luxury products. He argued that sensuality and excess were not direct consequences of consuming luxury goods:

Luxury consists in providing the objects of sensuality, so far as they are superfluous. Sensuality consists in the actual enjoyment of them and excess implies an abuse of enjoyment. A person, therefore, according to these definitions, may be very luxurious from vanity, pride, ostentation, or with a political view of encouraging consumption, without having a turn for sensuality, or a tendency to fall into excess.⁴²

Steuart's assessment is important for a number of reasons. His acknowledgement of the positive political and economic implications of consumption is evidence of a rethinking of the Classical Republican argument. Instead of luxury consumption acting as a catalyst to the destruction of civilised society, it was instead seen as central to the building and development of an economy which promoted domestic production and international trade. This sentiment was echoed by other philosophers and political economists, such as Adam Smith and David Hume, who argued for the importance of

⁴¹ Berg and Eger, 'The Rise and Fall of the Luxury Debates', p. 6.

⁴² James Steuart, *Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy* (London: A. Millar and T. Cadell, 1767), Book II, Chapter 20.

luxury in developing the wealth of a nation.⁴³ The consumer interest in luxury could, therefore, become key to the mobilisation of the consumer for national economic benefit.

A second point which Steuart raises, and which is important in charting the changing figure of the consumer, is the separation of the action of being a consumer of luxury goods, from the concept of being corrupted by them. This observation provides a logical explanation for the contradictory attitudes held towards the female consumer, as summarised earlier in this chapter. Being a consumer was, in itself, not a negative moral identity. Indeed, in terms of national economy, it could be a positive one.⁴⁴ In terms of personal morality and corruption, it was not luxury products, or becoming a consumer of these products, which provoked immoral behaviour. Instead, it was a lack of restraint which it was argued should be denounced. In line with much enlightenment literature, it was rationality, moderation, and control which were prized as ways of combatting vanity and immorality. This developing consumer figure was a creature with economic value, who was capable of promoting commerce, but who must avoid falling into moral disgrace. In rethinking the consumer of luxury goods such as fashionable clothing in this way, the consumer became central to the discussion and enactment of a commercial nation. This does not automatically imply that Britain was a consumer society, rather than the commercial society painted by Paul Langford.⁴⁵ Rather, something more nuanced was at play. A more reasonable

⁴³ Berg and Eger, 'The Rise and Fall of the Luxury Debates', p. 11-12.

⁴⁴ Christopher Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 138.

⁴⁵ Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*; Trentmann, 'The Modern Genealogy of the Consumer', p. 11.

assertion would be that the power, utility, and agency of the consumer were increasingly recognised.

1.4 Credit, Control, and the Consumer

The concept that the eighteenth-century consumer possessed agency has been increasingly acknowledged. There has been a significant paradigm shift in the way in which consumers have been viewed, which has spread across anthropology, sociology, and economics, as well as history.⁴⁶ The previously held image of the passive consumer, a creature controlled by advertising and mass production, has been challenged by a new vision of the consumer as an active and creative figure. Marina Bianchi in particular has advocated what she terms the ‘active consumer’.⁴⁷ Bianchi has argued that consumers have always had goals and motivations, but that economic commentators have lost sight of them. This active consumer retained control and the ability to conduct rational choice throughout the consumption process, and has been applied to consumers of both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Moral literature from the period often presented an image of the consumer in control, particularly in financial terms. This control was chiefly provided by the economy of credit, and was enacted through how, when, and to whom credit was paid off. This often left the retailer in a weak position, as it relied heavily on trust. This culture of credit came about as part of the financial revolution of the seventeenth century, and provided the precedent for the majority of the consumer’s financial

⁴⁶ Trentmann, *The Making of the Consumer*, p. 2.

⁴⁷ Bianchi, ‘Taste for Novelty and Novel Tastes’.

transactions throughout the eighteenth century.⁴⁸ Credit was granted based almost entirely on an appearance that the consumer would be able to pay off the debt. As Margot Finn has stated, '[c]reditors sought constantly and unsuccessfully to read debtors' personal worth and character from their clothing, their marital relations, their spending patterns and their perceived social status'.⁴⁹ In this sense, it was the very dress worn by a consumer which supported their plausibility as credit-worthy customers.

The most credit-worthy clients (usually judged to be so based on their social status) were permitted to pay off their debts after a period of months, even years; and could conduct their business at a distance. Augusta Irby (1747-1818), wife of Thomas de Grey, the second Baron Walsingham, ran up debts of nearly £1,000 with her London milliner, S. Taniere, between 1784 and 1796, which she paid off by small and irregular instalments of £50.⁵⁰ This was not an irregular arrangement for Taniere, who had a similar agreement with other aristocratic clients. For example, the Earl of Egremont (1751-1837) ordered items from Taniere for his mistress Elizabeth Ilive, which were to be sent to Petworth House in Sussex, and added to the Earl's credit account.⁵¹ The viability of an individual as a consumer was therefore based on a subjective assessment of objective means, and was often compounded by conducting

⁴⁸ Carl Wennerlind, *Casualties of Credit: The English Financial Revolution, 1620–1720* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

⁴⁹ Margot Finn, *The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture, 1740–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 21.

⁵⁰ NRO, WLS/LI/12/427: 'Accounts from S. Taniere, milliner, 1784-93, 1793-6'. Baron Walsingham was a British peer and politician who served as Groom of the Bedchamber to George III from 1771-1777. The £1,000 spent by Lady Walsingham amounts to approximately £106,700, in terms of relative purchasing power. This calculation was made using the Economic History Association's calculators on the Measuring Worth website, www.measuringworth.com, accessed 22nd December 2015.

⁵¹ WSRC, PHA/7558: 'Receipted bills from London tradesmen to George, 3rd Earl of Egremont, chiefly for articles sent to Petworth, 1800'. The Earl was a peer and great patron of the arts. He had numerous mistresses, and was rumoured to have over forty illegitimate children.

business at a distance. This meant that, ideally, regular repayments created a systematic cash flow for the retailer.

Conversely, the consumer who was misjudged by the retailer, and could not, or would not, pay their debts, resulted in a break in the financial flow of business, and possible financial ruin. Account books seized by officials, when business owners were unable to pay their own debts, provide an insight into how and why the credit system caused financial issues. The accounts of retailers-turned-debtors in York's prison, now held in York City Archives, provide an extensive array of such cases. In particular, the account books of William Barwick, a Haberdasher working in York in the 1820s, demonstrate how fatal non-payment by credit clients could be.⁵² These accounts were arranged under the names of each customer, with each page forming an account of that customer's spending. Some of these accounts were marked as having been settled in person 'by cash', others were settled 'by bill', however the vast majority remained uncollected months, or even years, after the customer received the goods. In these situations, consumer abuse of the credit system left the retailer open to financial downfall.

Much of the literature which criticised consumer abuse of the credit system stemmed from moral religious writing. Josiah Hort (1674-1751), Bishop of Kilmore and Ardagh, published a sermon in 1738 entitled *Of Righteousness in Paying Debts*, in which he stated that:

The Spoil of the Poor is in your Houses; for how can we call it by a better Name when we see Luxury in Dress...supplied by poor Tradesmen, who are

⁵² YCA, Acc. 203: 'Account books of William Barwick, Debtors' Accounts, 1823-24'.

unmercifully kept out of their Money, till they are ruined and undone by supporting the Vanity of those who despise them.⁵³

Hort's complaint places social and economic responsibility on the shoulders of the consumer. This consumer has been seduced by luxury goods, and in this sense fits the model of the passive consumer, but is simultaneously attributed a degree of financial control. The tradesman is actively 'kept out of their Money', implying that the act of withholding payment was a deliberate and controlling act, rather than the consequence of falling prey to consumer desire.⁵⁴

There is an interesting conceptual difference here between the consumer who relies on credit, and the consumer who falls into debt. Both are status-defining social positions: to be a holder of credit indicates social and financial stability, or, more cynically, social power; to be in debt defines the individual as an abuser of a position of credit, and the financial model it supports. Margot Finn has argued that debtors' prisons evolved from the 1740s to 1820s from a site of custody and protection for debtors, to punitive institutions which set out to punish economic misbehaviour.⁵⁵ This reflects a changing cultural perception of credit and debt which can be traced back to larger economic issues. John Smail has argued that the economic expansion of the eighteenth century meant that the financial credit system, which supported all economic transaction, was not sufficiently robust.⁵⁶ One of the key points on which

⁵³ Josiah Hort, *Sixteen Sermons by Josiah, Lord Bishop of Kilmore and Ardagh* (Dublin: George Grierson, 1738), p. 252.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 252; Margot Finn has explored consumer control in relation to middle class perception of plebeian debt in the nineteenth century in Margot Finn, 'Working-Class Women and the Contest for Consumer Control in Victorian County Courts', *Past & Present*, no. 161 (1998): pp. 116–54; see also Alexandra Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself: Worth, Status, and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 278.

⁵⁵ Finn, *The Character of Credit*, p. 154.

⁵⁶ John Smail, 'The Culture of Credit in Eighteenth-Century Commerce: The English Textile Industry', *Enterprise and Society* 4, no. 2 (2003): pp. 299–325.

the reliability and security of this economic model fell down, was on the financial administrative authority which was provided to the consumer. It was the consumer who could, to an extent, decide when to pay the retailer, meaning that the act of consumption, and the act of purchasing, were quite distinct. The increased use of ready money and fixed price sales in the latter part of the century (especially for the purchase of ready-made clothing), can therefore be read as a reaction to the financial control held by the consumer.⁵⁷ As Finn has observed, to be in debt became an increasingly negative thing, which identified the individual as an immoral or unprincipled, or simply an ignorant consumer.

Fifty years after Hort's observations, Vicesimus Knox (1752–1821) echoed similar misgivings, elaborating on the moral and economic implications of the financial control held by the consumer:

The poor tradesman who supply the ordinary articles of domestic consumption, are not only denied their price, but after every abatement are obliged to wait an unreasonable time for their money. So far are such persons from possessing an inclination to be generous, that it grieves them to be just. But though they who furnish commodities without which life cannot be supported, are ill-used and defrauded, whoever can supply any circumstances of dress, equipages, luxury, by which selfishness and vanity may be gratified, and profusely and immediately rewarded.⁵⁸

Here, Knox brings the arguments surrounding the financial power of the consumer back to the luxury debate. Aside from returning to a frequently discussed topic of the luxury debates – the difference between a luxury and a necessity – Knox also makes

⁵⁷ Stobart, *Sugar and Spice*, p. 159; Mitchell, *Tradition and Innovation*, p. 10.

⁵⁸ Vicesimus Knox, *Essays Moral and Literary* (London: Charles Dilly, 1787), p. 138.

an interesting observation about the priorities of the consumer.⁵⁹ In essence, Knox's argument is that the consumer will pay off their credit to luxury retailers before paying off their credit with retailers of 'the ordinary articles of domestic consumption'.⁶⁰ In other words, the consumption of luxuries, such as fashionable dress, was prioritised by the consumer, and the retailer of necessities struggled as a result. However, the most important point to be made is that it is the consumer themselves to whom Knox attributes the power to manipulate the market. This figure of the consumer uses this power to promote self-interest, specifically their continued access to luxury goods. It is important to point out that Knox does not, however, attribute any purpose or forethought to this action by the consumer; rather, he proposes it as a result of ignorance, vanity, and selfishness.

1.5 The Active Consumer and the Conscious Consumer

Unlike Knox's heedless and oblivious vision of the consumer, scholars such as Bianchi have engaged with economic and consumer theory to argue that efficiency and pleasure gains were significant factors in driving forward the motivations of an active consumer.⁶¹ Bianchi particularly focuses on the concept of novelty in motivating a desire amongst consumers for luxury goods, arguing that new goods need to be understood in the context of existing frameworks of goods, meaning novelty is never absolute. Bianchi uses the example of calicoes to consider the determinative role

⁵⁹ Berg and Eger, 'The Rise and Fall of the Luxury Debates', p. 7.

⁶⁰ Knox, *Essays Moral and Literary*, p. 138.

⁶¹ Bianchi, 'Taste for Novelty and Novel Tastes', p. 76.

of the consumer, and the failure of the state to control or dissuade consumers from perusing the product they desired.⁶²

Manufacturers were aware of the need to make products that would appeal to the end consumer, echoing Adam Smith's assertions regarding the importance of the consumer.⁶³ However, what is unclear is the extent to which the consumer, or indeed consumers as a recognisable body, were conscious of the influence of their consumption choices on macroeconomics. More specifically, while purchasing items from certain manufacturers, such as Wedgwood or Boulton, may have held a certain local social prestige, were these consumers aware of the impact of their consumption choices on the international market? Trentmann has unequivocally stated that consumption practises did not lead to the development of any sort of consumer consciousness.⁶⁴ Yet there is evidence to suggest that the notion of patriotic spending was of significant importance in the late eighteenth century, particularly in relation to dress. This was reflected in Royal patronage. Queen Charlotte, wife of George III, and their daughters were recorded as having a 'patriotic sense of duty towards the struggling Spitalfields silk industry' in 1791.⁶⁵ In the same year, the Society for the Improvement of British Wool was established by Sir John Sinclair, which linked the promotion of British products with the improvement of product quality and agricultural method.⁶⁶ By the 1830s, the concept of 'buying British' was established as a patriotic and conscious consumer action. Indeed, it was even discussed that all attendants at the coronation of Queen Victoria should be seen to wear British

⁶² Ibid., pp. 65-69.

⁶³ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations* (1776), p. 658.

⁶⁴ Trentmann, 'The Modern Genealogy of the Consumer', pp. 19-70.

⁶⁵ Lister, 'Twenty-Three Samples of Silk', p. 56.

⁶⁶ John Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment: Useful Knowledge and Polite Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 189.

manufactured garments.⁶⁷ This notion – to purchase in order to promote trade and industry – was also supported by newspapers and advertising, which targeted consumers as a recognisable body.⁶⁸

There is, of course, a difference between the patriotic consumer in the sense of purchasing items with political symbolism, and purchasing items which support a nation's economic needs. The former requires a consumer motivated by the acquisition of a product which will demonstrate their own political affiliation. The latter is about consciously supporting a particular manufacturer, or nation's manufacturers, in order to promote trade and economic growth. Some movements, such as the 'buy Irish' campaign (1790s) bridged these two types of patriotic consumer, in that they both promoted a political message, and a national economy.⁶⁹ Movements such as the American Quakers' Free Produce Movement (1790s-1860s), which called for an economic and moral boycott of goods produced by slave labour, utilised the power of the consumer to promote the abolitionist cause.⁷⁰ Similarly, British abolitionists called for a boycott of slave-produced products, following the rejection of the abolition bill in 1791, although this focussed upon sugar – a product more universally associated with slave labour – rather than cotton.⁷¹ Of course, it must also be acknowledged that

⁶⁷ House of Commons Debate, 30 April 1838, vol. 42, cc674-5.

⁶⁸ Helen Berry, 'Promoting Taste in the Provincial Press: National and Local Culture in Eighteenth-Century Newcastle upon Tyne', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25, no. 1 (2002): pp. 1–17.

⁶⁹ Martyn J. Powell, 'Consumption: Commercial Demand and the Challenges to Regulatory Power in Eighteenth-Century Ireland', in *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire*, ed. Philip J. Stern and Carl Wennerlind (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 282–302.

⁷⁰ Lawrence Glickman, 'Buy for the Sake of the Slave: Abolitionism and the Origins of American Consumer Activism', *American Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (2004): pp. 889–912.

⁷¹ Michelle Craig McDonald and Steven Topik, 'Americanizing Coffee: The Refashioning of a Consumer Culture', in *Food and Globalization: Consumption, Markets and Politics in the Modern World*, ed. Alexander Nuetsenadel and Frank Trentmann (Oxford: Berg, 2008), pp. 109–27.

either form may still be motivated by a desire for social prestige and cultural participation, rather than from commercial or political awareness.

The recognition of a conscious consumer can be read as only part of a broader change in British economic structure, from one based on trade to one based on industry. It is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss the ever more complex notion of an industrial revolution, however the legislation behind the rise and fall of mercantilism is insightful regarding developing concepts of the consumer. Robert Walpole's 1721 policy reform implemented a number of new measures, which saw British economic priorities shift away from trade and importation, and towards a manufacture-based economy.⁷² This was compounded by the 1765 Act banning the import of French silks.⁷³

Political economic priorities did not immediately concern the behaviour of the consumer; however, consumers did react. The ongoing struggle with smuggling was perhaps the most apparent of these reactions. Smuggling has been recognised as a widespread activity along the coasts and waterways of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain.⁷⁴ The primary purpose of smuggling was clearly for smugglers to make money, and to avoid taxation and import duties; and the further implications of tax and duties will be considered later in this chapter. However, the preferences, choices, and desires of the consumer were also key factors. As Giorgio Riello has

⁷² It achieved this in six ways. First, the policies reduced or dropped the import duties on the raw materials needed for manufacture. Second, duty drawbacks on raw materials for exported goods were increased. Third, export duties on most manufactured goods were dropped. Fourth, import duties on goods manufactured abroad were raised. Fifth, export bounties were also applied to a wider range of products, including silk. Finally, the quality of textile goods was scrutinised in order to maintain the reputation of British products.

⁷³ William Farrell, 'Silk and Globalisation in Eighteenth-Century London: Commodities, People and Connections c.1720-1800' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Birkbeck, University of London, 2014), p. 135.

⁷⁴ Kenneth Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 157.

stated, ‘smuggling and the breaking of laws were everyday occurrences in the difficult process of securing congruence between what consumers and governments demanded’.⁷⁵ If a consumer desired a commodity which had been put under a trade embargo, such as banned Calicoes or French silk, the consumer would side-step legislations and restrictions in order to acquire it. This created a parallel economy, which provided desirable, banned luxury goods – goods such as the French silks and calicoes which were otherwise banned.⁷⁶ This, in turn, influenced the state of protectionist mercantilism through lowering the price of popular goods and mitigating the effects of fiscalism. Eventually, as William Ashworth has convincingly argued, as concepts of free trade began to dominate state economic policies, the illicit economy of smuggling was eroded.⁷⁷

For the majority of the eighteenth century, however, smuggling was rife, and many consumers were eager to purchase illicit smuggled wares. The need to encourage consumers to conform to government legislation was articulated in an anonymous pamphlet from 1745, entitled *The Danger of Great Britain and Ireland Becoming Provinces to France*. The author of this pamphlet argued that the ‘fleets and armies of France’ were maintained by British and Irish consumers who supported the practise of smuggling.⁷⁸ However, the author did not appeal to consumers, but to parliament to implement further legislation to prevent smuggling through ‘negative discouragements’. In the same year the Anti-Gallican Association also directed their

⁷⁵ Riello, *Cotton*, p. 112.

⁷⁶ Kwass, *Contraband*, p. 114.

⁷⁷ William Ashworth, *Customs and Excise: Trade, Production, and Consumption in England, 1640-1845* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); see also William Farrell, ‘Smuggling Silks into Eighteenth-Century Britain: Geography, Perpetrators, and Consumers’, *Journal of British Studies* 55, no. 2 (2016): pp. 268–94; Felicia Gottmann, *Global Trade, Smuggling, and the Making of Economic Liberalism: Asian Textiles in France 1680-1760* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

⁷⁸ Anon, *The Danger of Great Britain and Ireland Becoming Provinces to France* (London: J. Roberts, 1745), p. 1.

ire towards the French, stating that they wished to ‘discourage the introduction of French modes and oppose the importance of French commodities’.⁷⁹ This attack on French dominance was an outlet for international cultural and political tensions. However, it is telling that it is trade, and the desires and actions of the consumer, which are alluded to. It was the desires and actions of an active consumer that had made French commodities important, and economically imposing to British trade.

1.6 The Consumer, Luxury, and Foreignness

The positioning of the consumer as an internationally influenced figure is evident throughout contemporary literature. The connection between luxury as a negative influence and its perception as foreign and ‘other’ was long standing, and continued to be perpetuated throughout the eighteenth century.⁸⁰ David Ritchie reflected on the relationship between dress, foreignness, and luxury in his 1770 publication, *A Treatise on the Hair*:

We blame [foreigners’] luxurious mode of dress through caprice, yet imitate them through taste: it is their glory, and they find it their interest, to encourage dress and luxury, which we so much exclaim against as dangerous to the state; but then we become their dupes and customers, by purchasing their articles of dress and fashions, which we neglect to cultivate ourselves.⁸¹

Ritchie echoes the comments made by Bage regarding the hypocritical nature of many people who bemoan the prevalence of luxury, yet indulge in it themselves. However, he expands upon this point to emphasise the international element of the consumption

⁷⁹ Berg, ‘New Commodities, Luxuries, and Their Consumers’, p. 77.

⁸⁰ Ibid. pp. 63–87; Berg and Eger, ‘The Rise and Fall of the Luxury Debates’, p. 8.

⁸¹ David Ritchie, *A Treatise on the Hair* (London: David Ritchie, 1770), p. 96.

of dress. This opens up an interesting series of questions regarding the British consumer: how were they influenced by the international market, and how did the manufacturing community adapted to cultivate and maintain the interest and loyalty of British consumers? These are very large and complex questions, and cannot be dealt with fully within the context of this thesis. However, a few summary observations are useful in order to contextualise the British consumer within an international market.

Anglo-French relationships are perhaps the most regularly discussed in literature on luxury, as has been evident in a number of the sources already discussed. France was often blamed for the more negative, indulgent elements of luxury, and was feared as a foreign, corrupting influence.⁸² However, France was also engaging in parallel debates on luxury, which it articulated through a clash between commercial wealth, and classical modernity.⁸³ As has already been mentioned, the Gournay circle were proponents of free trade, and an early conceptualisation of ‘consumer sovereignty’.⁸⁴ This resulted in renewed proposals for sumptuary legislation, and a greater degree of material social distinction; although these were not reflected in British perceptions of French luxury. In both the British and French context, the consumer was a political beast, who was seen to both act and be controlled in relation to national political and economic debates. Contemporary British writers certainly saw France as the crucible of luxury, and as one writer stated in 1785, ‘luxury has not made the same progress in London as at Paris’.⁸⁵ Similarly Frenchman Jean Bernard Le Blanc observed of the English that ‘people here are...studious to avoid luxury in

⁸² This is considered at greater length in chapter seven.

⁸³ Berg and Eger, ‘The Rise and Fall of the Luxury Debates’, p. 20.

⁸⁴ Kwass, *Contraband*, p. 293.

⁸⁵ Anon, *The Novelties of a Year and a Day* (London: Logographic Press, 1785), p. 202.

dress’.⁸⁶ Aside from the legislation and mercantile need to promote British interests, there was also a cultural need, felt and enacted by the consumer, to differentiate British from French culture.

In a more literal, mercantile sense, Britain and France also had contesting interests in the silk trade, which particularly influenced British consumers of dress. As has already been explained in regards to smuggling, British consumers were keen to gain access to French silks, which continued to be desirable. The Anglo-French rivalry was particularly evident due to market conflict, with Lyonnais silk pitted against Spitalfields silk.⁸⁷ At the start of the eighteenth century, France was considerably superior in terms of its silk industry, while the British silk industry suffered from a lack of trained designers. From the 1680s onwards Britain was keen to promote the burgeoning Huguenot silk industry in Spitalfields. This support intensified later in the century through the Act of 1766 which banned French imports, and the Spitalfields Acts of 1773, which regulated wages and protected Journeymen.⁸⁸ William Farrell has also argued that London silk weavers consciously positioned themselves at the heart of a global market, and catered their designs to appeal to an international export market, as well as to domestic consumers.⁸⁹ The copying of French designs was also key to the success of the London silk industry. While it was argued that consumers would not purchase a copy over an authentic French silk, when a sample book was seized from smugglers by excise men in 1764, weavers flocked to see the designs, and

⁸⁶ Jean Bernard Le Blanc, *Letters on the English and French Nations*, (2 vols, Dublin: J. Brindley, 1747), 1, p. 71.

⁸⁷ Natalie Rothstein, *Spitalfields Silks* (London: V&A, 1975); Farrell, ‘Silk and Globalisation’; Lesley Ellis Miller, ‘Material Marketing: How Lyonnais Silk Manufacturers Sold Silks, 1660-1789’, in *Selling Textiles in the Long Eighteenth Century: Comparative Perspectives from Western Europe*, ed. Jon Stobart and Bruno Blondé (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 85–98; Miller, *Selling Silks*.

⁸⁸ Rothstein, *Barbara Johnson*, p. 2-3.

⁸⁹ Farrell, ‘Silk and Globalisation’, p. 13.

paid to do so.⁹⁰ Simultaneously, in France, guild regulations implemented from the 1660s through to the 1740s dictated the quality and composition of Lyonnais silk, maintaining their status. Lesley Miller has argued that, while these silks were principally perceived by contemporary manufacturers as intended for consumption by the French court, travelling salesmen, equipped with sample books such as that seized by the British excise men, were also key in enabling the industry to respond to international consumer demand.⁹¹

The consumption of silk was not only influenced by Anglo-French cultural and mercantile relationships, but also by global trade, and particularly by the rise of cotton. The calico crisis, which culminated in the Calico Act of 1721, and which prohibited the use of calico, is a key example of this.⁹² The threat to the domestic silk industry posed by the ‘calico craze’ was partly blamed on the female consumers of these cottons, known as ‘Calico Madams’:

By the East we’re oppress’d,
By the South we’re distress’d,
Tho’ at peace with our neighb’ring nations,
Yet if Steps be not made,
To recover our Trade,
It will wear out each Sufferer’s Patience,
For both Sinners and Saints
Are so full of Complaints
Of the Tricks that have lately been plaid ‘em,

⁹⁰ Miller, *Selling Silks*, p. 9; Farrell, ‘Silk and Globalisation’, p. 106.

⁹¹ Miller, ‘Material Marketing’, p. 88, 95; Miller, *Selling Silks*, p. 39.

⁹² Lemire, *Cotton*, pp. 53-64.

That they cause the South Sea

O'er their Coffee and tea,

For not drowning each Callico Madam.⁹³

This ballad, published as *The Spitalfields Ballard: Or the Weavers Complaints against the Calicoe Madam* in 1721, the year of the Act, pinpoints both the female consumer, and the East India Company as culpable for the suffering silk market.⁹⁴ From the 1680s, concurrently with the rise of the Spitalfields silk industry, the East India Company had begun releasing imported Indian cottons onto the London market at competitive prices.⁹⁵ However, what is interesting in the context of this thesis is that it is the 'Calico Madam', rather than the merchants of the East India Company, who were the primary culprits in the ballad writer's eyes. This consumer was seen as having active power on an international scale.

The consumer was seen as a figure who could be defined by national, and perhaps, as Helen Berry has argued, even regional borders.⁹⁶ This need to make Britishness distinct from other national identities was a significant theme throughout the eighteenth century, and the importance of the consumer, and the promotion of patriotic consumption, should not be underestimated here. Linda Colley in particular has been influential in emphasising the importance of trade, and the concept of patriotic trade, to the emerging British state following the Act of Union in 1707.⁹⁷ The *Society of the Arts*, or the *Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Commerce, and*

⁹³ Anon, *The Spitalfields Ballard: Or the Weavers Complaints against the Calicoe Madams* (London: [no publisher], 1721).

⁹⁴ Wigston Smith, "'Callico Madams'".

⁹⁵ Beverly Lemire, 'Fashioning Cottons: Asian Trade, Domestic Industry and Consumer Demand, 1660-1780', in *The Cambridge History of Western Textiles*, ed. David Jenkins (2 vols, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1, pp. 493-512.

⁹⁶ Berry, 'Promoting Taste in the Provincial Press', pp. 1-17.

⁹⁷ Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, pp. 55-101.

Manufactures in Great Britain, was started in 1754 and, much like the *Anti-Gallicans*, was primarily focussed on promoting British trade and manufacture, and suppressing foreign influence. In particular, it was keen to enable Britain's textile industry to be able to dye cloth and fibre domestically, rather than sending it abroad for this process.⁹⁸ What has not generally been considered is the extent to which this promotion of British manufacture was engaged with by the consumer, and to what extent the consumer supported this promotion of patriotic consumption. This is an issue which will continue to be considered throughout the course of this thesis, and returned to in the conclusion.

1.7 Taxation and the Consumer

As has previously been discussed, the figure of the consumer as an active promoter of national economic interests was manipulated by both state and law through political and economic influences on trade.⁹⁹ This was primarily achieved through taxation and duties. Some duties, and indeed many of those implemented by Walpole's 1712 policy reforms, were levied at importers and exporters. However, as the century progressed, it was the public, and in particular the consumer, who was increasingly targeted. The discussions surrounding taxation firmly brought the figure of the consumer to the forefront of political economy. I will divide my discussion of this matter into two subsections. First, I will consider how politicians and political economists have philosophised over the details of who should be taxed and by how much. Secondly, I will interrogate observations regarding how consumers reacted to these taxes.

⁹⁸ Berg, 'New Commodities, Luxuries, and Their Consumers', p. 77.

⁹⁹ Trentmann, *The Making of the Consumer*, p. 12.

David Hume, in his *Political Discourses*, argued that the most desirable form of taxation was the moderate taxation of consumer goods through a sales tax, as these tended to stimulate industry.¹⁰⁰ This countered the views of earlier writers, such as John Locke, who had argued for property taxes as the most effective form of revenue generation. Furthermore, Hume argued that it was luxury goods, rather than necessities, that should be taxed as the purchase of luxury items was ‘in some measure, voluntary; since a man may chuse how far he will use the commodity which is taxed: They are paid gradually and insensibly: And being confounded with the natural price of the commodity, they are scarcely perceived by the consumers’.¹⁰¹ Hume directly referenced the consumer as a distinct player in the strategizing of taxation. Hume’s consumer was in many ways controlled through taxation, simultaneously deceived into not noticing the tax due to the already high price of the luxury commodity, and also encouraged into ‘sobriety and frugality’.¹⁰² Hume’s vision of taxation was not only a means of generating revenue, but also a means of controlling what consumers spent their money on, and how much they spent.¹⁰³

Adam Smith’s views, in principle, held a number of similarities. He argued that a tax on necessities was, in effect, the same as a tax on wages – a point on which many eighteenth-century political economists differed from their predecessors.¹⁰⁴ He also believed, as Hume did, that a tax on luxury goods, such as tobacco, meant that the consumer was in control of the amount of their income that they decided to spend on

¹⁰⁰ David Hume, *Political Discourses* (Edinburgh: A. Kincaid and A. Donaldson, 1752). See in particular p. 116.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 119.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 119.

¹⁰³ Claudia M. Schmidt, *David Hume: Reason in History* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), p. 308.

¹⁰⁴ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations*, p. 871.

that products, and consequently laid out in tax. This was as opposed to the taxation of necessary items, such as food, shirts, and leather shoes, which Smith saw as essential to survival, and therefore comparable to a tax on wages.¹⁰⁵ Smith also argued that taxes on luxuries had no negative influences on the market as a whole. While the taxation of a necessity might in turn raise labour costs, and consequently manufacture costs, Smith stated that a taxation on a luxury would only raise the price of the commodity itself. In other words, it would only impact the consumers of those luxuries.

Smith and Hume both placed a significant amount of trust in the consumer to moderate their spending in accordance with what they could financially afford. Their theories on taxation ignored a trend that was widely noticed and commented upon elsewhere – that many consumers who could not afford to purchase luxury goods were nonetheless compelled to buy them. As John Bidlake wrote in his sermons of 1799, ‘the luxury of dress is then only improper in those who cannot afford it; and who by indulgence may be reduced to distress’.¹⁰⁶ Duties and taxes were key in influencing consumer behaviour. However, how reactions to the implementation of these government decisions were manifested was often not as was predicted or desired. Certainly, changes in government policy in regards to revenues and the taxation of luxury goods can be seen to have influenced the mercantile and industrial development of Britain. Patrick O’Brien formulated that tax on luxury goods such as wine, sugar, and tea contributed sixty percent of the total British public revenue between 1788 and 1792, collected primarily in order to fund war with France.¹⁰⁷ The decision to tax these luxury commodities, and the amount of public wealth which was acquired through this

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 871.

¹⁰⁶ John Bidlake, *Sermons, on Various Subjects* (2 vols, London: J. Murray, 1799), 1, p. 64.

¹⁰⁷ Patrick K. O’Brien, ‘The Political Economy of British Taxation, 1660-1815’, *Economic History Review* 41 (1988): pp. 1–32.

scheme, was as much a result of developing consumer behaviour as it was government manipulation of consumer spending.

The implementation of certain taxes influenced consumer behaviour on an individual level, in terms of consumer choices, and in terms of how relationships were managed between consumers and retailers. To some degree, luxury taxation acted as a new form of, or replacement of, sumptuary law.¹⁰⁸ Susan Vincent has demonstrated that dress was regulated through these laws, as well as through social and moral means, throughout the early modern period.¹⁰⁹ Sumptuary laws often levied fines upon those who broke them, meaning both forms of regulation were incentivised financially. Vincent's work emphasises the importance of appearances, primarily expressed through dress, in communicating social status. As was earlier discussed in relation to acquiring credit, maintaining, or simulating, the appearance of being worthy of credit was essential in order to establish the individual as a viable consumer.

The influence of taxation on the appearance of the consumer can be most readily demonstrated through the tax on wig powder. The Duty on Hair Powder Act was put in place in 1795, and was not repealed until 1869.¹¹⁰ The act declared that anyone wishing to wear hair powder had to visit a stamp officer and pay one guinea annually. There were various exceptions to this tax, such as the Royal family and their servants, clergyman earning below a certain salary, and any additional unmarried daughters beyond two in one family. Although hair powder had already declined as a fashionable item, consumer reactions to this taxation are nonetheless compelling. John Donaldson wrote, in an open letter to William Pitt responding to the act, that the tax

¹⁰⁸ McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, *Birth of a Consumer Society*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁹ Susan Vincent, *Dressing the Elite: Clothes in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), pp. 117-152.

¹¹⁰ Anon, *An Abstract of the Hair Powder Act* (London: Allen and West, 1795).

actually proved of additional use to the retailer wishing to discern customers who would be able to afford to pay: ‘What tradesman will refuse credit to a powdered person, who proves by his appearance, that he gives a guinea a-year to the revenue, for a licence to use a luxury in dress?’.¹¹¹ In other words, the tax acted as a pseudo-sumptuary law, enabling visual distinction based on financial ability to pay the tax. In both cases, if the financial penalty could not be paid, the luxury item of dress could not be worn.

For every tax that is enacted, there are of course those who evade it. John Bowles, in 1797, reflected upon this fact, stating that:

This disposition to injure the Revenue has been carried into private life, where we have been accustomed to see men, even of rank, who have renounced the garb of gentlemen in order to evade a tax, imposed upon a mere luxury of dress, and the unproductiveness of which must have an obvious tendency to make public burdens fall more heavily upon the inferior classes of the Community.¹¹²

Bowles here made the argument that individuals would prefer to not wear the garments which would distinguish them as socially superior, rather than pay the tax levied upon them. Furthermore, he argued that as a consequence of their avoidance of tax, poorer people were being induced to pay more tax to make up the deficit. As Bowles made clear, the introduction of taxation had the potential to significantly shift the way in which the public consumed.¹¹³ While Bowles’ argument is primarily concerned with the economic impact of government taxation on the merchant class, we can also

¹¹¹ John Donaldson, *A Letter to the Right Hon. William Pitt, on the Use of Hair-Powder* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1795), p. 7.

¹¹² John Bowles, *A Third Letter to a British Merchant* (London: T. N. Longman and Richard White, 1797), p. 83.

¹¹³ Trentmann, *The Making of the Consumer*, p.12.

deduce interesting observations about the nature of consumer behaviour towards the end of the eighteenth century. Specifically, that social commentators were increasingly identifying the consumer, whether specifically termed as such or not, as a distinct and important player in the economic structure of the country.

1.8 Conclusion

Aside from his interest in taxation, Bowles also returns us to the issue of gender and the consumer, identified earlier in this chapter, through a point of omission. Bowles' active and decisive, although socially selfish, consumer is depicted as male, even though the powder tax impacted upon the consumption of both genders. While philosophical and economic discussions around the consumer tended to discuss either a male, or un-gendered consumer, the majority of moral and cultural representations of the consumer were female, as will be discussed in the following chapter. Interestingly, the denouncement of the intemperate female consumer of dress continues throughout the course of the century, while other elements of the consumer, as discussed in this chapter, evolved and gained recognition as economically positive.

Trentmann examined a similar body of sources to reach his own conclusions; however, his interpretations generally considered these sources in stark contrast to their nineteenth and twentieth century equivalents.¹¹⁴ Eighteenth-century sources, when extracted from this broader contextual narrative, reveal a more nuanced and gradual recognition of the consumer – particularly the consumer of dress – both as an individual figure, and as a form of group consciousness. Many writers did not directly address the consumer, however, the terminology of the consumer became more

¹¹⁴ Trentmann, 'The Modern Genealogy of the Consumer', pp. 19-70.

frequently used to refer to this body of people. Furthermore, these sources unveil an desire to recognise, at state level, an ever more prominent and determined consumer, which coincided with the gradual shift from a mercantile to free trade economy. In other words, the consumer was identified as a figure who required recognition – both in cultural and economic terms. This recognition did not necessarily take the form of direct control, as it had with the sumptuary laws centuries earlier, but instead guided emergent forms of consumer behaviour. This consumer, it was increasingly observed, possessed financial, international, and social influence, which could both benefit and hinder the national economy and personal moral welfare.

CHAPTER TWO

Representing the Consumer: Idleness and Productivity

The figure of the female consumer was an increasingly visible character in eighteenth-century England. This stereotypical consumer ‘type’ found her way into the contemporary cultural vocabulary, becoming an identifiable trope.¹ In order to assess how contemporaries read this emerging consumer character, this chapter will focus upon the culturally-constructed consumer figure – as opposed to the economically-defined consumer group – and how this figure was perceived in contemporary representational culture. Drawing from a diverse mix of contemporary literature and visual culture, this chapter argues that a clearly defined evolution took place in regards to how the consumer was represented in cultural mediums such as novels, art, and periodicals, as well as in more practical trade manuals for prospective apprentices and those working in the retail trade. This evolution saw a new understanding of consumer practice, with the character of the consumer shifting from one of unwelcome and unproductive idleness, to a more productive, skilled, and market-aware figure – albeit with residual traces of concern and gendered suspicion.²

The key concern of this chapter is, therefore, how people were trained to perceive the figure of the consumer beyond state-mandated policy and political economics.³ These culturally led – as opposed to economically or philosophically led – representations provide a nuanced picture of day-to-day attitudes towards consumers, as articulated by authors within the middling sort, and, indeed, by female

¹ Berry, ‘Polite Consumption’, pp. 375-94; Smith, ‘Sensing Design and Workmanship’, pp. 1-10.

² Vickery, ‘Women and the World of Goods’.

³ The extent to which this ‘training’ was effective will be evidenced in chapters three, four, and five.

consumers of dress themselves. These representations have generally been read in a binary fashion, with the frivolous female, who plagued shopkeepers and either consumed far too much or far too little, being considered separately to the female consumer as the rational and organised household manager.⁴ This chapter takes a more nuanced view, and sees these two consumer types not as diametrically opposed opposites, but instead identifies a gradual chronological shift in public understanding of the consumer and consumer practise, which redefined browsing, and the new pastime of ‘shopping’, in terms of productivity and skill.

2.1 Sources: Visual and Literary Culture

This chapter predominantly draws upon visual and literary culture of the eighteenth century, as opposed to documentary archival sources. This conscious decision allows historical engagement with the broader print culture of the period – specifically the published texts and images which influenced and trained public perceptions of the consumer. This chapter engages with novels and graphic satire. As Diana Donald has rightly noted, satirical prints are not ‘an unproblematic body of representational evidence’, into which historians may dip at random.⁵ However, they do provide a new kind of evidence of how eighteenth-century people saw each other and their own practices, which was new compared with the sixteenth century. Caricature was a vehicle for expressing concerns and tensions through comic likenesses, as well as a

⁴ For work on the frivolous female consumer, see Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*; Guest, *Small Change*; For work on household management, see Vickery, ‘His and Hers: Gender, Consumption and Household Accounting in Eighteenth-Century England’; Julie Day, ‘Elite Women’s Household Management: Yorkshire, 1680-1810’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Leeds, 2007).

⁵ Donald, *The Age of Caricature*, p. vii.

means of self-definition and self-regulation for the rising middling sort.⁶ We see across the various cultural incarnations of the consumer a consistent concern that this figure is transparent in both their purpose and identity. As Amelia Rauser has argued, ‘caricature became a valuable tool for articulating the growing desire for authenticity, inner consistency, and politeness without affectation’.⁷ These concerns, as will become clear throughout this chapter, are key in navigating how eighteenth-century people conceptualised the consumer.

Novels expressed similar tensions and concerns, in particular the female-authored literature of the later eighteenth century. First and foremost, these novels are relevant to this thesis as a whole due to their significance in feminist historiography.⁸ Women are traditionally not seen to have participated in the political public, whereas they were extremely active in the reading public that was the former’s ‘staging ground’.⁹ Mary Wollstonecraft, Frances Burney, Jane Austen and many of their contemporaries all expressed influential and insightful opinions on female consumption habits and participation in this ‘counter public’, which reflect both the changing face of feminine thought, and the significance of the role of the consumer to gendered identity and public roles. The Evangelical revival of the late eighteenth century, and the culture of sensibility, both key themes in contemporary literature, are also significant in the evolution of the female consumer; not least due to their influence on the rising consciousness of the consumer.¹⁰ Furthermore, representations of the

⁶ Ibid., p. 75; Kate Heard, *High Spirits: The Comic Art of Thomas Rowlandson* (London: Royal Collections Trust, 2013), p. 236.

⁷ Rauser, *Caricature Unmasked*, p. 56.

⁸ Guest, *Small Change*, p. 17; Deidre Shauna Lynch, ‘Counter Publics: Shopping and Women’s Sociability’, in *Romantic Sociability*, ed. Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 211–36.

⁹ Lynch, ‘Counter Publics’, p. 214.

¹⁰ Berry, ‘Women, Consumption and Taste’, p. 206.

consumer within the novel open up an interpretation of the dialogue, expectations, and interactions which made up the multidimensional figure of the consumer, often left unexpressed in archival sources depicting economic realities. In other words, novels allow us an insight into the, admittedly fictionalised, interactions behind the moment of purchase.

2.2 Day Goblins and Female Rakes, 1710-1740

The consumption of luxury items, such as textiles and ceramics, has often been termed the ‘female vice’.¹¹ Daniel Defoe wrote in 1725 in *Every-Body's Business, is No-Body's Business* that ‘it seems as if the whole Business of the Female Sex were nothing, but Excess of Pride, and Extravagance in Dress’.¹² Women were seen as particularly susceptible to this ‘contagion of fashion’ and were swept into ‘folly, affectation and expense’ by a desire to acquire novel items of dress.¹³ The *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1731 ascribed the prevalence of this contagion, describing its sufferers as having ‘weak Minds, vain, empty, and effeminate’.¹⁴ The perpetrators of these feminine follies were characterised as ‘silk worms and magpies’, and it was from these early concerns about luxury and the gratification and indulgence of material desires that early representations of the consumer emerged.¹⁵

Indeed, early representations of the female consumer as a disruptive and immoral force are not confined to fashionable dress, and instead focus more generally

¹¹ Berg and Eger, *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 163.

¹² Defoe, *Every-Body's Business*, p. 13.

¹³ Raven, *Judging New Wealth*, p. 164.

¹⁴ *The Gentleman's Magazine* (London: F. Jeffries, 1731), p. 389.

¹⁵ Thomas Brown, *The Works of Mr Thomas Brown, Serious and Comical* (London: Sam Briscoe, 1715), p. 130.

on luxury consumption.¹⁶ A fictionalised letter from a disgruntled china retailer, published in the 26 March 1712 edition of the *Spectator*, provides a particularly thorough example of contemporary concerns and attitudes towards the female consumer within the broader luxury market. Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's *Spectator* (1711-14) critically engaged with the cultural, social, and economic forces at play in early eighteenth-century London. Focussing on middle class, urban society, Addison and Steele grappled with topics such as religion, gender, marriage, business, and the 'proper use of wealth', often using a format of letters from fictional readers, usually penned by Addison and Steele themselves.¹⁷ The letter in question was written as the character Rebecca, a fictional china seller.¹⁸ Rebecca began by describing her business as being a successful venture, and herself as one of the 'top China-women' in London. She also claimed that she had a high class of both products and customers. However, she went on to describe one class of customer, the 'female rakes', who frequently plagued her shop and threatened her business.

I am in a fair way to be easy, were it not for a club of *female Rakes*, who, under pretence of taking their innocent rambles, forsooth, and diverting the spleen, seldom fail to plague me twice or thrice a day [...] These rakes are your *idle ladies of fashion*, who, having nothing to do, employ themselves in tumbling over my wares.¹⁹

¹⁶ For an in depth discussion of luxury, see in particular Berg, 'New Commodities, Luxuries, and Their Consumers'; Berg and Eger, 'The Rise and Fall of the Luxury Debates'.

¹⁷ Donald Newman, ed., *The Spectator: Emerging Discourses* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), p. 12.

¹⁸ Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Spectator* (London: Payne, Rivington, Davis etc., 1712), no. 336.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* Emphasis my own.

This extract from the fictional letter highlights three significant elements of the vilified female consumer: their irresponsibility, their status, and their idleness.

Let us start by considering the significance of the terminology of the ‘female Rake’. The rake, traditionally a male figure, was characterised by both his elite social status, and his criminality. However, the rake’s negative, violent, and criminal features were often overlooked because of his assumed prestigious and elite status.²⁰ He was seen to possess aesthetic and performative mastery, but was subjectively seen as both a charming and benign libertine, and socially immoral.²¹ Poems on the rake were prolific, particularly in the early decades of the eighteenth century.²² The poems echo the irreverent yet indulgent attitude to material goods, evident in the letter in the *Spectator*. The *Rake Reform’d*, published in 1718, stated that to the rake, ‘ev’ry Object still new Pleasures yields’, articulating an attraction to goods based on sensual pleasure and self-gratification, rather than commercial engagement.²³

As a consumer, the female rake in the *Spectator* is characterised by her idle indulgence and commercial irresponsibility. However, she is generally protected from overt reproach because of her apparent social status. The significance of the social status of the vilified consumer is again made evident through the phrase ‘idle ladies of fashion’. Daniel Defoe’s *The Complete English Tradesman*, published in 1726, also echoes that these frivolous female consumers are always ‘persons of good note’.²⁴ These women were not specifically defined through their wealth, or whether they are

²⁰ Erin Mackie, *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates: The Making of the Modern Gentleman in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009), p. 35.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

²² For some examples, see Anon, *The Unfortunate Rake, Or, Love by Moon-Light: And the Fair-One Stark Naked* (London: H. Hills, 1710); Anon, *The Progress of a Rake* (London: N. Cox, 1732); Anon, *The Rake’s Progress: Or, The Humours of Drury-Lane* (London: J. Chettwood, 1735).

²³ A. G. Gent, *The Rake Reform’d: A Poem. In a Letter to the Rakes of the Town* (London: A. Dod, 1718), p. 23.

²⁴ Daniel Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman* (London: Charles Rivington, 1726), p. 104.

titled, but through a visually evident connection with, or an aspiration to, fashionability. Greig has identified that being fashionable in eighteenth-century London relied upon being part of a visible community, based on credentials other than simply wealth or rank.²⁵ Participating in the activity of visiting shops and browsing was more important in terms of self-definition of fashionability, than whether you could afford to purchase.

Participation in urban rituals of shopping was made possible by the increased leisure time provided by a shift in middling-rank domestic female roles, which saw women redefined from housewife, to 'household manager'.²⁶ As the century progressed, possessing a 'housewifely appearance' was increasingly berated in middling class women, and the delegation of tasks to servants became more commonplace, and even necessary, in order to maintain an appearance of leisure.²⁷ This acquirement of leisure time, and removal from domestic drudgery, was key in aspiring to the emerging principles of politeness.²⁸ Politeness as a status was earned, demonstrated, and defined through action and display; and domestic femininity, leisure, and consumption were central to the construction of polite respectability. That leisure and extra-domestic publicity, rather than the acquisition of goods, was the primary purpose of the consumers depicted in the *Spectator* becomes even more evident as the letter from the fictional Rebecca continues.

²⁵ Greig, *The Beau Monde*, pp. 16-18.

²⁶ Trevor Lummis and Jan Marsh, *The Woman's Domain: Women and the English Country House* (London: Penguin, 1993); Berry, 'Women, Consumption and Taste', p. 197.

²⁷ *Connoisseur*, 11 December 1755; Claire Walsh, 'Shopping at First Hand? Mistresses, Servants and Shopping for the Household in Early Modern England', in *Buying for the Home: Shopping for the Domestic from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, ed. David Hussey and Margaret Ponsoyby (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 13-26.

²⁸ Berry, 'Polite Consumption', p. 382; Lawrence E. Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', *The Historical Journal* 45, no. 4 (2002): pp. 869-98; Paul Langford, 'The Uses of Eighteenth-Century Politeness', *Transaction of the Royal Historical Society* 12 (2002): pp. 311-31.

One of these *no-customers* (for by the way they seldom or never buy anything) calls for a set of tea-dishes, another for a bason [sic], a third for my best green-tea [...] there is scarce a piece in my shop but must be displaced, and the whole agreeable architecture disordered, so that I can compare them to nothing but the *Night-Goblins* that take a pleasure to overturn [...] the kitchens of your housewifely Maids. Well, after all this racket and clutter, this is too dear this is their aversion; another is charming, but not wanted [...] I am not a shilling better for it. Lord! What signifies one poor pot of tea, considering the trouble they put me to? [...] Admonish all such Day-Goblins.²⁹

These women are seen to participate in the rituals surrounding Berry's browse-bargain model.³⁰ Each customer requests to browse, view, and inspect items, and elsewhere in the letter Rebecca refers to them even progressing through the process to bargaining, as they attempt 'to cheapen tea'.³¹ Similarly, Jonathan Swift lamented in 1710 that 'to shops in Crowds the daggled Females fly / Pretend to cheapen Goods, but nothing buy'. However, this is as far as the process of consumption is enacted, as they 'seldom or never buy anything'.³² These women appear to be what they are not, playing the role of the serious consumer, assessing the objects they are offered, but failing to see through the final, vital stage of purchasing. The language of the letter emphasises that the transactions at the heart of consumption do not simply involve the exchange of money for goods. The retailer also provided a service, centred on display and access to objects, which these women used and abused, but did not compensate for through

²⁹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, no. 336.

³⁰ Berry, 'Polite Consumption', p. 375.

³¹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, no. 336.

³² Swift, Jonathan, 'A Description of a City Shower', in *Tatler* (London: Longman, Dodsley, Law etc., 1710), no. 238.

making a purchase. Furthermore, Rebecca implies that even if a sale was made, it would not be worth the trouble and disruption these women had caused.

In removing these women from practical, domestic responsibility, they were, in a sense, undomesticated.³³ Instead of exhibiting rationality, they appear untamed and uncontrolled. The analogy is given even greater weight by the parallel between the china shop, and the kitchen as a potential destination for the purchased china within the home. The supernatural 'night-goblin' is inspired by mischief and merriment to overturn and disrupt the work of the honest, hardworking housewife. The female consumer as 'day-goblin' is similarly inspired by 'diverting the spleen' to spoil and disorder the carefully arranged shop displays, simply for her own amusement.

2.3 Controlling the Consumer, 1740-1775

The early decades of the eighteenth century firmly characterised the consumer as a victim of the seductive qualities of luxury goods. Focussed on self-gratification, and the irresponsible and poor use of leisure time, representations of the consumer trained readers to associate the unproductive consumer with a lack of economic engagement. Ensuring that the consumer moved through the process of browsing to the point of purchasing became the key point of concern at the century progressed. Richard Campbell's *The London Tradesman*, published in 1747, provided a series of observations on the various trades carried out in London, for the purpose of advising young people who might wish to seek apprenticeships.³⁴ Campbell's summary of the

³³ Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, p. 85.

³⁴ *The London Tradesman* was published under the name R. Campbell. Various historians have since referred to the author as either Robert or Richard Campbell. For the purpose of consistency, this study will refer to him as Richard Campbell.

mercier provides an insight into the continuing presence of the vilified consumer, and how retailers were expected to adapt themselves to humour this now regular and common character, and ensure that they made the all-important purchases necessary to the success of business.

The Mercer deals in Silks, Velvets, Brocades, and an innumerable Train of expensive Trifles for the Ornament of the Fair Sex: He must be a very polite man, and skilled in all the Punctilios of City-good-breeding: he ought, by no Means be an aukward [sic] clumsy Fellow, such a Creature would turn a Lady's Stomach in a Morning, when they go their Rounds, to tumble Silks they have no mind to buy [...] The mercer who intends to succeed in his Business ought to humour the Ladies [...] as much as a Rational Creature can; but I would have him Master of so much natural good Sense as to mind the main Chance of getting Money.³⁵

In Campbell's description, the frivolous, gadding female consumer has become a recurrent and regular experience for shopkeepers. They 'go their rounds' every morning, as part of a carefully timetabled social ritual, which involved shopping in the morning, followed by paying or receiving social calls in the afternoon.³⁶ As early as 1711, the *Spectator* commented that going to the shops in order to carry out 'the sorting of a Suit of Ribbons is reckoned a very good Morning's Work'.³⁷ In becoming a fixed, regular, daily activity, shopping was not carried out for personal necessity, but out of habit. An argument often put forward in scholarly work which acknowledges

³⁵ Richard Campbell, *London Tradesman* (London: T. Gardener, 1747), pp. 197-98.

³⁶ Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, p. 21; Berry, 'Polite Consumption', p. 380; Stobart, Hann, and Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*, p. 148; Smith, 'Sensing Design and Workmanship', p. 1.

³⁷ Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Spectator* (London: Payne, Rivington, Davis etc., 1711), no. 10.

this fixed regularity of shopping is that it was, like paying calls and taking tea, part of a routine ritual of polite society.³⁸ It was part of a list of tasks which needed to be carried out in order to retain credibility as a member of polite society. Retailers were expected to work around this now established ritual, accepting that browsing had become habit for female consumers, but adapting their retail methods to ensure that browsers did, eventually, become purchasers.

The female consumer who passed from shop to shop, disrupted goods, and purchased nothing was referred to in *The London Tradesman* with a sense of resignation and acceptance. These women, while vilified, were also one of the trials to be expected as a mercer. They must be humoured, but simultaneously they must be carefully encouraged to purchase in order to increase the likelihood of the retailer 'getting Money'. Defoe, in his *The Complete English Tradesman*, tells a story of a shop-keeper who 'behav'd himself to such an extreme, that when he was provok'd by the impertinence of the customers [...] he would go up-stairs and beat his wife, kick his children about like dogs, and be as furious for two of three minutes as a man chained down in Bedlam'.³⁹ The tradesman must possess the restraint and self-mastery that these female shoppers do not. Interestingly, Campbell's entry for the Milliner, which he describes as 'no Male trade', does not echo his description of the male Mercer.⁴⁰ The comparison of these texts therefore supports Kowaleski-Wallace's view of the dichotomy between male and female, control and emotion, rationality and

³⁸ Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, p. 21; Stobart, Hann, and Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*, p. 148.

³⁹ Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman*, pp. 114-115.

⁴⁰ Campbell, *London Tradesman*, p. 206.

disruption.⁴¹ Masculine power was needed to keep the frivolous female in her place, and to ensure that she contributed productively to the economy through purchasing.

The 1772 print, *The Unwelcome Customer* (Figure 2.1), is perhaps the earliest visual portrayal of the trope of the frivolous female consumer. This engraving was taken from a painting by John Collett, a graphic satirist whose work demonstrates an interest in social weaknesses and absurdities.⁴² This image shows a bull forcefully entering a milliner's shop, while a male figure attempts to restrain the beast. This image is chaotic, with fainting shop attendants, snarling dogs, and frightened children scattered across the scene. Centre stage in this depiction of discord is the female consumer and her companion, disrupted from their inspection of a box of ribbons and laces, which is now tumbling onto the floor in disarray. These two women, illuminated and placed in the foreground of the image, draw the viewer's eye. It is this pair of shoppers, rather than the bull, who are the unwelcome customers. Just as the bull clumsily and thoughtlessly rampages through the shop, so too do these women disrupt and disorder the shop space, while the central figure throws up her hands as a sign of innocence.

The image is an early representation of the concept behind the idiom of the 'bull in a china shop'. A 'bull' was a vulgar by-word for a blunder, which itself meant to act blindly.⁴³ The phrase was in common use by the early nineteenth century: an 1834 song, entitled *A Bull in a China Shop*, even contained the lyrics 'he play'd mag's

⁴¹ Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, p. 84.

⁴² Patricia Crown, 'Sporting with Clothes: John Collet's Prints in the 1770', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 26, no. 1 (2002): pp. 119–35; Caitlin Blackwell, 'John Collet (c.1725-1780): A Commercial Comic Artist' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of York, 2013).

⁴³ Francis Grose, *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (London: S. Hooper, 1785), p. 34.

diversion among all the crates, he splinter'd the dishes, and dish'd all the plates'.⁴⁴ This damaging of the goods echoes the disorder created by the mischievous 'day-goblins' in Rebecca's letter in the *Spectator*, more than fifty years earlier. The vilified consumer can be seen to haphazardly and blindly rummage through the products, while the shop-attendants scurry around trying to minimise the damage caused, or simply fainting in distress.



Figure 2.1. James Caldwell, after John Collett, *The Unwelcome Customer*, 1772, British Museum, 1860,0623.22.

⁴⁴ Anon, 'A Bull in a China Shop', in *The Universal Songster, or Museum of Mirth* (London: Jones, 1834).

This damage is not only physical, as goods are scattered across the room, but financial and legal. Looming at the back of the image are two be-wigged lawyers. One of these men is helping the other up onto the counter, as they simultaneously take possession of the shop, and remove themselves from the dangerous path of the bull. The satirical intention here is twofold. Firstly, the lawyers are abandoning the shop floor, finding it too dangerous to stand in the path of the approaching bull, and therefore withdrawing themselves from liability. Secondly, in positioning them as scrambling onto the counter, a central element of the shop space in the negotiation of sales, they as shown to take control of the shop as a space for business and sales.⁴⁵ The significance of this depiction is that the consumption habits of the unwelcome customer have driven the retailer into debt, and made their business unviable, meaning that the patriarchal figure of the lawyer has had to take control. Here, the artist has emphasised an interesting perspective of the gender dynamics of consumption, which is also evident elsewhere in the image. For example, to the far left of the image, behind the rioting bull, stands a male figure attempting to restrain the bull. The implication here is that the women at the centre of the image, like the bull, are incapable of self-restraint, meaning that male influence is required in order to curb their excessive and disruptive shopping habits. Elite masculinity relied upon concepts such as restraint and self-control - virtuous characteristics which these women appear wholly without.⁴⁶ They

⁴⁵ Cox, *The Complete Tradesman*, p. 87; Stobart, *Sugar and Spice*, p. 130; Claire Walsh, 'Shop Design and the Display of Goods in Eighteenth Century London', *Journal of Design History* 8 (1995): pp. 157–76, p. 163.

⁴⁶ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 96; Michele Cohen and John Tosh, *Masculinity: Men Defining Men and Gentlemen, 1560-1918* (Marlborough: Adam Matthews, 2000), p. 12; Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (Harlow: Pearson, 2001), p. 71; see also Hitchcock and Cohen, *English Masculinities*.

are portrayed as requiring the interference of a masculine influence in order to reign in their excess.

The two central figures are not the only female consumers depicted in this image, although it is interesting to observe that the third female consumer is overshadowed by the frivolous women at centre stage. In other words, the virtuous female consumer is eclipsed by her vilified counterpart. An imaginary diagonal line divides the image, with the vilified consumer and the bull taking the left side of the composition, and the virtuous consumer and her companions, the right. This woman is depicted as the protector of home and family, as she courageously uses a cane to shield her husband and child from the encroaching bull, while the child cowers behind her father. This family group have also been browsing, but in a more constrained manner, with only one type of lace being scrutinised. The shop attendant serving them has also had time to carefully put away the other items they have looked at in the boxes behind the counter, enabling a more restrained, controlled, and virtuous browsing practise. This virtuous female consumer is depicted in the role of wife and mother, a paragon of harmonious domestic goodness. This representation of motherhood as a state of moral and material guardianship ties in with arguments made in women's and family history, which see the mother as increasingly being characterised as the virtuous guardian of the nursery and domestic hearth.⁴⁷ In this image, virtuous, productive modes of consumption are depicted as being inextricably linked to the merits of a good wife, and the ideal woman. This emerging character of the productive,

⁴⁷ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 335-43; Ruth Perry, 'Colonizing the Breast: Sexuality and Maternity in Eighteenth-Century England', in *Forbidden History: The State, Society, and the Regulation of Sexuality in Modern Europe*, ed. John Fout (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 107-37; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 92.

rational, and virtuous consumer would begin to recast the consumer as a skilled and positive figure in both domestic and national life.

2.4 The Consumer's Work, 1775-1820

An explicit link must be drawn between the woman as consumer, and the woman as wife and mother. The interconnection between these two figures was key to the development of the female consumer as a productive character in the later decades of the eighteenth century. The mother, in particular, was recast in a pedagogical role in the later decades of the eighteenth century, and with this educational responsibility to her children also came an obligation to lead by example, and to remodel the mother's role within the household in a rational, productive light.⁴⁸ Jan de Vries has categorised two distinct forms of household economy towards the close of the period in question: those in which the woman acted as manager and overseer, and those which followed the breadwinner-homemaker binary.⁴⁹ In both of these models, it is the wife and mother who took the role of consumer, not as a use of leisure time, but as a means of contributing to the flow of the household economy, and the nurturing and maintenance of the home and the family. These households, characterised by de Vries as middling and elite households which kept servants, were increasingly consuming a wide variety of goods, which brought comfort and fashionability into the home.

⁴⁸ Terry Lovell, 'Subjective Powers? Consumption, the Reading Public, and Domestic Woman in Early Eighteenth Century England', in *The Consumption of Culture, 1660-1800: Image, Object, Text*, ed. John Brewer and Ann Bermingham (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 23–41; Joanne Bailey, *Parenting in England, 1760-1830: Emotion, Identity, and Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 4.

⁴⁹ de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*, pp. 186-87.

Acknowledging contemporary perceptions of the female consumer as a significant economic role within the framework of the household is key to the character of the consumer. This redefinition of the consumer as a rational, productive figure was not confined to women in the role of homemakers, but also intersected with an attitude many middling women had held towards their own consumption for some time: that consumption was women's work. As Amanda Vickery has amply demonstrated, women's letters and diaries frequently refer to women's consumption in terms of employment and work. Betsy Sheridan, unmarried sister to playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan, assured her sister in the 1780s that 'I have business on my hands' in reference to her shopping, just as married homemaker Elizabeth Parker referred to her proxy shopping commissions in terms of 'employment'.⁵⁰ More recently, Kate Smith has reinterpreted browsing as a means of building up a somatic memory, which incorporated viewing both good and poor quality products to obtain market knowledge, recasting the frivolous consumer of the early century in a more productive role.⁵¹ Consumption was self-consciously defined as work by middling women in order to defend it as acceptable, and not as a 'degraded female hobby'.⁵²

The character of the good housewife and homemaker was made more complicated by a resistance amongst aspiring middling class women to the trouble of 'domestic cares'. In an edition of the *Lady's Magazine* from 1770, a reader complained that '[my new husband] is so provokingly absurd as to expect me to look after his household matters, tho' he knows I have always lived without having my mind

⁵⁰ Betsy Sheridan, *Betsy Sheridan's Journal: Letters from Sheridan's Sister, 1784-1786 and 1788-1790*, ed. William Le Fanu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 36; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 164.

⁵¹ Smith, 'Sensing Design and Workmanship', p. 7.

⁵² Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 163.

disturbed by domestic cares'.⁵³ The writer claims to be the daughter of a tradesman who acquired a significant fortune, and that she now considers herself to be a gentlewoman, and distances herself from 'that vulgar character, a good house-wife'. In line with de Vries' 'industrious revolution', the work of the parent had created the ability and opportunity for his offspring to indulge in leisure, and to aspire to politeness, and consequently to try to separate themselves from the prospect of labour or work.⁵⁴ The appearance of fashionable leisure had 'become a requirement of middle-class politeness'.⁵⁵

Isaac Cruikshank's 1808 caricature, *Miseries of Human Life* (Figure 2.2), sums up this dual consumer character. *Miseries of Human Life* was part of a series of caricatures which explored the calamities and woes of life in London at the turn of the nineteenth century, and accompanied a text by James Beresford of the same title.⁵⁶ This image depicts the female consumer contextualised within a broader urban context, on a par with the irritation of listening to a saw being sharpened and, in other images, muddy pavements. The two women in the shop, accompanied by the retailer, are examining a length of fabric in the natural daylight by the shop door, while their male companion waits in the carriage outside. The habit of these women to browse and inspect goods can be read as a skilled shopping practice: rational and productive. The women are using their initiative to gauge the quality and suitability of the fabric, and appear to disregard the simpering retailer who might attempt to cheat them out of money, or provide them with faulty advice.

⁵³ *The Lady's Magazine* (London: George Robinson, 1770), p. 462.

⁵⁴ de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*, pp. 40-43.

⁵⁵ Guest, *Small Change*, p. 83.

⁵⁶ James Beresford, *The Miseries of Human Life* (London: William Miller, 1806).



Figure 2.2. Isaac Cruikshank, *Miseries of Human Life*, 1808, DRO, D5459/3/20/6.

While it may be depicted in *Miseries of Human Life* as an acceptable, skilled, and positive practice for women, it is shown to frustrate men. Here, the figure of the consumer is both distinctly female, and in possession of enough leisure time to browse, while the man is impatient due to the ‘endless time’ he has had to waste while waiting, which could be spent in more constructive employment. William Gilpin, in his 1807 dialogues on the *Advantages of a Town Life and a Country Life*, argued that women should only be allowed to visit shops if they have specific errands to run, in order to ‘make the streets more comfortable, and commodious for those who had real business’.⁵⁷ This gendered tension in regards to the perception of women’s work as consumers underlines the significance of rationality and productivity in formulating a

⁵⁷ William Gilpin, ‘The Advantages of a Town Life and a Country Life’, in *Dialogues on Various Subjects* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1807), p. 153.

positive consumer character. Indeed, Robert Southey wrote in 1807 that it was the custom for English ladies to visit the shops as if they were going to see ‘curious exhibitions’.⁵⁸ Although suspicion and derision continued to be levied at the habits of the female consumer, these concerns were now in conversation with an emerging figure of the female consumer as skilled, productive, and market-aware.

2.5 The Deviant Consumer, 1775-1820

The emergence of the skilled female consumer character could also be subverted by female consumers themselves. By the 1790s, the browsing model outlined by Berry, and developed by Smith, prevailed as standard consumer practise, yet deviating from this mode of consumption could reveal an inherent lack of social awareness. An examination of Frances Burney’s depiction of the shopping habits of Mrs Mittin in her 1796 novel *Camilla* demonstrate this point. Keen to view the latest goods, yet wanting to avoid giving the impression of being a consumer, Mrs Mittin rouses suspicion by not conforming to the now established browsing practise. This deviation saw the consumer detach themselves even further from the retailer, sidestepping any potential allurements to purchase, and gaining purely visual access to the goods. Upon taking the heroine of Burney’s novel, Camilla, around the shopping streets of Southampton, her guardian, Mrs Mittin, attempts to advise her ward:

‘The thing is to find what we’ve got to look at; so don’t let’s go on without knowing what we’re about; however, these shops are all so monstrous smart, ‘twill be a pleasure to go into them, and ask the good people what there’s to see

⁵⁸ Robert Southey, *Letters from England*, ed. Jack Simmons (London: Cresset Press, 1951), p. 69.

in the town’...This pretext proved so fertile to her entertainment, in the opportunity it afforded of taking a near view of the various commodities exposed to sale, that while she entered almost every shop, with inquiries of what was worth seeing, she attended to no answer nor information, but having examined and admired all the goods within sight or reach, walked off, to obtain, by similar means, a similar privilege further on; boasting to Camilla, that, by this clever device they might see all that was smartest, without the expense of buying anything at all.⁵⁹

Mrs Mitten appears to triumph in what she clearly sees as a clever and innovative scheme. She is demonstrated through the plot to be officious, and leads Camilla into disgrace and debt. Mrs Mittin is driven by curiosity and an irresponsible lack of awareness about the consequences of her actions – a clear contrast to the rational, skilled consumer figure. Samuel Richardson’s Charlotte Grandison comments that ‘of ten ladies, six will be gone to the sales, or to plague tradesman, and buy nothing: Anywhere rather than home: The devil’s at home’.⁶⁰ Such women were perceived by William Alexander, writing in 1779, as ‘thoughtless of their folly’ or ‘exulting at the thoughts of the trouble and disturbance they have given’.⁶¹ Whether thoughtless or artful, this lack of sensibility was perceived as an attack on behavioural norms. This view is summarised in Austen’s depiction of Mrs Palmer, ‘whose eye was caught by

⁵⁹ Frances Burney, *Camilla, a Picture of Youth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 607.

⁶⁰ Samuel Richardson, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, ed. Jocelyn Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), letter xxxvii.

⁶¹ William Alexander, *The History of Women, from the Earliest Antiquity, to the Present Time, Giving Some Account of Almost Every Interesting Particular Concerning That Sex, among All Nations, Ancient and Modern* (2 vols, London: J. A. Husband, 1779), 1, p. 98.

every thing pretty, expensive, or new; who was wild to buy all, could determine on none, and dawdled away her time in rapture and indecision'.⁶²

However, the key difference between Mrs Mittin and the browsing female consumer is that she does not fully engage with the shopkeepers, feigning to ask directions and seek information about the town, whilst subversively and clandestinely seeking to view goods without laying herself open to being encouraged to spend money. Mrs Mittin's failure is that she apes a polite practice of shopping, but fails to fully imitate it, completely detaching herself from the positive, commercial traits of the consumer. Harriet Guest has termed Mrs Mittin's actions as 'exploitative impoliteness'.⁶³ This misappropriation of an accepted shopping habit was compounded by Camilla's inexperience:

It is possible that this might safely have been repeated, from one end of the town to the other [...] but Camilla, who, absent and absorbed, accompanied without heeding her, was of a figure and appearance not quite so well adapted for indulging with impunity such idle curiosity. [...] Some supposed they were only seeking to attract notice; others thought they were deranged in mind; and others, again, imagined they were shoplifters, and hastened back to their counters, to examine what was missing of their goods.⁶⁴

Burney implies that it is possible for women to 'indulge with impunity such idle curiosity', and indeed her other works and personal diaries imply an active interest in

⁶² Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, ed. James Kinsley, Margaret Ann Doody, and Claire Lamont (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 142.

⁶³ Guest, *Small Change*, p. 77.

⁶⁴ Burney, *Camilla, a Picture of Youth*, p. 607.

and engagement with consumption.⁶⁵ However, Mrs Mittin and Camilla fail to achieve this, and their actions instead are observed as remarkable. They do not request to see goods, or set themselves up as potential customers in any way. Instead, they appear to deceive, masquerading as visitors after directions, instead of curious consumers. This is compounded by Burney's description of the reactions of the shopkeepers to these women. These retailers, all depicted as male, are convinced that there must be some sinister, hidden reason for their underhand and remarkable behaviour. They are seen as either seeking attention, being mad, or shoplifters.

The allusion to shoplifting is also of interest here, both in a literal and metaphorical sense. On the one hand, as Kowaleski-Wallace and Guest have both pointed out, gratifying curiosity without making a purchase can be seen as a form of theft.⁶⁶ The consumer has received information from the shopkeeper, but the shopkeeper has received nothing in exchange. This is exacerbated in *Camilla* by the fact that Mrs Mittin causes Camilla to run up debts through credit to a milliner which she cannot repay, which eventually causes Camilla's reputation to be damaged – a clear warning to young, impressionable female readers. However, the behaviour of Mrs Mittin and Camilla also parallels that identified as suspicious in eighteenth-century shoplifting cases. Shoplifting was first specifically identified as an issue in the Act of 1699, which was even at that early date 'much increased'.⁶⁷ As Shelley Tickell has shown, eighteenth-century retailers were increasingly concerned about shoplifters, and many of these thefts occurred from shop windows or unmanned

⁶⁵ Frances Burney, *Evelina* (London: Thomas Lowndes, 1779); Frances Burney, *The Witlings*, ed. Peter Sabor and Geoffrey Sill (London: Broadview, 2002); Frances Burney, *Fanny Burney's Diary*, ed. John Wain (London: The Folio Society, 1961).

⁶⁶ Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, p. 92; Guest, *Small Change*, p. 77.

⁶⁷ Cox, *The Complete Tradesman*, p. 101.

counters, avoiding the need for the customer to interact with the retailer in order to access the goods.⁶⁸ One case, recorded in the Old Bailey, provides a detailed account of how the accused, Mary Hudson, was able to snatch some muslin from one counter, while her accomplice, Hannah Hobbs, kept the shopkeeper's attention at the opposite end of the shop.⁶⁹ To the retailer, the process of 'selective revelation' over the counter was necessary as a method of controlling the customer, whether or not they purchased goods.⁷⁰ In avoiding this established mode of interaction, Mrs Mittin and Camilla are, quite literally, suspected of villainy.

The *Shop-Lifter Detected* (Figure 2.3), a print after a painting by John Collet, depicts a young woman being apprehended, having attempted to hide a length of lace up her skirts, and another item within her bodice. Patricia Crown has argued that 'the exchange of smiles and glances prompts us to regard her pilfering as initiating a game of skill', and this could certainly be argued in reference to the coquettish smile she gives the man reaching into her bodice, and the immodest way she lifts her skirts to assist the figure pulling out the length of lace.⁷¹ The placing of the shop-lifter's hands over the most intimate part of her body is also significant, as the viewer is invited to question whether she is inviting the invasion of the more intimate parts of her body, or protecting herself from the invasive grasp of the shop men. The 'game' which the young shop-lifter plays has an undeniable sexual undertone as, corrupted by her material desire for goods, she is also debased, sexualised, and herself commoditised

⁶⁸ Shelley Tickell, 'The Prevention of Shoplifting in Eighteenth-Century London', *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* 2, no. 3 (2010): pp. 300–313; Joshua Bamfield, *Shopping and Crime* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 27; Shelley Tickell, 'Shoplifting in Eighteenth-Century England' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Hertfordshire, 2015).

⁶⁹ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, last accessed 17 April 2013), t17900915-36: 'September 1790, trial of Mary Hudson and Hannah Hobbs'.

⁷⁰ Walsh, 'Shop Design and the Display of Goods', p. 172.

⁷¹ Crown, 'Sporting with Clothes', p. 120.

as the young men grope at her body. Interestingly, as with Collett's *Unwelcome Customer* (Figure 2.1) it is again the intervention of male figures which is required in order to control female consumers, and maintain the economic stability of commerce. Here, we can turn to the importance of authenticity, as pointed out by Rauser.⁷² Although the shoplifter appears fashionably dressed and, as was discussed in chapter one, a respectable candidate for the receipt of credit, her fine garments – the finest depicted in the image – have potentially been pilfered and stolen. She is not the consumer and potential consumer that she appeared to be. As with Mrs Mittin, her appearance is deceptive.

The statue of Mercury – god of thieves, merchants, and artists – looms behind Collett's shoplifter, as a figure of both protection and judgement.⁷³ Collett's inclusion of this figure implies that Collett intended to comment not only on the deceptiveness of appearances and the sexual corruption of female consumers, but also on the moral corruption of materiality and luxury, and its simultaneous negative and positive effects on commerce. In other words, thievery and trade are intertwined in the events of the image, as they are through the classical mythology of Mercury. The shoplifter has been compelled to acquire the goods she feels she requires in order to participate in fashionable society through acting as an illicit consumer, rather than contributing to the national economy through purchasing these luxury goods. Deirdre Shauna Lynch has argued that consumers who left the shop with goods, but purchased on credit with no intention to pay, were accused of subverting consumption practice in a similar fashion.⁷⁴ This abuse of the credit system, which was at the heart of the functioning of

⁷² Rauser, *Caricature Unmasked*, p. 56.

⁷³ Crown, 'Sporting with Clothes', p. 120.

⁷⁴ Lynch, 'Counter Publics', p. 223.

commerce, could seriously affect the success of business, as was argued in chapter one. Lynch argues that this representational vilification of women who consumed goods without any intention of paying for them was common well into the nineteenth century. The shoplifter's crime can also be extended to the figure of the gadding female shopper. While the latter stole time, information, and knowledge, rather than the goods themselves, both figures are depicted as victims of the materialism of the 'world of goods', and victims of their own feminine material desires.



Figure 2.3. After John Collet, *Shop-Lifter Detected*, 1787, Lewis Walpole Library, 787.08.10.0.

2.6 The Productive Consumer

The overarching chronology of this chapter has painted the female consumer as an increasingly skilled and productive character in contemporary literary and visual culture. As Jon Stobart and Bruno Blondé have pointed out, it would be ‘a mistake to see consumers as helpless victims of the marketing techniques deployed by retailers’.⁷⁵ There has certainly been a trend in recent scholarly work on consumption to see consumers as active agents, whose skill and expertise as consumers caused them to be, if not immune, then wise to the marketing ploys of retailers.⁷⁶ While new displays and advertisements may have been designed to seduce and draw in female consumers with shows of novelty and luxury, representations of the consumer also show resistance to the retailer’s tricks, particularly during the last quarter of the century. Glennie and Thrift have argued that it is unlikely that consumers possessed a ‘complete intellectual framework...which they deployed when encountering commodities, other consumers, and consumption sites’.⁷⁷ However, possessing an all-encompassing knowledge of the market was not necessary in order for a consumer to act in an informed, moral, and economically responsible manner.

Fictional depictions of the consumer are useful when thinking about how consumers articulated their own knowledge, skill, and moral imperviousness to the coercion of retailers. The eponymous heroine of Burney’s 1778 novel *Evelina*, despite being unschooled and unpractised in the established behaviours of polite, urban consumption, is able to observantly remark that the haberdashers she encountered in

⁷⁵ Stobart and Blondé, *Selling Textiles*, p. 6.

⁷⁶ Bianchi, ‘Taste for Novelty and Novel Tastes’; Stobart, *Sugar and Spice*, p. 14.

⁷⁷ P. D. Glennie and N. J. Thrift, ‘Consumers, Identities, and Consumption Spaces in Early-Modern England’, *Environment and Planning* 28 (1996): pp. 25–45.

London were ready to take advantage of her, saying ‘I thought I should never have chosen a silk: for they produced so many, I knew not which to fix upon; and they recommended them all so strongly, that I fancy they thought I only wanted persuasion to buy every thing they showed me. And, indeed, they took so much trouble, I was almost ashamed I could not’.⁷⁸ Through this detached, almost mocking, remark, Burney shows Evelina to have the moral strength to not only resist the temptations of the material goods she is overwhelmed by, but also the flattery and selling techniques of the retailer. Her strong moral education, in spite of her lack of worldliness, had equipped her to resist the corruptions of fashionable goods, yet still to participate in the act of consumption.

This virtuous consumer characteristic – to resist the temptations of the overwhelming world of goods, yet to continue to consume and engage in the commercial market – has been observed by Guest to be a regular theme of periodical essays in the latter part of the century.⁷⁹ Guest has argued that these representations of the consumer draw out a key difference between consumption as a habit of expenditure, and as a commercial and fashionable necessity. Consumers needed to assimilate the objects they acquired into their own personal wardrobe as a visual articulation of identity, and to act within their own means, as opposed to allowing themselves to become swallowed up by the endless stream of dress, among other luxury goods, that might catch their fancy. In other words, the consumer was compelled to show discernment and discrimination in their consumption choices. This productive consumer, although perhaps not fully aware of the economic implications

⁷⁸ Burney, *Evelina*, p. 29.

⁷⁹ Guest, *Small Change*, p. 26.

of their consumption in a broader sense, was aware of the need for moral and financial control on their spending, and participation in the commercial economy.

The productive consumer was not only able to resist the corruption of material temptation which earlier depictions of the female consumer focussed upon, but also flattery and manipulation. The *Haberdasher Dandy* (Figure 2.4) provides an insightful example of this productive consumer at work. The image depicts two women, who have entered a haberdasher's shop, possibly seeking refuge from the rain, which two men outside continue to suffer in. In spite of having potentially entered the shop out of a desire to keep dry, they nevertheless are in the process of purchasing a length of cloth, and are consequently participating in a commercial exchange; whereas their predecessors, the frivolous consumer, may have simply browsed to escape the rain. Furthermore, that the ladies inside have brought in an umbrella with them, now resting on the stool, while the male figures outside have not, implies a message of female sense and awareness.

The theme of feminine sense and control is continued through the depiction of the skilled and knowledgeable shopping practise which Vickery and Smith have argued for.⁸⁰ This can be read through the array of discarded rolls of fabric which lie at one end of the counter, which have been inspected and compared, before a choice was made. The consumer has also removed her gloves, implying that she has haptically, as well as visually, examined the goods, coinciding with Smith's arguments about the importance of the haptic skills of the eighteenth-century shopper.⁸¹ The consumer's companion, instead of causing suspicion by looking around the shop without the assistance of a retailer, sits and observes her friend's transaction.

⁸⁰ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 164; Smith, 'Sensing Design and Workmanship', p. 2.

⁸¹ Smith, 'Sensing Design and Workmanship', pp. 1-10.



Figure 2.4. C. Williams, *The Haberdasher Dandy*, 1818, Lewis Walpole Library, 818.0.22.

It is the interaction between the consumer and the retailer – central to many of the frustrations felt towards the various forms of vilified consumer – which is key to this image. The issues of authenticity, directed at the consumer earlier in the century, had shifted onto the retailer.⁸² The ‘dandy haberdasher’ of the title is depicted as small and preening, much like the male retailers depicted in the *Bum Shop*, over thirty years earlier. These effeminate men were seen to have been corrupted by the fashionable goods they dealt in, and their close association induced in them a tendency to work-avoidance and negligence.⁸³ The dandy retailers were described in one satirical

⁸² Rauser, *Caricature Unmasked*, p. 56.

⁸³ Raven, *Judging New Wealth*. See in particular p. 184.

pamphlet through association with their goods as ‘Knights of Cambric! Heroes of Buckram!...Hero of Kid and Cotton!’.⁸⁴ The same pamphlet goes on to echo the marauding sexuality of these retailers’ selling tactics, declaring ‘let amorous intrigues occupy your sole attention; and when females enter the shop, behave towards them with the politeness [sic] yet wicked attention of woman-hunting nobility’. This predatory behaviour was not directed towards the making of sales and the commercial success of their trade, but rather towards the gain of personal social and sexual dominance. This fawning behaviour was depicted in the *Haberdasher Dandy*, in which the figure of the retailers says ‘HeHe! nothing talked of but Dandies Mem now Men! what is the next thing I shall have the felicity to do for you Mem!!’.

In the *Haberdasher Dandy*, the retailer’s dominance is challenged by the skill and discernment of the productive consumer. The consumer is depicted as matching the s-shaped stance of the retailer, and placing her arms firmly on the counter which separates them. The counter acted as a mark of division, as well as a platform for display and interaction, facilitating the transaction. The practical and metaphorical significance of the counter as a site for the mediation of consumption has been generally accepted.⁸⁵ In placing her arms on this space, the consumer takes control of both her own consumption, and the transaction as a whole, asserting herself over the retailer. This authority is compounded by her speech, which reads: ‘The next thing, Mr Dandy is to measure that over again, and see how much you hav [sic] cut short’. On the one hand, this comment, and the image as a whole, is a comment on the effeminacy, or rather lack of masculinity, of men working in the feminised trade of

⁸⁴ J Bisset, *Dandyism Displayed Or the Follies of the Ton* (London: Duncombe, 1800), p. 12.

⁸⁵ Cox, *The Complete Tradesman*, pp. 76-79; Stobart, Hann, and Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*, pp. 126-30.

fashion retail. However, it also comments on the changing figure of the consumer. This female consumer is no longer the victim of the schemes of sexually and commercially predatory retailers. Instead, she is asserting both her own control over the consumption process, and her awareness of the potential that the retailer could sell her short. This productive consumer is aware of their own commercial significance, and is keen to protect both their own financial and material interests, and to fully engage with the commercial market.

To support my assertion that by the turn of the nineteenth century the consumer had evolved into a respectable, skilled, and economically aware female role, let us reassess one of a much-referenced series of pictures in histories of retailing and consumption alongside its accompanying text: that is the image of the interior of Messers Harding, Howell and Co., linen drapers, which was published in Rudolph Ackermann's *Repository of Arts* in 1809 (Figure 2.5). This image is contemporaneous with *Miseries of Human Life* (Figure 2.2), and supports the depiction of consumer skill shown in the latter. This image, and its accompanying text, lend credence to my argument that by the early nineteenth century the figure of the productive consumer had evolved into a dominant representation of the consumer, and that the positive image of luxury consumption, shown by Raven to have been put forward in economic texts, had also gained ground in literary and visual representations.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Raven, *Judging New Wealth*, p. 162.



Figure 2.5. Messers Harding, Howell and Co., 1809, British Library, Ktop XXVII.
From *Repository of Arts* (London: Rudolph Ackermann, 1809).

The accompanying text is insightful in its description of the current business conducted in the building. In this text, it is advertised that Harding, Howell and co. employed forty people on the premises to make up articles for sale, as well as a number of artisans ‘engaged in supplying the concern with novelties’.⁸⁷ Aside from supporting Bianchi’s arguments about the importance of novelty in drawing in consumers, this assertion also provides evidence of the importance of both the quality of goods, and the material knowledge and skill of the retailer. Possession of material literacy was also a significant consideration for the consumer, as this image amply demonstrates. It is an excellent example of what Smith has termed the ‘haptic skills’ of consumers.⁸⁸ Smith has argued that touching products focussed attention on the goods, and that

⁸⁷ Rudolph Ackermann, ‘Harding, Howell and Co.’s Grand Fashionable Magazine’, *Repository of Arts, Literature and Commerce* (London: Rudolph Ackermann, 1809), 1, p. 187.

⁸⁸ Smith, ‘Sensing Design and Workmanship’, p. 6.

through the act of grasping, consumers were able to draw comparisons, and make informed consumption choices. Almost all of the female consumers in the image from the *Repository of Arts* are engaging with products in this way, running lengths of fabric through their fingers. Furthermore, the depiction of the shop's design also supported this, with lengths of fabric displayed for passing consumers to touch and inspect.⁸⁹

The text also raises another significant issue discussed in chapter one: the domestic and international origins of goods. The text claims that: 'there is scarcely a manufacturing town in the kingdom but what is laid under contribution by this establishment', demonstrating that consumers were keen to know the geographical origin of the goods they purchased, even to the regional extent suggested by Berry.⁹⁰ However, it is not only domestically produced goods which are advertised as being sold, as the text goes on to say: 'the attention of whose spirited proprietors is not confined to native productions, but extends to every article of foreign manufacture which there is any possibility of obtaining'.⁹¹ In spite of the attempts of the *Society of the Arts* amongst others, the British consumer still desired the exoticism of foreign luxuries, and was not consistently interested in promoting British manufacture.⁹² On the one hand, this advertisement appealed to the patriotic consumer, wishing to support domestic industry. On the other, it was continuing to sustain the interest of the consumer who desired choice. This choice can be articulated both through the array of goods on offer, but also the autonomy of the consumer to make those choices, rather than being restricted by the market. The importance of consumer choice has generally

⁸⁹ Walsh, 'Shop Design and the Display of Goods', pp. 157-176.

⁹⁰ Ackermann, 'Harding, Howell and Co.'s Grand Fashionable Magazine', p. 187; Berry, 'Promoting Taste in the Provincial Press'.

⁹¹ Ackermann, 'Harding, Howell and Co.'s Grand Fashionable Magazine', p. 187.

⁹² Berg, 'New Commodities, Luxuries, and Their Consumers', p. 77.

been acknowledged amongst historians of consumption, and it was clearly a significant concern for the productive consumer.⁹³ This expressly diverse selection of goods signals the coming of the consumer of the free market – who is educated and literate, but given the opportunity to choose.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the character of the female consumer of dress was a prominent figure in contemporary literary and visual culture. This figure underwent a clear, if gradual evolution through the century, which saw the emergence of a productive and skilled consumer character. Early in the century, she was vilified and victimised, reproached for both spending too much and spending too little, and was generally accused of an inauthenticity of appearances.⁹⁴ As consumers became better trained in material and economic literacy, acceptance for the browsing consumer increased, meaning that although the activity of consumption was still gendered as female, it nevertheless gained compliance and understanding in the press. To browse became an accepted and essential part of the consumption process, and was in turn encouraged and supported by retailers.

This shift in the public image of the consumer was due to a number of factors, not least the changing attitudes to female publicity, and a repositioning of the consumer in relation to the domestic economy and the home. However, while the economic advantages of fashionable and luxury consumption were espoused in economic texts of the period, literary and visual culture took longer to accept the

⁹³ Bianchi, 'Taste for Novelty and Novel Tastes', pp. 64-87; Mitchell, *Tradition and Innovation*, p. 10.

⁹⁴ Rauser, *Caricature Unmasked*, p. 56; Smith, 'Sensing Design and Workmanship', p. 2.

consumer as a positive social and economic force, with acknowledgement of consumer skill failing to emerge until the 1770s. This accepted, and increasingly celebrated figure of the productive consumer was market aware and materially literate, able to make consumer choices, and to provide positive support to the national economy. Frivolous consumers would consistently be satirised and mocked, but the figure of the productive consumer gained strength and cultural recognition.

SECTION TWO

TRAINING AND THE LIFECYCLE

CHAPTER THREE

Training the Child Consumer

In order to resist the destructive passions, such as those exhibited in the representations of the unproductive, frivolous consumer of the previous chapter, eighteenth-century pedagogues argued that children were in need of early instructive discipline.¹ Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849), together with her father Richard (1744-1817), wrote in 1798 that ‘the false associations which have early influence upon the imagination...produce the furious passions and miserable vices’.² These ‘passions’ referred to more than simple emotion. Rather, they were psychosomatic experiences which could be overcome with rationality and science.³ Similarly, pedagogical writings viewed the negative aspects of the figure of the consumer to be surmountable through early instructive discipline and the development of self-regulation.

This late eighteenth-century interest in pedagogy, and increasing acknowledgement of earlier pedagogical works, led to the shaping of what Andrew O’Malley has termed the ‘modern child’.⁴ This work held John Locke’s (1632-1704) notion of the infant being born as *tabula rasa*, roughly meaning clean slate, at its core. Locke first posed this theory in his 1693 work, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, as a philosophical and psychological observation on the development of children, and the mechanisms of the acquisition of knowledge. In other words, the education of the

¹ O’Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child*, pp. 89, 102.

² Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education* (2 vols, New York: Garland, 1974), 2, p. 727.

³ Helen Yallop, *Age and Identity in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 19.

⁴ O’Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child*, p. 4.

individual whilst in the state of childhood, when their mind was blank and easily impressionable, was essential for the moulding of a rational adult. Those who would succeed as adults were those who had received the most appropriate education as young children, who had applied themselves industriously, and had acquired the most useful skills and knowledge.⁵ This skill and knowledge encompassed not only religious or academic education, but also the moulding and training of the practical economic and material skills of the child, both as producer and consumer, ensuring their social and economic future.⁶

In this chapter, I argue that the rational, active, and productive female consumer, whom I have identified to have emerged in later eighteenth-century portrayals of women as consumers, was partially the product of this evolving attitude to children's education, and the early training of the female child to enable them to practise economically and materially skilled consumption. This was primarily manifested in the conscious development of the child's economic and material literacy, and was enacted through training in accounting and sewing, the use of moralistic and socially instructive educative materials, and through instructive play. The materials for this education were prolific from the mid-century, and could take the form of pocket books, children's stories, play dolls, and paper dolls, or they could be homemade by the mother or children. These didactic materials will form the primary source base for this chapter, alongside contemporary pedagogical writing, letters, and diaries. I argue that the rise in both availability and use of these materials

⁵ Ibid., p. 5; see also Glaser, 'Gendering Childhoods'; Anja Müller, *Framing Childhood in Eighteenth-Century English Periodicals and Prints, 1689-1789* (London: Ashgate, 2009); Karen Smith, *The Government of Childhood: Discourse, Power and Subjectivity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁶ McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, *Birth of a Consumer Society*, pp. 286–315.

from the middle of the eighteenth century, and especially in the final decades and at the turn of the century, indicates the development of pedagogical attitudes, but more specifically an increased recognition of the importance of childhood training in order to mould consummate and skilled consumers. In other words, the figure of the consumer was recognised as requiring training and moulding in order to be financially responsible, a careful and skilled purchaser, and to have a positive economic influence on the national economy.

3.1 Pedagogy and Parenthood

Pedagogical writing of the eighteenth century, while it acknowledged the importance of the child as malleable and mouldable, focussed upon the figure whom that child would become. A key element of Locke's arguments in the late seventeenth century, although primarily aimed at boys, had been for the appropriateness of a child's education for the achievement of a focussed career, whether landowner, trader, banker, soldier, or doctor. Similarly, when mentioned in educational treatise, female children were perceived not as little girls, but as future women.⁷ Mary Wollstonecraft wrote in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) that 'females are made women of when they are mere children'.⁸ Their education focussed on the training of skills and the acquisition of knowledge which would appropriately suit their adult role – normally as household manager, wife, and mother – and they are referred to in this way. The primary mode of teaching suggested is through example. Although middle- and upper-

⁷ Glaser, 'Gendering Childhoods', p. 190.

⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, ed. Miriam Brody (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 145.

class boys tended to be sent to school around the ages of 6 or 7, girls were generally – although not exclusively – kept at home to be taught by their mother, or a similar female figure, such as a governess.⁹ This home schooling meant that the mother was recast in a more active role in the transmission of cultural values and practices across generations.¹⁰ Samuel Richardson's eponymous *Pamela*, when contemplating the delights of motherhood, reflected on the mother's role to oversee 'the dawning of reason in [her children], to direct their little passions'.¹¹ The mother's role was consequently integral to the successful development of rational and virtuous adults, and the absent or neglectful mother was a figure to be despised.¹²

The mother, in her didactic role, was primarily guided by instructive literature. This could take the form of conduct manuals, such as *The Lady's Preceptor* (1743) and *The Polite Academy* (1768).¹³ Such books cemented the morals and lessons which the mother should instil in the child in order for them to successfully prepare for their adult role.¹⁴ *The Polite Academy*, for example, contained a conversation staged in a toy shop.¹⁵ This piece, aiming to amuse as well as instruct, depicts various customers entering a toy shop, interacting with the retailer, and asking the questions which a consumer should and should not ask. One exchange, over a pocket book, is particularly insightful. The retailer espouses the merits of the book, and how it may be used to self-

⁹ Arizpe, Styles, and Brice Heath, *Reading Lessons from the Eighteenth Century*, p. 8.

¹⁰ Lovell, 'Subjective Powers?', p. 37; Bailey, *Parenting in England*, p. 4.

¹¹ Quoted in Arizpe, Styles, and Brice Heath, *Reading Lessons from the Eighteenth Century*, p. 7.

¹² Eleanor Fenn, *Rational Sports in Dialogues Passing Among the Children of a Family* (London: John Marshall, 1783), p. xi. Marilyn Francus, *Monstrous Motherhood: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Ideology of Domesticity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2012), pp. 170-202.

¹³ Abbé d'Ancourt, *The Lady's Preceptor. Or, a Letter to a Young Lady of Distinction upon Politeness*, trans. Anon (London: J. Watts, 1743); Anon, *The Polite Academy; Or, School of Behaviours for Young Gentlemen and Ladies* (London: B. Collins, 1768).

¹⁴ Perry, 'Colonising the Breast', pp. 107-137.

¹⁵ Anon, *The Polite Academy*, pp. 101-110.

regulate the owner's time and money.¹⁶ However, the frivolous consumer, depicted as an example of folly, sees it only as a 'curiosity' and disregards it.¹⁷

More specific pedagogical literature was widely available from the early eighteenth century, and alongside Locke, this included translations of the works by the French François Fénelon (1651-1715). Fénelon's 1687 work, *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter*, was especially influential. It was translated and revised into English in 1713 by Dr George Hickes, an English clergyman and scholar, and, although progressive, espoused virtues which were reflected in a number of the teaching materials used by mothers in later eighteenth-century England. In his work, Fénelon (via Hickes) argued that girls needed to be taught how to, as women, keep their 'worldly goods...in order'.¹⁸ Furthermore, he warned against softness in women in order to avoid the 'great number of mistakes and extravagances which will be apt to expose them to scorn and ridicule'.¹⁹ This softness and extravagance were key traits shown in the previous chapter to have caused the downfall of ignorant consumers at the hands of forceful retailers.

Fénelon similarly argued against excess and vanity in dress – a theme which arises in a number of didactic sources examined throughout this chapter. Chapter ten of his *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter* is entirely devoted to this topic. Fénelon bemoaned that women were 'so passionately in love with Dressing', and that the purchase of 'an Hood, an End of Ribbon, a Curl of Hair' was an important matter.²⁰ Moreover, he linked this love of clothing to the ruin of families, and in turn the ruin

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 109.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁸ François Fénelon, *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter Done into English, and Revised by Dr George Hickes*, trans. George Hickes (London: James Reid, 1713), p. 92.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 144.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 157.

of states – an early acknowledgement of the potential impact of individual consumers’ actions upon to the national economy. Instead, Fénelon argued for a balanced bringing together of virtue and beauty, in which the woman’s attention to dress was regulated and informed by her broader education, but was by no means non-existent. ‘Neatness, proportion and decency’ are promoted, as well as an almost prophetic appreciation of the ‘Nobel Simplicity which appears in the Statues...which remain of the Greek and Roman women...[with] Draperies full and carefully hanging’, which would influence fashion so strongly a century later.²¹ Fénelon’s arguments are not unique, and were reflected in numerous treatise on luxury and political economy considered in the previous chapter of this thesis. However, what is most significant here is that they are specifically directed towards a female audience, specifically mothers, with the intention that these values are instilled in a new generation of young women. These values were to be taught alongside household skills and moral judgement, in order to enable women to support men in the execution of the public good.²²

3.2 Economic Literacy and the Pocket Book

The majority of existing scholarly research has focussed on the textual education of children, and their philosophical and literary knowledge.²³ These aspects are undoubtedly important, however, before moving on to consider them, I wish to

²¹ Ibid., p. 163.

²² O’Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child*, p. 117.

²³ Glaser, ‘Gendering Childhoods’, pp. 189-198; see also Arizpe, Styles, and Brice Heath, *Reading Lessons from the Eighteenth Century*; Arianne Baggerman, ‘The Moral of the Story: Children’s Reading and the Catechism of Nature around 1800’, in *Making Knowledge in Early Modern Europe: Practices, Objects, and Texts, 1400-1800*, ed. Pamela H. Smith and Benjamin Schmidt (London: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Matthew Grenby, *The Child Reader, 1700-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

highlight the overlooked topic of the economic education of children. That children should learn accounts was supported by Locke in the 1690s. He argued that children should be encouraged ‘to learn perfectly merchants’ accounts, and not to think it is a skill that belongs not to them, because it has received its name from, and has been chiefly practised by, men of traffic’.²⁴ Locke encouraged accounting as a means of self-regulation, which would enable analysis of an individual’s spending, rather than to provide dissuasion to consume.

It was not until the mid-eighteenth century that pedagogical writing and materials aimed at girls began to acknowledge the importance of a girl’s economic literacy. The Abbé D’Ancourt, in the anonymous 1743 translation of *The Lady’s Preceptor*, encouraged that girls be taught ‘enough arithmetic to prevent her being deceived by merchants’.²⁵ Although D’Ancourt considered other skills, such as handwriting, as being more ‘improving’ occupations for young girls, this early acknowledgement of the importance of the development of female economic literacy directly relates to the tensions and concerns felt about the softness and susceptibility of female consumers. If taught at an early age how to manage her money, and to have the skill and confidence in her arithmetic to challenge untrustworthy merchants, the woman whom this girl would become would be a more effective consumer and household manager. This would save her from the pitfalls faced by the gadding female consumers of contemporary satire.

The enactment of this childhood training in arithmetic and accounting is most clearly evident in contemporary pocket books, which were purchased and used by both

²⁴ John Locke, *The Works of John Locke* (12 vols, London: Rivington, 1824), 8, pp. 199-201.

²⁵ d’Ancourt, *The Lady’s Preceptor*, p. 59.

girls and women.²⁶ Pocket books acted as moral and economic shields for young women, providing them with indispensable knowledge, and making them accountable for their own financial outlay.²⁷ These small books, usually measuring around five inches by three inches, became popular from the mid-century, and were available under a plethora of titles. They could literally be carried in a lady's pocket, and contained moral essays and stories, as well as 'useful hints' pages, new dances, and tables of the sun's movement. However, these volumes were dominated by the almanac and accounting pages. In copies viewed of *The Ladies' Own Memorandum Book*, which ran from 1767 to 1805, over three quarters of the volumes were taken up with this section, entitled 'A Perpetual Diary'.²⁸ This diary consisted of two pages for each week of the year, which were divided into columns for the 'account of cash', 'received' divided into pounds, shillings and pence, 'paid', and finally 'memorandums and remarks'. It is the financial transactions, rather than social meetings or visits, which dominate this record of the week. In doing so, these books provided an economic framework through which girls should navigate their time. The preface to John Newbery's 1753 *Ladies Compleat Pocket Book* reiterated the importance of the financial element of these publications:

'There is nothing more necessary to make Life easy and comfortable than to keep and exact, plain, and explicit Account of our daily Expenses, that we may be able to regulate them in Time, and not run blindfold into Errors which are

²⁶ Rebecca Elisabeth Connor, *Women, Accounting, and Narrative: Keeping Books in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 5.

²⁷ Batchelor, 'Fashion and Frugality', p. 2.

²⁸ See, for example *The Ladies' Own Memorandum Book* (London: George Robinson, 1775); *The Ladies' Own Memorandum Book* (London: George Robinson, 1780); *The Ladies' Own Memorandum Book* (London: George Robinson, 1782); also discussed in Connor, *Women, Accounting, and Narrative*, p. 5.

not to be retrieved...To prevent this fatal Precipitancy, you have here a Column appropriated to every Day in the Year for setting down your casual Disbursements...by looking only into this little Book, you will be capable of...keeping your Credit with Mankind'.²⁹

The warning given in this preface emphasised that a woman's financial failure was a 'fatal Precipitancy', which robbed her of both her financial and social credit. These books could quite literally function as a regulator of the credit system, allowing the female consumer to record what she owed as well as what she had paid, encouraging the self-regulation of her credit, and the prevention of her becoming a casualty of credit through over-consumption.³⁰

Some pocket books specifically aimed to help children self-regulate their expenditure. John Newbery, a prolific pocket book publisher, published *The Important Pocket Book* in the 1760s, which was aimed at both boys and girls, with the title page inscription: 'He that keeps his Accounts may keep his family, but he that keeps no Account may be kept by the Parish'.³¹ This correlation between fiscal and moral status was emphasised throughout didactic literature of the period. The message is continued throughout this particular publication, with the columns of the almanac section divided in a 'Money Account' and 'Moral Account'. The former was intended to record money paid and received, and the latter to record good and bad deeds, often with a financial element. For example, sample entries refer to the giving of small amounts of money to poor women and children. Similarly, *The Minor's Pocket Book*, which ran from the 1790s to the 1840s and was also aimed specifically at children, contained similar

²⁹ *The Ladies Compleat Pocket-Book* (London: John Newbery, 1752).

³⁰ Wennerlind, *Casualties of Credit*.

³¹ *The Important Pocket Book* (London: John Newbery, 1765), p. 1.

accounting pages.³² This apparatus for financial self-regulation was supplemented by tables of coach fares, and more importantly, a table educating the young reader about money calculations, and providing information on the breakdown of one pound into shillings and pence. Keeping practical financial records was a form of practice accounting, encouraging children to take charge of the small amount of pocket money they controlled, and to regulate their own spending, developing their personal sense of economic literacy.

3.3 Experiencing Education

Whether these instructions were followed by the children who owned these pocket books, or whether they used them in an idiosyncratic manner, is a matter of some debate.³³ Lorna Weatherill pointed out that ladies' pocket books of the eighteenth century rarely reflected personal finances with accuracy.³⁴ Their owners often recorded their expenditure and income arbitrarily, reflecting personal priorities. The use of these books has also been shown by Rebecca Elisabeth Conner to blur the personal and financial, with the columns often ambiguously used or misused. Furthermore, the account pages, when they are filled, often did not balance, and simply acted as a loose record of money spent.³⁵ Perhaps surprisingly then, examples of pocket books filled in by young girls show, if not a scrupulous usage, a comparatively consistent approach.

³² O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child*, p. 104.

³³ Matthew Grenby, 'Delightful Instruction? Assessing Children's Use of Educational Books in the Long Eighteenth Century', in *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices*, ed. Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 181–98.

³⁴ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture*, p. 4.

³⁵ Connor, *Women, Accounting, and Narrative*, p. 12.

The pocket books of Fanny Knatchbull, née Austen Knight, niece to Jane Austen, provide an excellent example of this consistent usage. From the age of around ten in 1804, Fanny continually kept accounts of her expenditure. This habit continued into her adult life, providing an example of the effective implementation of this early economic training. The entries in the early diaries primarily record expenditure on ribbons and sweets. The expenditure on ribbons is particularly interesting here, as it provides evidence of early interactions with the milliners or haberdashers who would provide them.³⁶ As Jennie Batchelor has argued, the financial well-being and frugality evident in pocket books ran side-by-side with a recognition that dress was one of the most significant financial considerations for their readers.³⁷ *Harris's British Complete Ladies' Pocket Memorandum Book* for 1792 claimed that its aim was 'all of fashion and dress, With œconomy's dictates...to express'.³⁸ Fanny's purchase of ribbons marks an early reflection of this association between the purchase of fashionable items and the pocket book. It also makes evident a more significant point: that the economic training provided to shape the future woman-consumer was not theoretical, it was practical. In other words, girls entered shops and purchased things, engaging in the act of consumption.³⁹ The ultimate aim was to shape the adult female consumer in order to enable her to carry out her duties as household manager and overseer.⁴⁰ However, as a by-product this method of training also moulded the child consumer. Plumb has argued that this rise of the child as consumer was in part due to an increased interest

³⁶ KA, U951/F24/1-69: 'Diaries of Fanny Knatchbull, née Austen Knight'.

³⁷ Batchelor, 'Fashion and Frugality', p. 2.

³⁸ Anon, *Harris's British Complete Ladies' Pocket Memorandum Book* (London: H. Goldney, 1791), p. 2.

³⁹ KA, U951/F24/1-69: 'Diaries of Fanny Knatchbull, née Austen Knight'.

⁴⁰ de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*, pp. 186-87.

in investing in the future of the child.⁴¹ This was enacted through the use of the child as a vehicle for capital investment – through enabling them to practice their adult role, their future fiscal abilities would be secured.⁴²

Similarly to Fanny, Harriet Youell kept pocket books from around the age of ten. Only two of her pocket books survive, both from the early 1790s. Unlike Fanny, Harriet was less rigorous in recording her expenditure, only occasionally marking down odd figures. Her pocket books are more remarkable for the proliferation of sketches and scribbles which adorn them, demonstrating a sense of ownership and juvenile imagination, rather than serious economic practice. However, it is worth noticing the elements of the diary which Harriet did make use of, those being the memorandum and diary sections. Harriet used these to make occasional records of appointment or things which had occurred.⁴³

As observed in the previous chapter, one of the criticisms levied at frivolous consumers was that browsing and not purchasing was an unproductive use of their time. Pocket books advocated childhood training in the management of time, as well as money, and saw it as a prized commodity. Puritan writers, in particular, advised children to divide up the day into useful activities, and to be employed effectively at every moment.⁴⁴ Arguments for the efficient use of time were generally moral. However, *Mental Amusements*, a series of stories and essays for children published in 1797, published an essay entitled ‘On the Management of Time’, which intersected with the numeracy training afforded to children by providing a mathematical argument

⁴¹ McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, p. 287.

⁴² Daniel Thomas Cook, ‘Children’s Consumption in History’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption*, ed. Frank Trentmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 585–600.

⁴³ GYBA, Y/D 87/51-52: ‘Ladies Pocket Book, 1793-94’.

⁴⁴ O’Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child*, p. 102.

for the amount of time which can be lost through idleness.⁴⁵ Both money and time were key commodities in eighteenth-century society, and the early appreciation and regulation of these assets was increasingly enabled through the publication and use of pocket books.

Further information about girls' education can be gleaned from letters sent home by boarding school teachers. Boarding schools for girls became increasingly popular towards the end of the eighteenth century, in line with the simultaneous increase in pedagogical writing.⁴⁶ School teachers, often themselves educated young ladies who, through necessity, had sought employment, were seen as a 'mother-pedagogue', assuming the maternal role of guide and moulder of future women.⁴⁷ The letters sent by these teachers enable us to engage with the practical schooling of individual girls in a way which is significantly less ambiguous than the evidence of the auto-didactic pocket book. Furthermore, we are able to gauge which skills were particularly emphasised and prized by educators.

Frances and Charlotte Starkie, the two daughters of a Cheshire gentleman, attended a school in Twickenham from around 1804. The school was run by Mrs Fletcher, and her sisters the Misses Dutton, who were regularly called upon for reports on the girls' progress. The comments passed make only brief mention of their grammar and mathematical lessons, and primarily focus on their behaviour, and manners. In one letter of 1806, the teachers wrote that Frances, the elder daughter, was 'still awkward in person and manner and does not possess proper confidence in herself. Confusion

⁴⁵ G. Seal, *Mental Amusements: Consisting of Moral Essays, Allegories, and Tales. Interspersed with Poetical Pieces* (London: G. Sael, 1797), p. 9.

⁴⁶ Müller, *Framing Childhood*, pp. 69-111.

⁴⁷ Carol Percy, 'Learning and Virtue: English Grammar and the Eighteenth-Century Girls' School', in *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices*, ed. Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 77-98.

and absence, accompanied by an inherent timidity prevail'.⁴⁸ The emphasis here was on the manners and behaviours required for polite sociability. However, the one element of their practical, skilled education which did receive frequent mention was their sewing. Unfortunately, this too was lacking. In 1804, the teachers complained of Frances that 'the moment she uses a needle, her hands become so warm and moist that it is with difficulty she can proceed'.⁴⁹ She was slow and awkward, and had very little skill. Although it is clear that this lack of talent extending to her other subjects, with the exception of music, this emphasis on sewing is significant for being pinpointed and discussed at greater length. It is evident that sewing was particularly prized both as a feminine skill, and, as these letters convey, as a barometer for haptic skill and material literacy. This material literacy was central to the development of the consumer. Not only did it facilitate practical self-fashioning through providing girls and women with the ability to sew their own clothes, but it also equipped them with key skills of judgement and knowledge when appraising consumer goods and commissioned garments. The female consumer was not a passive recipient of goods produced elsewhere, but took an active interest and role in making.⁵⁰ I argue that the development of sewing skills in childhood specifically enabled the adult female consumer to engage with production.

⁴⁸ Kent Archives, U908/C60/10: 'Letters relating to the education of Frances and Charlotte Starkie, 1806'.

⁴⁹ Kent Archives, U908/C60/4: 'Letters relating to the education of Frances and Charlotte Starkie, 1804'.

⁵⁰ For work on perceptions of production, see Smith, *Material Goods, Moving Hands*.

3.4 Sewing and the Evidence of Material Literacy

The material evidence of this childhood sewing skill is accessible through extant examples of doll's clothing which can be found in museum collections. An example from the Museum of London (Figure 3.1) demonstrates the high level of skill involved in creating these miniature garments. The documents providing a provenance for this dress claim that this dress was made by a girl who was a student at a London school for the daughters of impoverished gentry, and that it was made by her while remaining at the school during the summer vacation in c. 1805. The dress is a perfect miniature copy of a contemporary woman's drop-front gown, and measures approximately 33cm in length. It is made from a white cotton, woven with a large check pattern, which out-scales the size of the dress, and the bodice is lined with white linen. A lace trim adorns the neckline and the sleeves, and is used as an insert on the front bib.

A closer inspection of the handiwork of this garment reveals the level of material knowledge and skill this young pupil had obtained. Firstly, the lace inserts on the front of the bib are perfectly inserted, their edges butting the tiny rolled hems, and positioned carefully in line with the check pattern of the fabric. Knowledge of fabric and cutting is also demonstrated through the sleeves, which were cut on the bias, allowing for greater flexibility. A back view of the garment (Figure 3.2) demonstrates further skill in the top-stitched construction of the side back seams, in which the side back is carefully lapped over the back and stitched in place using a backstitch. The lining of the garment continues to show a careful awareness of the construction methods used in full-sized garments, as all raw edges are either concealed or whip-stitched over to prevent fraying. The dress fabric is also used economically, with the flaps underneath the bib constructed only from the cheaper, plain lining.



Figure 3.1. Doll's dress, 1805, Museum of London, A21412, author's own photograph.



Figure 3.2. Back view of doll's dress, 1805, Museum of London, A21412, author's own photograph.



Figure 3.3. Inside view of doll's dress, 1805, Museum of London, A21412, author's own photograph.

Katherine Glover has argued that girls began to learn plain sewing from around the age of 5, and that girls were encouraged to be active with their hands from an early age.⁵¹ Emphasis is usually placed upon girls making shirts for their father or brothers – a comparatively simple task compared to the complexity of the doll’s dress from the Museum of London. Textual sources back up this assertion that girls were actively involved in the creation of miniature garments for their dolls. As early as the 1770s, Ann Hicks dressed her doll in a full brocade gown.⁵² This evidence continues into the early nineteenth century. Miss Betsy Nutt is recorded as having been working on a doll and ‘made it such a pretty frock and petticoat’.⁵³ Similarly, in 1830, seven-year-old Caroline Pennant wrote to her grandmother to tell her that she was pleased with ‘the first little pocket handkerchief I have made for my doll’.⁵⁴

Further extant examples show mistakes and faults in the cut and construction of the garments, which I argue provide evidence of doll’s clothes acting as a practical method of acquiring skill and knowledge through making. A doll’s silk pelisse, also in the collection at the Museum of London, is generally executed to a very high standard (Figure 3.4). The majority of pieces were cut following the methods used to create full sized pieces. The right sleeve is cut correctly along the bias of the fabric, allowing it to cling at the forearm, and puff out at the head. However, the left sleeve has been cut at the incorrect angle, not quite on the straight grain, but not on the bias enough to create the same effect. It is possible that this was the result of needing to cut the garment from limited fabric, however the effect would have been evident when

⁵¹ Katherine Glover, *Elite Women and Polite Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), p. 27; see also Patricia Crawford and Sara Heller Mendelson, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 90.

⁵² GA, D2455/F1/7/4: ‘Letter to Martha Hicks from her daughter Ann, 1770s’.

⁵³ NA, B(HH)/148: ‘Letter to Mathilda Bosworth’.

⁵⁴ WCRO, CR 2017/TP548: ‘Letter from Caroline Pennant to her Grandmother, 1830’.

placed on a doll, and is, indeed, evident in the way in which the garment does not lay correctly when stored. This mistake firstly makes it unlikely that this garment was purchased, and highly likely that it was made at home. Secondly, it makes apparent the practical trial and error approach taken when developing the material literacy of girls. Finally, and perhaps more significantly, the childhood development of an awareness of the skills involved in cut and fit would result in an adult consumer who would be able to not only recognise faults in products, but to understand why and how those faults had emerged, enabling them to converse with the retailer or producer with a significant degree of practical material knowledge.



Figure 3.4. Doll's pelisse, 1810, Museum of London, A21160, author's own photograph.

From an assessment of the collections of the Museum of London and the Victoria and Albert Museum's Museum of Childhood, the phenomenon of highly skilled, homemade doll's garments appears to be confined primarily to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Later doll's garments, from roughly the 1840s onwards, are made comparatively shoddily, and do not hold close resemblance to full-sized garments in terms of construction technique. These later garments often retain the appearance of their full sized equivalents, but fail to capture the details of construction. Earlier examples of doll's clothing, independent of fully-dressed dolls, from the earlier eighteenth century are rarer, and it is harder to make an assessment of the comparative skill involved in their construction. One petticoat from the eighteenth century is a rare exception (Figure 3.5). This example, now preserved at the Museum of London, is made up of multiple strips of silk in a variety of colours which have been pieced together. These silks were most likely scraps from other projects. These pieced silk strips were placed on top of a wool batting or wadding, and then quilted, before being pleated onto a waistband. The emphasis here was not on the aesthetic value of the garment, or even perhaps its functionality as a garment for a doll, but on practicing a specific technique – in this case, quilting. In essence, this piece acts in a similar way to an embroidery sampler or an apprentice piece – allowing the sewer to demonstrate their mastery of a particular set of skills.⁵⁵ Although later dolls' clothes later became more closely aligned solely with play, generally providing a rough approximation of fashionable dress rather than a close copy of it, dolls' clothes from this earlier period focussed more closely on the material literacy of the child. The emphasis was on

⁵⁵ Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: I B Tauris, 1996), p. 128.

construction and on developing a skilled knowledge of making, which could be applied either as a producer, or as a means of assessment when acting as the consumer.



Figure 3.5. Doll's petticoat, 1750, Museum of London, A21960e, author's own photograph.

3.5 Play Dolls and Fashion Dolls

The majority of garments from this earlier date remain associated with fully dressed dolls, and are complicated by the ambiguity of the definition of child's play doll and fashion doll. Sometimes known as a Pandora, mannequin, or *poupée*, fashion dolls have been interpreted by historians as marketing ploys to manipulate the fashion

market.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, those working more specifically on dolls have insisted on demarcating their studies from fashion and dress scholarship, stating that many dolls were ‘made solely as luxury toys’.⁵⁷ This demarcation is in many ways artificial and misleading. Historians and curators struggle to tell them apart, leading to confused indexing. However, the objects themselves often crossed over this boundary of material identity.⁵⁸ Once they had fulfilled their use as disseminators of dress, fashion dolls could quite conceivably be passed on to children as toys, evidence of which will be explored in the following case studies. Consequently, in many cases, the object’s afterlife has become caught up with its original purpose, making it difficult to understand the complexities of these objects. Instead of attempting the futile task of defining categorisations of what is and is not a fashion or child’s toy doll, I take a more inclusive view. On the one hand, the fashion doll was a commodity of the clothing trade, providing an official and regimented source of fashion dissemination.⁵⁹ However, the toy doll can also be considered a fashion doll, in that it was a tool through which girls and women could practice and develop practical sewing skills and fashion knowledge.⁶⁰ In both cases, it was a tool for material literacy.

Fashion dolls, which were produced for adult female consumers, held similar didactic and mimetic qualities, and it is useful to compare the two similar media and their influence on the female consumer through the life cycle. Adult fashion dolls were sometimes smaller, such as those previously examined, however evidence suggests

⁵⁶ Max von Boehn, *Dolls*, trans. Josephine Nicoll (New York: Dover, 1972); Madeleine Ginsburg, *An Introduction to Fashion Illustration* (London: V&A, 1980), p. 6; McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, *Birth of a Consumer Society*, pp. 43–46; Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 474; Juliette Peers, *The Fashion Doll: From Béb  Jumeau to Barbie* (London: Berg, 2004).

⁵⁷ Kay Desmonde, *Dolls* (London: Littlehampton, 1972), p. 12.

⁵⁸ Peers, *Fashion Doll*, p. 3.

⁵⁹ McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, *Birth of a Consumer Society*, p. 43.

⁶⁰ Peers, *Fashion Doll*, pp. 1–41.

that life-sized dolls also existed. Extant examples of these are rare, and research for this study has brought to light only one (Figures 3.6 and 3.7).⁶¹ The doll is constructed from painted wood, and revolves on a central iron pole. She is dressed in a silk brocade gown, which matches the painted shoes on the mannequin. She also wears a wig, pearl earrings, paste buckles, and a ribbon necklace. The experience of interacting with this doll would be quite different to that of viewing the smaller dolls. It provided an opportunity to admire and scrutinize an artificial paragon of femininity.⁶² The action of viewing such dolls has been interpreted as a desire to transform the self into the doll, and to be admired just as the doll is.⁶³ Indeed, such terminology was used to describe women, such as Lady Harcourt who was hailed as the ‘finest Doll’, implying a mimetic connection between woman and doll, and the terminology of ‘doll’ being seen as a byword for aesthetic female perfection.⁶⁴

These dolls can certainly be interpreted as artificial portrayals of feminine ideals, however this should not cause the historian to overlook the role of these dolls as an educational tool, allowing mimicry, inspiration, and re-interpretation. In spite of satirical comments to the contrary, it was certainly not the case that the drawing rooms of the *beau monde* were filled with identically dressed women. Similarly, although evidence regarding exactly who viewed these dolls is lacking, it is unlikely that all who saw them could afford such garments, nor that they would fit other

⁶¹ This doll also appeared in the Silent Partners exhibition, held at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge 14th October 2014 – 25th January 2015. See Jane Munro, Alyce Mahon, and Sally Woodcock, *Silent Partners: Artist and Mannequin from Function to Fetish* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 39.

⁶² That a similar commercial tool does not appear to have existed for male fashion is noteworthy. Although male dolls do exist, they appear to have been almost certainly for purposes of play and display. See: Lord Clapham, 1690-1700, VAM, T.847-1974.

⁶³ Julie Park, *The Self and It: Novel Objects in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 108.

⁶⁴ BA, L 30/15/54/250: ‘Letter from Lord Grantham, 1785’.

priorities, such as age, colouring, or personal taste. Neil McKendrick has claimed that these full sized mannequins allowed for the garments to be immediately tried on by customers.⁶⁵ Furthermore, an advertisement from 1799 stated that customers might view items worn by dolls ‘by a trial on themselves’.⁶⁶ The important factor here is not that customers were manipulated by the doll as a marketing tool, but rather that they enabled personal education, which in turn facilitated choice and agency in engaging with the product on a material level, physically interacting with it. This haptic interaction mirrors the priorities evident in interactions with children’s dolls, indicating the continuing didactic properties of the doll throughout the lifecycle, and the importance of ongoing material literacy.

Although we can state with some certainty that the full-sized dolls were intended as dissemination and marketing tools for adult consumers, the purpose and use of smaller dolls is contentious. The fluidity of the identity of extant dolls is evident in a doll from the Victoria and Albert Museum, which curators have traditionally classified as a fashion doll (Figure 3.8). The doll itself is a turned wooden doll, with carved lower arms and jointed legs, human hair, and a gessoed face. She wears a silk gown trimmed with gilt braid, cap, mittens, stomacher, shift, stays, three petticoats, a pocket, stockings, shoes, and a fob watch. She measures approximately 60cm in height. Her jointed arms and legs coincide with a rare description of a fashion doll by Horace Walpole in 1793 as a ‘jointed baby’.⁶⁷ From this information, it proves difficult to ascertain her purpose. A more specific clue lies in the marks and inscriptions on the doll. Specifically, the watch fob carried by the doll bears the inscription ‘Eliz. Bootle,

⁶⁵ McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, *Birth of a Consumer Society*, p. 45.

⁶⁶ ‘Advertisement for Trichomato-Parastasis’, *Oracle and Daily Advertiser*, January 1799; ‘Advertisement for Ross’s’, *Morning Post*, February 1800.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Park, *The Self and It*, p. 108. I have been unable to trace the original source.

London'. The provenance of the doll is that it came from the Loveday family, who were friends and cousins of Mary and Robert Bootle, who married in the 1750s, and had a daughter called Elizabeth in the late 1760s.⁶⁸ Given the dating of the doll, it therefore seems probable that it was created as a fashion doll, which was then given to a child five to ten years after its original use.



Figure 3.6. Mannequin, 1765, 175cm, Pelham Galleries, Paris.

⁶⁸ Charles Mosley, ed., *Burke's Peerage, Baronetage and Knightage* (3 vols, Delaware: Burke's Peerage, 2003), 3, p. 3637.



Figure 3.7. Mannequin, 1765, 175cm, Pelham Galleries, Paris.



Figure 3.8. Fashion Doll, 1755-1760, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, T.90 to V-1980.

The confusion over the original purpose of the doll is not the most important factor when engaging with this object. Having established that, at least for some portion of its life, this doll belonged to a young girl with aristocratic connections, is

more significant. This doll continued to act as a fashion educator, which the owner could examine, dress and undress, and potentially create new garments for.⁶⁹ These dolls were the dynamic possessions of girls learning how to be women. As we have already seen, it is likely that the watch fob was added, or at least adapted, later in this doll's life. Crucially, even if the fashions became outdated, this doll was still able to act as a material educator, passively informing the child how women's clothes felt, moved, were made and were worn. This knowledge – key to understanding dress, fabrics, and cut, rather than the sweeping trends of fashion – was the focus here. This information could then be transposed to interactions with full-sized garments as the child developed as a consumer.

The mimetic quality of dolls has been well established. Young girls were encouraged to practice their adult role of mother, with the doll taking the part of the child. In Dorothy Kilner's *The Doll's Spelling Book* of 1802, the author encourages readers to be 'anxious for the welfare of your dear little families, whether they are composed of Wax, Wood, Leather or Rag'.⁷⁰ This conflation of feminine identity and motherhood, and of girl and woman, again reflect the notion of learning through doing, which was evident in the doll's clothes previously examined. Throughout *The Doll's Spelling Book*, the character of the girl teaches the doll, mirroring the configuration of mother teaching child. This was enacted through play and imagination, and the creating of imaginary conversations:

⁶⁹ Peers, *Fashion Doll*, p. 20.

⁷⁰ Dorothy Kilner, *The Doll's Spelling Book: Intended as an Assistant to Their Mammas in the Difficult Undertaking of Teaching Dolls to Read* (London: J. Marshall, 1802), pp. v-vi.

MAM-MA:...Come, my dear doll, though you can not talk, I will make-believe that you can. So come, my child, sit in my lap, and tell me if you know what you are made of?

DOLL: I am made of paper.

MAM-MA: Oh you silly thing! Do you not know better than that? You are made of wood.⁷¹

The girl, in the role of 'Mam-ma', trains for her future role through teaching the doll-baby lessons she is herself in the process of learning. She teaches her to read, and provides moral lessons and tales. Importantly, there is again a significant focus on the development of material literacy and an awareness of the physical world, seen in the quote above, through the emphasis on what the doll is made of. This is extended through a description of the wax, which the doll is made of, and an explanation of the processes behind its manufacture. Again, the child's development and preparation for their adult role includes a significant degree of knowledge of manufacture, materials, and making. This knowledge is developed both through practical enactment of skills, but also through play. Play as a device was widely used to acquaint children with the world they inhabited, and this pedagogical practice has been widely commented upon.⁷²

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 39-40.

⁷² McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, pp. 286-315; O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child*, p. 108.

3.6 Play and the Commercial and Material Worlds

Lady Eleanor Fenn's 1783 work *Rational Sports in Dialogues Passing Among the Children of a Family* is one example of a plethora of texts which bridged education and entertainment.⁷³ Like Kilner's *The Doll's Spelling Book*, Fenn's work takes the form of a series of dialogues. The first of these is entitled 'Trades', in which the children play out a series of different occupations through the dialogues – primarily retail roles. The dialogues start with each child taking on the role of a type of shopkeeper, and describing it

JANE: I will be a Milliner; and I will sell a thousand things. Jack says, that is the meaning of the name; and I will make caps and ruffles and such things.

GEORGE: And I will be a Haberdasher, and I will sell as many things as you: pins, tape, needles, thread; and I will have a great shop.

WILLIAM: And I will be a Pedlar; and I will buy my goods of George, and carry them a great way about, and call at all the houses; and I will keep a stall at the fair and sell my goods.

[...]

JANE: Let Susan be a draper; then what shall she sell?

GEORGE: Cloth to be sure, you know; there are both linen and woollen-drapers.⁷⁴

Facilitated through play, these children learn about different varieties of retailer, what they sell, and how they conduct their trade. Not only does the dialogue specify the

⁷³ Fenn, *Rational Sports in Dialogues*.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-22.

exact goods each retailer would sell, such as pins, tape, needles and thread from the Haberdasher, it also describes where the pedlar would acquire their goods, and the location each retailer can be found, whether a stall at a fair or a shop on the street. Other trades, such as a cooper, druggist, stationer, and pastry-cook are also included, demonstrating that a wide knowledge of the retail market was deemed desirable. The dialogue is enacted through a series of questions, and when a child did not know an answer, they had to forfeit. The dialogue goes on to discuss the material properties of the goods each vendor sells:

GEORGE: Draper! – When you are asked what your linen is made of, answer hemp or flax. – They are both plants. – You know what the woollen cloths are made of?⁷⁵

Similar assessments are made about leather, butter, chocolate, Cochineal, and Turpentine. The subtitle of the work states that these dialogues were ‘designed as a hint to mothers how they may inform the minds of their little people respecting the objects with which they are surrounded’.⁷⁶ This explicit focus on material literacy within the context of commerce and retail is evidence of the significance of the tangible and material world in developing the child as a consumer. Being a consummate consumer involved not only adept financial awareness and responsibility, but also, as we have seen through the material literacy developed through dolls and doll’s clothing, a thorough awareness of how goods were made and what they were made from.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 22-23.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. i.

Literature was also produced and circulated which developed a child's material knowledge of the world on a visual level.⁷⁷ Between 1810 and 1816, London publishers S. & J. Fuller created a series of books, designed for children, with accompanying paper dolls. In these moralistic children's tales, the young boy or girl is represented by a paper doll, which is accompanied by a selection of outfits, which correspond with sections in the story. In the case of the *History of Little Fanny* (Figure 3.9), the eponymous Fanny runs away, has her fashionable clothes stolen, and then has to work her way up through society until she is returned to her Mama.⁷⁸ This use of the paper doll is not simply to represent fashionable dress as a form of dissemination, neither is it simply a moralistic threat about the removal of luxury, but instead it provided children with an overview of the outfits that were suitable for certain social positions. In essence, it instructed the child how to visually read society, and to distinguish between the working woman, the servant, and the respectable lady.

The application and demonstration of useful knowledge through play is again evident in the *History of Little Fanny*. The text was accompanied by 7 cut out figures, one moveable head, and four hats; the object being to dress Fanny in the outfits which suited her current station in the story as the story was read. Each chapter of the story required a different outfit, and was proceeded by a description of what the paper doll of Fanny should be wearing. The first gown that Fanny wears is a fashionable white muslin dress with drawers and a pink silk sash (Figure 3.10), which would have been standard attire for wealthy little girls. Fanny clasps a doll to her, again referencing the mimetic quality of dolls, and the general practice of learning through play with dolls.

⁷⁷ For the history of book illustration, see Christina Ionescu, ed., *Book Illustration in the Long Eighteenth Century: Reconfiguring the Visual Periphery of the Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015).

⁷⁸ Anon, *The History of Little Fanny: Exemplified in a Series of Figures* (London: S and J Fuller, 1811).

However, ironically, this book actually derides Fanny for her attention to dolls. As the story progresses, Fanny loses her doll and loses her social position, because of idleness and vanity. When she is redeemed, she again wears her fashionable dress, but this time she clasps a book to her. This reveals a complex and often contradictory attitude to dolls which pervaded the eighteenth century. On the one hand, they were frivolous toys, which promoted vanity and frivolity. On the other hand, they were key tools which facilitated a girl's material education. The format of the moralistic tale was considered central to children's education. The early tutoring of children propagated connections between clothing prosperity, and between materiality and morality.⁷⁹



Figure 3.9. *The History of Little Fanny* (London: S. & J. Fuller, 1810).

⁷⁹ Baggerman, 'The Moral of the Story', pp. 143-163.

The combination of moralistic tale and paper doll seen in the Fuller stories were also created at home. In 1806, the five Burton sisters, daughters of the builder James Burton - who was responsible for the creation of Bloomsbury and collaborated with John Nash - created their own card dolls. These dolls had painted faces, white muslin dresses, pantaloons and blue sashes.⁸⁰ The girls were aged between two and twenty at the time of the dolls creation, and it is unclear which sisters had the largest part to play in their creation. Nonetheless, they were the work of young girls prior to marriage, who were, in effect, in the training stage of their lifecycle. Furthermore, it is evidence of an active engagement with play and making as a means of understanding and engaging with the material world of dress.

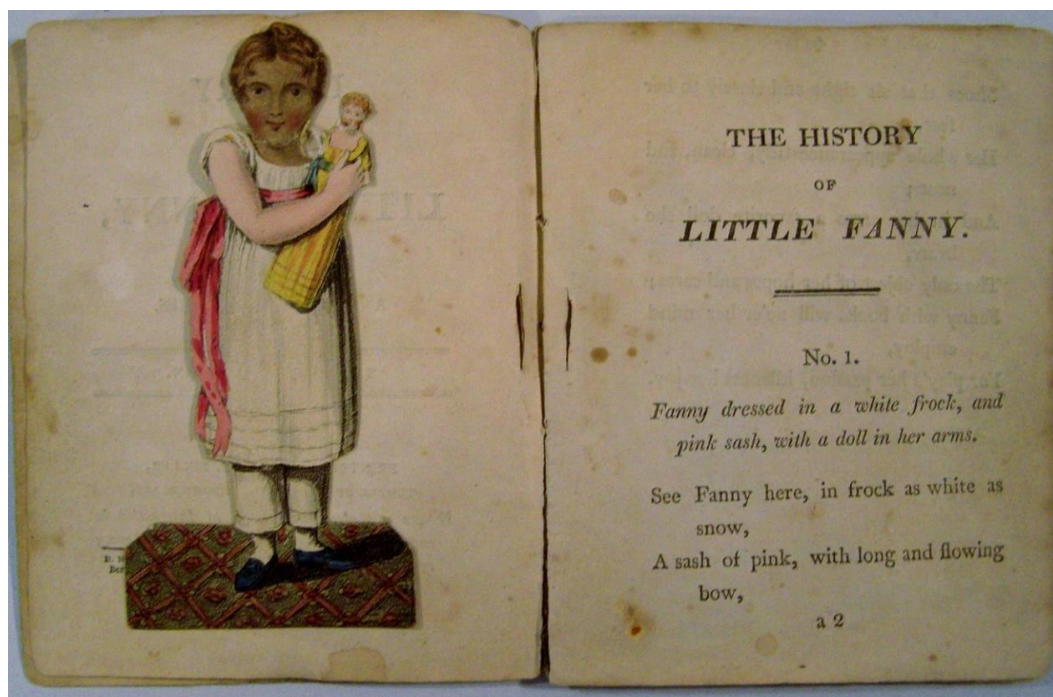


Figure 3.10 *The History of Little Fanny* (London: S. & J. Fuller, 1810).

⁸⁰ HASMG, 950.38.12: 'Card dolls, 1806, Hastings Museum and Art Gallery'.

The Burton girls were not alone in their creation of home-made paper dolls, and by the 1830s, it was a well-established pastime. In 1832, Ann Sanders Wilson created sixteen different outfits, painted in watercolour on card, for the heroine of the accompanying manuscript. The story, *The History of Miss Wildfire*, tells the tale of a girl obsessed with fashion, who, after the death of her father, descends into poverty.⁸¹ She is then compelled to make a living as a lace maker, before finding redemption in marriage and Quakerism. This tale and dolls were not, however, the playthings of children. Ann Sanders Wilson inscribed the tale and being a gift for her sister Mary, who was at the time twenty-one. These dolls were an articulation of knowledge already acquired, and an awareness of a genre which they had grown up with. As such, they were also an extension of the domestic and polite training of young ladies.

The use of images and visual material was recognised as an important educational device by eighteenth-century writers on education. Locke, Fénelon, Watts, Rollin among others all advocated the inclusion of images as supplementary tools in children's reading.⁸² In George Hickes's 1713 translation of Fénelon's *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter*, the inclusion of images was encouraged as they 'may add to other Discourse, the better to enliven it, and print it deep on the minds of Children and Young Persons'.⁸³ The paper dolls seen in the Fuller books fit into, but also enlarge upon this notion. Not only did they provide visual stimulation and reinforcement of the lessons of the story, but they also allowed the child to interact with the tale, actively engaging with the information delivered to them.

⁸¹ *The History of Miss Wildfire*, 1832, Victoria and Albert Museum, T.360:1-3-1998.

⁸² Arizpe, Styles, and Brice Heath, *Reading Lessons from the Eighteenth Century*, p. 62.

⁸³ Fénelon, *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter*, p. 88.

3.7 Conclusion

Active engagement with financial and material tasks was key in didactic tools for the eighteenth-century child. The materials studied in this chapter have overwhelmingly indicated a continuous need to train girls for their adult roles, and that the passions which dominated the frivolous consumer were best countered with the skill and reasoning required by the consummate consumer. Economic and material literacy were the two significant elements of this childhood consumer education, as well as active engagement with the act of consumption itself, either via play enactments of shop scenes, or through actively engaging in consumption practise through small purchases of sweets and ribbons. I have demonstrated that this emphasis on training the child consumer is particularly evident from the mid-century, coming to a head in the 1790 to 1810 period, coinciding with the increased recognition of the significance of the figure of the consumer which I have previously identified. From their toys and stories to their mathematical lessons, girls and young women were consistently encouraged to develop independent financial and material skills during this period. Skills which would set them up to fulfil the role of the consummate, productive consumer.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Consumer Cycle

The trope of women who were regular participants in ‘a determined *shopping-morning*’ had, by the turn of the nineteenth century, become a national trait, worthy of remark by observing foreigners.¹ The consistent and regular reports of sightings of these female consumers in urban shopping streets have been read by scholars as evidence of shopping being a part of a carefully timetabled social ritual, which was as integral to the rhythms of genteel and polite urban life as paying calls and taking tea.² Rather than an indication of routine and constancy in shopping habits, this evidence actually hints at the importance of cycles of consumption. In these observations consumers took part in shopping as part of a daily cycle, in which this activity was always undertaken in the morning. However, consumers were also subject to seasonal, annual, and life cycles, which shaped and were shaped by age, social and economic needs, and practical processes.

Cycles existed in relation to finance, production, and fashionability at a seasonal and annual level. The credit system necessitated a cycle of billing, which often occurred annually.³ The perennial indebtedness intrinsic to the credit system brought with it a cycle of generous credit and financially liberated consumption, followed by the ‘usual overwhelming cavalcade of Christmas accounts’, as it was described by Edward Blanchard in the early nineteenth century.⁴ Whether or not one

¹ Samuel Pratt, *Gleanings in England* (3 vols, London: A. Strahan, 1803), 3, p. 404.

² Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, p. 21; Berry, ‘Polite Consumption’, p. 380; Stobart, Hann, and Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*, p. 148; Smith, ‘Sensing Design and Workmanship’, p. 1.

³ Finn, *The Character of Credit*, p. 98.

⁴ Edward Leman Blanchard, *Life and Reminiscences of E.L. Blanchard*, ed. Clement Scott and Cecil Howard (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1891), p. 115.

was perceived as credit-worthy as a middling-rank consumer not only influenced whether one could consume, but when and how regularly you were presented with your bill. Similarly, seasonal variations can be traced through fluxes in the intensity of production and supply, which reflected patterns of consumption and demand.⁵ The majority of garments purchased by women of the middling sort and above were still made to order, meaning that production by dressmakers occurred in direct response to orders. In turn, these orders followed a pattern of demand which was dictated both by the social season, and by the length of the production process.

The wealth of accessories which became fashionable over the course of the century, such as hats, caps, bonnets, and muffs, although often purchased ready-made, also followed cycles of consumption due to changing seasons and fashions. Fashionability was a key aspect in terms of the cycle of the consumption of dress, and the life-cycle of the goods themselves. Kimberley Chrisman-Campbell has argued that the majority of fashionable changes which took place in women's dress over the course of the century primarily focussed on their trimmings and decoration.⁶ Consequently, the historian of the consumer of dress in this period must also consider the extent to which consumption was determined by the cyclical process of trimming and remaking existing garments, and the consumer's engagement with labour and sewing, as much as with the consumption of complete new garments.⁷

⁵ Riello, *A Foot in the Past*, pp. 123, 188.

⁶ Kimberley Chrisman-Campbell, 'The Face of Fashion: Milliners in Eighteenth-Century Visual Culture', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25, no. 2 (2002): pp. 157-71.

⁷ Fine and Leopold, 'Consumerism and the Industrial Revolution', pp. 151-79.

For women of the middling sort, the life-cycle also brought with it significant shifts in consumer priorities and activity.⁸ A young woman about to enter public life and the marriage market would undoubtedly have had differing consumption priorities to an older, married lady running a household and caring for children, or a widow with relative financial freedom. With the exception of Amanda Vickery's recent article on the dress choices of older ladies, little attention has been paid to this subject.⁹ The interplay of fashion, economic power, household types, and age formulate a complex and dynamic array of priorities and circumstances which informed how, when, and what female consumers of dress were purchasing. Therefore, the figure of the consumer, and their engagement with consumption, should not be considered as having been in a static and constant state, but rather in a continual state of flux, evolution, and cycle.

4.1 Young Women and the Marriage Market

The early years of the adult female consumer's life were perhaps the most readily in flux. For young women of the middling sort, these were key years in determining their future financial and social security, usually as the manager of a household of their own. The early consumption of adult women not only engaged with the commercial market, but also the marriage market. On the one hand, their consumption was relatively unfettered, restricted only by the size of the allowance granted to them by

⁸ For studies of clothing and the life cycle in relation to plebeian consumers, see Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England*, pp. 229-46; Alice Dolan, 'The Fabric of Life: Linen and Life Cycle in England, 1678-1810' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Hertfordshire, 2015), pp. 147-177.

⁹ Amanda Vickery, 'Mutton Dressed as Lamb? Fashioning Age in Georgian England', *Journal of British Studies* 52, no. 4 (2013): pp. 858-86.

their father or guardian. On the other, it was carefully calculated to mould them into the model of idealised femininity – commoditising themselves in the process.¹⁰ The young, middling woman of marriageable age was marketed with increasing ferocity through the eighteenth century. Although the romantic elements of marriage were certainly significant for the eighteenth-century middling sort, other considerations certainly played a large part.¹¹ Besides determining temper and disposition, finances were key. As was shown in the 1766 play, *The Clandestine Marriage*, the economics of marriage remained a significant aspect: ‘Love in a cottage? ... Give me indifference and a coach and six’.¹² Furthermore, the 1742 pamphlet, *A Master-Key to the Rich Ladies Treasury*, demonstrates the importance of the financial liquidity of potential wives to unmarried men.¹³ This text classified women by wealth and location, laying out any annuities or stocks they possessed, effectively acting as a catalogue of women as commodities with a specific economic value.

The ‘commodification’ of women also extended to their dress and appearance, and the implications that the visual appearance of women had on their social status. Early in the century, daughters were encouraged to prioritise moral and religious goodness, neatness and cleanliness, and domestic skills and abilities, with the ultimate goal of them becoming wives and mothers themselves, with their own household and personal purse strings to control.¹⁴ However, concepts of gentility and politeness, which developed over the course of the century, complicate this image of the domestic

¹⁰ Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, p. 74.

¹¹ Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter*, pp. 40–44.

¹² David Garrick and George Colman, *The Clandestine Marriage* (London: T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, 1766), I, ii.

¹³ Anon, *A Master-Key to the Rich Ladies Treasury* (London: J. Roberts, 1742).

¹⁴ Lummis and Marsh, *The Woman’s Domain*, p. 54; Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter*, p. 7; Berry, ‘Women, Consumption and Taste’, p. 201.

household manager. Politeness as a status was earned, demonstrated, and defined; and domestic femininity and consumption in general, were central to the construction of polite respectability.¹⁵ As Berry has stated, a gentleman needed to portion his income so that his 'lifestyle, and that of the female members of his household, would be in keeping with his status'.¹⁶ If a family was aspiring to the realm of polite, leisured gentility, then the female family members could not be seen to need to participate in household drudgery, which included shopping for household necessities.

This need to separate the young woman from domestic drudgery extended to discussions about her dress. Even as early as the 1750s, women were simultaneously praised for 'simplicity in dress', yet berated for their 'housewifely appearance'.¹⁷ A new acquaintance in Mary Collyer's *Felicia to Charlotte* is praised for the 'genteel air of her dress, her polite [...] behaviour'.¹⁸ Similarly, in a dialogue in a periodical of the 1790s, a lady visiting the neighbourhood is immediately judged as 'irregular' for not being in 'polite dress'.¹⁹ As Harriet Guest states, the appearance of fashionable leisure had 'become a requirement of middle-class politeness'.²⁰ The genteel woman was berated if she acted like a servant in her own home, and consumed for practicality rather than pleasure. Her aspiration to gentility was articulated through her experience of leisure. This aspiration was reflected in a conceptualisation of consumption as an element of polite sociability – to be polite required you to be a consumer.

¹⁵ Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, p. 187; Stobart, Hann, and Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*, p. 6.

¹⁶ Berry, 'Women, Consumption and Taste', p. 197.

¹⁷ *Connoisseur*, 23 October 1755; 11 December 1755.

¹⁸ Mary Collyer, *Felicia to Charlotte: Being Letters from a Young Lady in the Country, to Her Friend in Town* (2 vols, Dublin: Griffiths, 1765), 2, p. 129.

¹⁹ W. Bews, *The Polite Amusement* (Edinburgh: W. Bews, 1791), p. 34.

²⁰ Guest, *Small Change*, p. 83.

Images such as Burney's *An Elegant Establishment for Young Ladies* (Figure 4.1) explore the training of these polite young ladies at the turn of the century. Here, posture and poise, and an appearance of politeness dominate the scene. The male figures in the scene are literally depicted as hauling and winching young ladies into shape. Emphasis is undoubtedly upon appearances, and each woman is dressed in a uniform of fashionable white muslin. This image is packed with references to the training of young women, a number of which relate to consumption and dress. To the far left of the image, two women examine a doll in a box – probably a fashion doll (Figure 4.2). The doll appears to mirror the lady examining her, continuing into adulthood the mimetic qualities of the doll explored in the previous chapter. The artist's implication here is that these young women are being formed in the image of the doll – pretty and compliant. However, we can also infer a secondary meaning – that the consumption of these polite young women was reduced to the superficial. They were encouraged to focus on beautification and the development of a polite and fashionable appearance.

These women were not encouraged to learn to cook, manage servants, and manage the household economy with frugality. Instead, as these tasks became part of the realm of servants, and the polite woman gained increasing leisure time, they were designed to be pleasing, decorative creatures.²¹ In the case of the draped lady to the right of the image, she is literally taking on a statuesque pose – to be gazed at and admired, but never to move or act (Figure 4.3), in the style of Emma Hamilton's attitudes. These views were conceptual, but not necessarily accurate reflections of the

²¹ Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*; on shopping delegated to servants, see Walsh, 'Shopping at First Hand?'.

individual experience of young women's training and consumption.²² However, the literature of the period implies a clear, if fragmented trend that leads the idealised woman as wife and mother out of the kitchen, and into the polite, leisured world. In doing so, her time was not taken up with domestic chores, but with the cultural practises of polite society, in turn shifting her patterns and practise of consumption. Dress, as a key element of polite beautification, was therefore key to defining young women.



Figure 4.1. Edward Francis Burney, *An Elegant Establishment for Young Ladies*, 1805, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, P.50-1930.

²² Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 162.



Figure 4.2. Edward Francis Burney, detail from *An Elegant Establishment for Young Ladies*, 1805, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, P.50-1930.



Figure 4.3. Edward Francis Burney, detail from *An Elegant Establishment for Young Ladies*, 1805, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, P.50-1930.

Accounts, such as those of Hester Heathcote, provide an example of pre-marriage expenditure which focussed almost solely on the sartorial. Hester Heathcote was the daughter of Gilbert Heathcote, who was a successful merchant, a great promoter of the East India Company, and eventually rose to become Lord Mayor of

London.²³ He was Governor of the Bank of England on two occasions, from 1709 to 1711 and from 1723 to 1725, and was a Whig MP. His wife, also named Hester, was the daughter of another merchant, placing the family firmly in the upwardly mobile middling sort for the majority of their lives.²⁴ Heathcote had three daughters, Anne, Elizabeth, and Hester. It is uncertain which of these daughters was responsible for this account book, however it seems most likely to have been Hester, who would have been in her early twenties in 1725, when the account book is dated.

The account book follows Hester Heathcote's expenses and income over the course of a year, providing an insight into the annual rhythms of consumption for a young, unmarried lady.²⁵ She recorded that she received £100 from her father at the start of the year, as well as over £400 from a variety of undisclosed sources, some of which were recorded as being in the form of 'a note of money'. This money was primarily acquired up to May, with no evidence of further income until a small amount in December, implying that Hester was expected to manage the division of her expenses through the year based on this income.

The expenditure recorded in the accounts demonstrates a similar trend (Diagram 4.1). The first three pages of the accounts are taken up with expenses from between the 13th to the 28th May, and the remaining seven pages covered her expenses for the remainder of the year. During this flurry of consumption in late May 1725, Hester records her expenditure by date, providing us with an insight into the frequency of her shopping visits. She recorded purchases on 13th, 15th, 17th, 25th, 27th, and

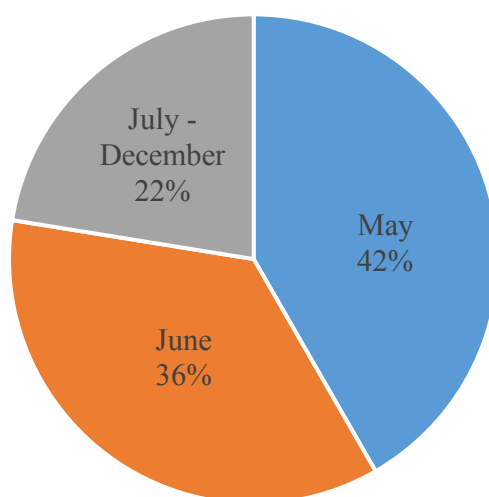
²³ Nuala Zahedieh, *The Capital and the Colonies: London and the Atlantic Economy 1660-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 107.

²⁴ Shortly before his death in 1732/3 Heathcote was made a Baronet, however this was nearly a decade after the accounts examined here were made.

²⁵ LA, 2ANC12/E/2: 'Personal accounts for a dress allowance, Sir G. Heathcote's daughter, 1725'.

28th May, implying that during this period she went to shops with the intent to purchase every two or three days. By the 1st June, Hester had spent over £220 – around half of the money she had received as her annual allowance. After this point, Hester discontinued the practise of consistently dating her expenses, other than some small amounts for December. However, we are able to gauge that Hester spent approximately 42 per cent of her income in May, and another 36 per cent in June, while the remaining 22 per cent was spread, undated, through the remaining months.

Graph 4.1. Expenditure of Hester Heathcote, May to December 1725.



Source: LA, 2ANC12/E/2: 'Personal accounts for a dress allowance, Sir G. Heathcote's daughter, 1725'.

The seasonality reflected in Hester Heathcote's consumption has long been recognised by economic historians in relation to employment and trade.²⁶ The trend for retailers to receive their greatest number of orders over the summer months and in the final months of the year, reflects the rhythms of the London season. The fashionable London season is observable and definable from the end of the seventeenth century. Although the exact dates shifted over the course of the century, the general trend was to be out of the city and in the country for the months of high summer. Orders for custom-made items, such as gowns, were therefore placed prior to the start of the new season, in order for the work to be carried out in time for the goods to be delivered in time for the start of the new season.²⁷ Tailors have been observed to have been paid more between March and July in order to economically compensate for the dearth of work over the rest of the year, and Hester Heathcote's accounts suggest that a similar trend existed for dressmakers.²⁸

The season has traditionally been seen as a time of increased social and cultural tourism to the capital, when aristocracy and landed gentry would descend upon the city. It could therefore be supposed that, with the rise of a stable, middle-class population in the city, consumption would be spread more equally throughout the year. However, evidence would suggest that, although resident in the city, the aspiring, polite, middling sort were also subject to the rhythms of the fashionable London season.²⁹ As such, the London season continued to be the cause of significant

²⁶ L. D. Schwarz, *London in the Age of Industrialisation: Entrepreneurs, Labour Force and Living Conditions, 1700-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 105; Riello, *A Foot in the Past*, p. 188.

²⁷ Riello, *A Foot in the Past*, p. 123.

²⁸ Schwarz, *London in the Age of Industrialisation*, pp. 105-106.

²⁹ Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society, and Family Life in London, 1660-1730* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), p. 135.

fluctuations in demand for fashionable dress, in much the same way as the seasons influenced demand and supply of different food stuffs.³⁰

The priorities of the London season brought with it further considerations for young female consumers. Perhaps most important was fashion, and the ultimate polite accolade of fashionability.³¹ As Adam Smith stated in 1759, fashion was ‘connected in our imaginations with the idea of something that is genteel and magnificent’.³² In other words, as Hannah Greig has argued, ‘fashion was defined more by its affiliation to particular people’ than by specific material characteristics of a product.³³ This fashion was not restricted to dress, but also including interior decoration, furniture, ceramics, silverware, and a wealth of other material objects through which one could define and display and awareness of what was fashionable. The conspicuous consumption of such items was not unique to the eighteenth century.³⁴ However, it did significantly influence both the types of goods consumers were willing to lay out vast sums of money for, and the seasonality with which goods were desirable.

An examination of the goods which Hester Heathcote consumed provide a useful insight into the priorities of fashionable female consumption. The majority of Hester’s expenses were relatively small sums, spent on lengths of cloth such as sarsanet, lustring and satin, and the making up of gowns.³⁵ However, these are interspersed with a number of sizeable and significant purchases. The first of these

³⁰ E. L. Jones, *Seasons and Prices: The Role of the Weather in English Agricultural History* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964).

³¹ Stobart and Blondé, *Selling Textiles*, p. 5.

³² Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: A. Millar, 1761), p. 93.

³³ Greig, *The Beau Monde*, p. 33.

³⁴ For an examination of seventeenth-century consumption, see Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor*.

³⁵ The lengths of cloth were priced at around £2 for 15-20 yards. The making up at around 9 to 12 shillings per gown. Sarsanet, alternatively spelt sarsnet, sarcenett, was a thin, fine, silk with a soft finish. Lustring, alternatively spelt lutestring, was a fine, glossy silk with a lustrous finish. Satin was a smooth, glossy silk, created by the weft floating over three or four warp threads at a time.

was 18 yards of a 'Rich Gold & Silv' Brocade at £3 3s a yard', coming to a total of £56 14s.³⁶ A week later, Hester laid out a staggering £84 for 'a fine brusell head and hancker', meaning a headdress made from expensive Brussels lace, the equivalent of around £11,170, or eight times a lady's maid's annual salary.³⁷

These highly fashionable goods stand out as significant outlays in comparison to Hester's other expenses. Even the descriptive language of 'rich' and 'fine' used by Hester, in her otherwise practical accounting, pinpoints these two purchases as special items. The brocade purchased by Hester Heathcote was probably purchased to be made up into a fashionable *robe à la française* (Figure 4.4). These types of silk were extremely fashionable and luxurious, and were achieved by incorporating metallic threads into the weaving process. The greater the weight of the gold or silver incorporated into the design, the greater the price.³⁸ The Brussels lace head-dress, or fontange, which Hester Heathcote purchased was equally luxurious.³⁹ This lace would have been supported by a wire frame, and was a complex and fashionable piece of headwear, worn only by the wealthy and fashionable.⁴⁰ Brussels lace was equally exclusive, and was highly intricate (Figure 4.5). This lace was made in Flanders, and was highly labour intensive and intricate. Both of these purchases were both highly

³⁶ LA, 2ANC12/E/2: 'Personal accounts for a dress allowance, Sir G. Heathcote's daughter, 1725', p. 19.

³⁷ Bridget Hill, *Women, Work and Sexual Politics In Eighteenth-Century England* (Taylor & Francis, 1993), p. 133.; LA, 2ANC12/E/2, 'Personal accounts for a dress allowance, Sir G. Heathcote's daughter, 1725', p. 27. The currency conversion provided is the real price commodity value conversion, and was made using the Economic History Association's calculators on the Measuring Worth website, www.measuringworth.com, accessed 22nd December 2015.

³⁸ Miller, *Selling Silks: A Merchant's Sample Book 1764*, p. 14; see also Anne Kraatz, *Lace: History and Fashion* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989); Heather Toomer, *Antique Lace: Identifying Types and Techniques* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd, 2001).

³⁹ A fontange was part of a *frelange*, a high headdress made of lace and ribbons on a wire frame, which was popular in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.

⁴⁰ Angela McShane and Clare Backhouse, 'Top-Knots and Lower Sorts: Print and Promiscuous Consumption in the 1690s', in *Printed Images in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Interpretation*, ed. Michael Hunter (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 337–58.

fashionable and highly expensive, marking them out as exclusive items which represented the wearer's wealth and fashionable knowledge.



Figure 4.4. Robe à la Française, 1730, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009.300.1089.



Figure 4.5. Brussels lace lappets, 1720-1730, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, H5111-43.

The same priorities of materially and visually conveyed fashionability were evident in the accounts kept by Miss Elizabeth Woodhouse, nearly 60 years later in the 1780s. Elizabeth Woodhouse was the daughter of a successful York Grocer, and was able to bring some considerable property to her marriage.⁴¹ She regularly purchased items of fashionable clothing from retailers in York from her teens; however, her accounts from this period are not extensive, and are primarily made up of scattered bills and receipts.⁴² There were only two occasions during this period when Elizabeth Woodhouse kept extensive and thorough records of her expenditure. The

⁴¹ Harvey, *The Little Republic*, p. 84.

⁴²YCA, Munby Papers, 54.18: 'Bills and Receipts of Miss Eliza Woodhouse for clothing, 1778-1790'.

first was upon her frequent trips to Bath with her aunt, and demonstrate early attempts at independent bookkeeping, and the second just prior to her marriage.⁴³

During a three month trip to Bath in 1787, Elizabeth kept meticulous accounts of her expenditure on hairdressing, using an entire sheet of paper to account for expenses such as the relatively minor amounts of 17 shillings on hairdressing, and 12 shillings on powder. This was kept separate from her other expenditure, which demonstrate a similar rhythm of visits to that shown by Hester Heathcote decades earlier. Although her individual expenses are relatively modest in comparison, Elizabeth spent over £50, a significant sum, during her three month visit.⁴⁴ However, the majority of these purchases were not for large amounts of material, or for the making up of gowns, but rather for the haberdashery items required to make her own alterations to garments, conforming to Chrisman-Campbell's emphasis on trimmings.⁴⁵

Cycles of consumption not only involved patterns in the purchase of new garments, but also reflected the cycles undergone by garments and accessories already owned by the consumer. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), the heroine's sister, Lydia Bennet purchases a bonnet, however having decided that she did not like the trim, decides she will purchase some 'prettier-coloured satin to trim it with fresh'.⁴⁶ Elizabeth Woodhouse's accounts hint at similar habits, as she often purchases ready-made bonnets, alongside a wide array of ribbons, artificial flowers, and short lengths

⁴³ YCA, Munby Papers, 54.21-b: 'Expenses incurred by Miss Eliza Woodhouse on her 3 journeys to Bath with her aunt, Mrs Woodhouse, 26 Mar - Jun 1787, 13 Apr - 23 May 1789, 21 Oct 1790, 18 Jan 1791'.

⁴⁴ This was more than Barbara Johnson's annual income of only £45 per annum. See NA, PROB 11/844/305: 'Will of Jane Johnson, 1759'.

⁴⁵ Chrisman-Campbell, 'The Face of Fashion', pp. 157-71.

⁴⁶ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Fiona Stafford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 166.

of gauze. Indeed, a receipt made out by a York milliner for instructing Miss Woodhouse in ‘the art of millinery’ further supports the notion that young ladies also expected to adapt and remake garments and accessories themselves, extending the practical material literacy taught through childhood sewing.⁴⁷

In 1791, Elizabeth Woodhouse became engaged to the Reverend John Forth, a Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, and agent and chaplain to Lord Carlisle at Castle Howard. The most extensive account which Elizabeth kept before becoming Mrs Forth was that which she drew up in the months leading up to her marriage. These accounts provide a detailed breakdown of the clothing, amongst other material goods, which was required to set up home as a wife in a middling household with elite connections.⁴⁸ Amanda Vickery has demonstrated how important setting up home was in the eighteenth century, in terms of choosing furniture, wallpaper, and the house itself.⁴⁹ However, equally important was the bride’s consumption of the equipment she would need for married life. During the preparations for her marriage in June 1791, Elizabeth Woodhouse spent £117, with purchases including an oyster knife, packs of cards, and a clothes brush, a medicine book, as well as needles and various pieces of sewing equipment. This investment consumption not only included the tools for managing a household and providing polite entertainment, but also the wife’s wardrobe – an entirely new selection of clothing to that worn as an unmarried lady. The garments purchased by Elizabeth Woodhouse do not constitute the wedding trousseau one might imagine, but represent a forward thinking investment in the material capital required

⁴⁷ YCA Munby Papers, 54.19: ‘Receipt by J Volans for £10 for instructing Miss Woodhouse in the millinery business, 10th February 1783’.

⁴⁸ YCA Munby Papers, 54.22 a-m: ‘Accounts for sundry items bought by Miss Eliza Woodhouse prior to her marriage to Mr John Forth, June 1791’.

⁴⁹ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 83-105.

to be a wife in a polite, middling rank household. She purchased, at various points during June, four aprons, a common gown, a muslinet gown, a dimity petticoat, six night shifts, and a black beaver hat among other things.⁵⁰ These purchases do not represent luxurious indulgence, but the acquisition of a new wardrobe suitable to her new role as wife and household manager, balancing the practicality of living in rural Yorkshire, with the fashionability expected of the wife of Lord Carlisle's agent and chaplain.⁵¹ This investment in the material capital of the marriage marks a shift in consumption priorities, from fashion conscious daughter, to the manager of a household of her own.

4.2 Marriage, Household Management, and Pin Money

The newly married Elizabeth Forth's careful accounting, started in earnest in the months before her marriage, continued throughout her married life. These records provide an insight into the ways in which the consumption choices and priorities of a woman shifted during the transition from dependant daughter, to managerial wife.⁵² Contemporary writers argued that 'from a married woman engaged in family concerns, a more staid behaviour is expected than from a young woman before marriage; and consequently a greater simplicity of dress'.⁵³ The couple shared the accounting responsibilities in the early years after marriage. At first, Reverend Forth kept the primary record of expenses of the household, while his wife annotated, corrected, and

⁵⁰ Muslinet was a heavy muslin.

⁵¹ For more on household management, see Day, 'Elite Women's Household Management'.

⁵² YCA, 54:2: 'Account book of John Forth and Mrs Elizabeth Forth, 1792'. The Latham family accounts provide a comparison to the Forths. See Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England*, pp. 229-45.

⁵³ *The London Magazine, Or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer* (London: R. Baldwin, 1781), p. 417.

supplemented the accounts, in a process of pseudo-apprenticeship.⁵⁴ Then, in 1792, Elizabeth became the primary account keeper, with her husband's hand occasionally also present.⁵⁵

Clothing was still a significant expense in these accounts, and an area of consumption worthy of an annual summary at the close of each book; however, it had shifted in its primacy in Elizabeth's consumption. She no longer purchased dresses, bonnets, and caps with the regularity that she did as an unmarried girl, and instead her outlay on clothing consisted primarily of threads, mending shoes, washing gloves, and the general maintenance of an existing body of material goods, and on garments for other members of the household. Once her first child was born in 1793, the household consumption shifted to accommodate this new life in the household. Elizabeth also oversaw the purchase of garments for her servants, and for her husband, such as the making of a dressing gown. An inventory from early in the marriage also demonstrates that many of the trinkets, jewellery, and accessory pieces accumulated by the Forths were inherited or gifted, rather than purchased.⁵⁶ For example 'a handsome ring with the late Mr Alderman Woodhouse's Hair set round with Diamond Sparks, (cost 11 guineas)', and 'a row of large amber beads 35 in number belonging to Mrs Forth's Mother's Mother' were to be found in one cupboard alone. Although still living close by to the urban retail streets of York, and the upwardly mobile daughter of a successful retailer herself, after she was married Elizabeth Forth's consumption was always checked by the necessities of maintaining and adapting the clothing she already possessed. There was certainly a shift away from the household production and

⁵⁴ For a full analysis of the Forths' joint accounting, see Harvey, *The Little Republic*, p. 85.

⁵⁵ YCA, 54:4: 'Mrs Forth's Memorandum Book, 1792-93'.

⁵⁶ YCA, 54:1: 'Inventory of John Forth and Mrs Elizabeth Forth, 1792'.

treatment of raw materials in relation to dress, such as spinning and weaving, towards a reliance on retailer provisioning, it does not necessarily follow that all production of garments left the home.⁵⁷ Old garments were remade, fabrics recycled, and gowns re-trimmed.

There is material evidence for this trend of remaking and recycling, as well as the implication from the purchase of thread and trims in account books.⁵⁸ Numerous extant gowns show signs of remaking for a variety of reasons, such as pregnancy, changes in body shape through age, and changes in the fashionable silhouette.⁵⁹ One example, from the Fashion Museum in Bath, provides evidence of this remaking and recycling (Figure 4.6). Firstly, the waistline of the gown has been lifted several inches (Figure 4.7). During the 1770s and 1780s, the fashionable waistline fell upon the natural waist. However, as this rose towards the under-bust waistline of the early nineteenth century in the 1790s, this garment had its skirt removed, and repositioned in the appropriate, fashionable location, significantly prolonging the fashionable life of the garment.

⁵⁷ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture*, p. 133; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 157.

⁵⁸ For work on the use of dress as historical evidence, see Ingrid Mida and Alexandra Kim, *The Dress Detective: A Practical Guide to Object-Based Research in Fashion* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

⁵⁹ For work on the afterlives of material objects, see Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*; Kelley, 'Time, Wear, and Maintenance: The Afterlife of Things'.



Figure 4.6. Gown, 1780-1790, Fashion Museum, Bath, BATMC I.09.2004



Figure 4.7. Detail of gown showing alteration to waistline, 1780-1790, Fashion Museum, Bath, BATMC I.09.2004



Figure 4.8. Detail of gown showing alterations to lining, 1780-1790, Fashion Museum, Bath, BATMC I.09.2004

Further evidence of recycling can be seen on the back of the dress, where the lining shows clear evidence of button holes in a row down the centre back (Figure 4.8). This would imply that the linen used to line the back of the dress when it was originally made had been pilfered from another garment – perhaps a shirt or shift – and used to line the new garment. It would therefore be likely that this dress was entirely homemade, rather than constructed by a professional dressmaker. However, the fabric – a beautiful printed cotton – was probably contemporary to the initial construction of the gown in the 1780s, meaning that the owner did engage with the consumer market in purchasing lengths of fashionable cloth, even if she relied upon her own skills to construct the garment. That this cotton is probably a European printed

cotton, as opposed to its painted, imported counterpart, also shows support of the growing domestic cotton industry.⁶⁰

Mrs Forth's tendency to remake and recycle might have partly been due to the shared financial management of the household. Financial exchanges between Reverend and Mrs Forth were remarkably fluid, yet strictly recorded. Reverend Forth gifted his wife two five pound notes on one occasion, and on another it is recorded that she returned to him all the money she had on her person, totally sixty one pounds.⁶¹ It would appear that Elizabeth Forth did not have access to her own private allowance for expenditure on dress and entertainment, as was the custom amongst the gentry and aristocracy. Pin money was a relatively new social phenomenon in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England, yet by the end of the century it had found its way into general parlance.⁶² Defined loosely as contracted payments made by a husband to his wife of a set annual sum, pin money had historically been seen as evidence of the financial liberalisation of married women.⁶³ However, Susan Staves has criticised this view, instead arguing that the use of pin money fitted with patriarchal views of women, and that the arrangement enabled men to manage any expenses that their wives might otherwise have placed at their door.⁶⁴ Hannah Greig has further demonstrated the patriarchal hold of pin money, recounting the story of the Countess of Strafford. In 1712, the Countess gained the Queen's sartorial and personal approbation through her consumer choices in dress. Pleased with her social

⁶⁰ Riello, *Cotton*, p. 179.

⁶¹ Harvey, *The Little Republic*, p. 85.

⁶² Susan Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property in England: 1660-1833* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 132.

⁶³ Marcia Pointon, *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture, 1665-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 25.

⁶⁴ Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property*, pp. 131-161.

achievement, and the familial success it had brought, her husband reimbursed her for the expense of the gown out of family funds.⁶⁵

Pin money was subject to significant debate over the course of the eighteenth century. This primarily surrounded issues of women's separate property and financial rights. Contemporaries grappled with the question of whether a married woman could save her pin money and use it to purchase property or to invest, and if so, whether these purchases belonged to husband or wife.⁶⁶ However, what the custom of pin money certainly did do was allow wives to have financial independence when it came to their wardrobe and entertainment: it allowed them to become independent consumers. Freed from the restriction of asking their husbands to pay their creditors, women were free to spend their allowance as they wished: responsible for their own purchases of dress and accessories, their attendance at social gatherings, and their losses at cards.

This financial freedom brought with it significant pitfalls, especially for wealthy ladies whose credit seemed endless with retailers keen for patronage.⁶⁷ Augusta, wife Thomas de Grey MP, and daughter of William Irby MP, left sporadic evidence of her consumption and the spending of her pin money between 1759 and 1815.⁶⁸ These records are mostly in the form of unpaid accounts sent by dressmakers. Between 1793 and 1796 Augusta worked up a bill of over six hundred pounds with one dressmaker, the unfortunate S. Taniere.⁶⁹ Taniere was a fashionable London

⁶⁵ Greig, *The Beau Monde*, p. 120.

⁶⁶ Pointon, *Strategies for Showing*, p. 25.

⁶⁷ For more on the issues created by credit, see Wennerlind, *Casualties of Credit*.

⁶⁸ NRO, WLS/LI/14: 'Dress accounts of Augusta de Grey, 1759-1815'.

⁶⁹ NRO, WLS/LI/12/427 x 4: 'Accounts from S. Taniere, milliner, 1793-6'.

milliner, with wealthy and aristocratic clientele.⁷⁰ Augusta made purchases regularly, always on credit, which was paid off in small, irregular instalments.

By the end of 1796, Augusta had run up a bill worth over seven hundred pounds, yet had paid off only one hundred and thirty pounds of this over a three year period.⁷¹ These bills were clearly made out to Augusta, and it is her hand which annotated them and recorded the money she had paid, implying that, as would be expected of a woman of her rank at this time, that she was paying for these expenses from her pin money. That the remainder of the bill was paid off in 1797, presumably after she had received her next annual payment from her husband, also supports this assertion. This cycle of billing again demonstrates how the economic mechanics behind consumption could initially increase through receiving liberal credit, and then significantly limit, once bills were received and pressed, the purchasing potential of the consumer. While it was usual for a credit account to be paid off annually, or even biannually, the extreme stretching of such a large amount of credit over what becomes a four year period is exceptional.⁷² Consumers often left some of their credit unpaid to act as a security that they would continue to patronise the retailer. In return, retailers were often keen to offer consumers of rank extra credit, in return for the acclaim of their patronage.

Across all three years of consumption represented in these accounts, purchases were only made between February and July. This slight shift from the annual trend observed in Hester Heathcote's accounts can be determined to reflect the shifts in dates

⁷⁰ George, 3rd Earl of Egremont, was one of her clients, who purchased items for his mistresses from her. See, WSRO, PHA/7558: 'Receipted bills from London tradesmen to George, 3rd Earl of Egremont, 1800'.

⁷¹ NRO, WLS/LI/12/427 x 4: 'Accounts from S. Taniere, milliner, 1793-6'.

⁷² Finn, *The Character of Credit*, p. 286.

which had taken place over the course of the eighteenth century in regards to the London season.⁷³ This shift, due to changes in the mechanisms of parliament and improved travelling conditions, had a knock on effect for retailers, whose periods of busiest sales shifted as a result.

Eighteenth-century consumers did not, of course, need to be in London in order to purchase fashionable items. As was demonstrated with Elizabeth Woodhouse's spending, local urban hubs such as York and the even more fashionable Bath also provided access to fashionable goods. Furthermore, systems of proxy shopping were well established by the eighteenth century, allowing wives and mothers who stayed at home in the country to sample the urban shopping experience vicariously through a city-dwelling friend or relative.⁷⁴ Sir Rowland Winn, a baronet from Nostell Priory in Yorkshire, was often commissioned by his wife, Sabine, to obtain products for her while he was in London. These were often items such as new books, which could be bound to match the library at Nostell, and consequently did not require close inspection or consideration. However, Rowland was occasionally entrusted with commissions for clothing. On one occasion, in 1781, he oversaw the purchase of stockings and hats for his wife and children, and he also assured her that 'you can depend on my not forgetting any of your small commissions'.⁷⁵

Consumers such as Sabine, who were restricted to staying in the country in order to raise her young children, but who wished to retain a link to urban fashionability through their wardrobe, often corresponded with urban retailers in order

⁷³ Schwarz, *London in the Age of Industrialisation*, pp. 105-106.

⁷⁴ Miles Lambert, 'Sent from Town: Commissioning Clothing in Britain During the Long Eighteenth Century', *Costume* 43 (2009): pp. 66-84.

⁷⁵ Translated from French, Lady Sabine Winn's first language, by the author. 'Tu peux compter que je n'oublierai aucune de tes petites commissions'. WYAS, WYL 1352/A1/53/3: 'Letter from Sir Rowland Winn to Sabine Winn, 1781'.

to place orders, and receive fashion news. Sabine voraciously indulged in this habit, and kept up a correspondence with a number of consumers during her married years. The most extensive of these was the series of letters from Mrs Ann Charlton, a milliner, which cover a period of approximately three years, from the beginning of 1783 until the end of 1785.⁷⁶

Use of the direct correspondence shopping method enabled Sabine Winn to retain control over the quality and other attributes of the items she ordered. While her husband could be entrusted with smaller, regular purchases, such as stockings, Sabine retained her independence and her ability to browse when ordering her fashionable clothing. Berry has suggested that these two types of shopping were often carried out using two different strategies.⁷⁷ Whereas significant individual purchases would involve meditative browsing by the consumer, repeat purchases could be carried out by a proxy or by servants.⁷⁸ The evidence of Sabine Winn's shopping practise certainly fits with Berry's model, however it also develops the model, extending the browse-buy system to incorporate distance shopping and sample exchange.

Purchasing at a distance did create problems when an item did not suit a client's requirements, did not fit, or was not what was expected. As Miles Lambert has pointed out, information cards were developed in the latter part of the century which improved the communication of sizing.⁷⁹ Prior to this, many mantua-makers would use a pattern from an old gown to gauge sizing. Mary Peers, a provincial mantua-maker, advertised that 'Ladies in the Country may be fitted with the greatest exactness by sending a

⁷⁶WYAS, WYL 1352/C4/9/16: 'Letters from Mrs Ann Charlton to Sabine Winn, 1783-1785'.

⁷⁷Berry, 'Polite Consumption', pp. 375-94.

⁷⁸Walsh, 'Shopping at First Hand?', pp. 13-26.

⁷⁹Lambert, 'Sent From Town', pp. 66-84.

Gown as a Pattern'.⁸⁰ Mrs Bell's advertisements advised that 'ladies residing in the country are instructed to send their measures, so as to be fitted with the same facility as if in London'.⁸¹ However, neither of these methods would have been fully successful in producing the fit achievable through fittings. Mistakes were still easily made with such restricted opportunities for interaction. When Lady King ordered some gloves from Mr Senior, a London haberdasher with whom she maintained a correspondence, she found that they were 'a trifle too small in all ways'.⁸² On some occasions when the goods delivered were not suitable, the retailer wrote off the loss, and asked the consumer simply to dispose of the items she did not like as she wished. In 1783 Ann Charlton wrote to Sabine Winn that: 'I am sorry the handkerchief was not what you meant but I assure you that the handkerchief with 3 tapes to tie under the chin is quite old & what we made last year & that I sent you was quite a new shape & what we sold so many of'.⁸³ Married women who still maintained a strong interest in urban fashionability, yet were restricted by the restraints of apron strings and young children, continued to engage with the consumer world in this way. However, they were severely bound by the limited access provided by correspondence shopping.

Local patronage was also an important aspect of married women's consumer experience and practice. In 1789 Sabine Winn ran up a bill of over one hundred pounds making purchases from Thomas Yeamans, a haberdasher from Wakefield whom she patronised for over a decade.⁸⁴ The bill, which was kept on account for a year, details a variety of items ranging from an 'India Chintz Gown' to simple packs of pins. In

⁸⁰ *Adams Weekly Courant*, 5 July, 1763.

⁸¹ *The World of Fashion*, April 1834.

⁸² YCA, 43/69: 'Letter from Lady King to Mr Senior, 1820s-1830s'.

⁸³ WYAS, WYL 1352/C4/9/16: 'Letters from Mrs Ann Charlton to Sabine Winn, 1783-1785'.

⁸⁴ WYAS, WYL 1352/A4/1538/31: 'Bill for items bought from Thomas Yeamans, 1789'.

spite of her connections with London, and a clear preference for French fashions, which she regularly refers to in her letters, the socially significant local position she held necessitated the economic support of local retailers. Furthermore, Borsay has argued that during the eighteenth century, there was a decentralisation of metropolitan commerce.⁸⁵ It is therefore possible that these provincial retailers were able to supply imported goods at more attractive prices than their London counterparts, due to the locality of ports and international trade.

4.3 Fashionable Consumption in Old Age

As Sabine got older and her health deteriorated, almost all of her purchases appear to have been placed via correspondence. The letters between Thomas Yeamans and Sabine Winn indicate that she may have rarely made the journey to Wakefield, instead relying on the exchange of notes and samples. For example in 1798, the year of her death, Sabine requested samples of the current selection of chintz fabrics to be sent to her at her home. The accompanying note prioritised the practicalities of the transaction, but still made use of the opportunity for self-promotion. Yeamans listed various other new items which might have been of interest to Sabine, such as ‘India muslin, satin, sarcenets’, ‘a new kind of fur’ and ‘many of the newest bonnets, caps...’, although these advertisements were not heeded, and no further purchases appear to have been made.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Peter Borsay, ‘The English Urban Renaissance: The Development of Provincial Urban Culture 1680-1760’, in *The Eighteenth-Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1688-1820*, ed. Peter Borsay (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 159-187.

⁸⁶ WYAS, WYL 1352/C4/1/18: ‘Letters from Thomas Yeamans to Sabine Winn’.

Sabine's husband, Sir Rowland Winn, passed away in a carriage accident in 1785, and it is no coincidence that Sabine's fashionable consumption significantly dropped after this date.⁸⁷ Although occasional purchases were made, the intensity of commercial exchange which existed between Sabine and fashionable London retailers before this date never returned. The transition into old age and widowhood, and the undoubted effect it had upon her mental and physical health, had significant influence on Sabine's engagement as a consumer.⁸⁸ Where once she enthusiastically bought silk ribbons and fashionable caps, now she purchased dark and drab cottons.

Old age for the eighteenth-century woman was depicted as a dull and dreary time. Once women had lost the bloom of youth, they were condemned to taking the back benches at balls and assemblies, and were removed from the heady gaze of fashionable life.⁸⁹ Significant scholarly attention has been paid to aging, focussing on stigma, scorn, and restraints.⁹⁰ Old women were generally portrayed in a more negative light than older men, and were distinctive due to their wrinkles, dowager hump, grey hair, toothlessness, and sombre dress.⁹¹ Other than these regular associations between drab dress and old age, very little work has engaged with the interplay of old age and fashionable consumption.⁹² Older women who continued to engage in fashionable consumption were ruthlessly and mercilessly condemned, most vociferously in graphic satire. Such women were either mocked for their ridiculous appearance, or distrusted as being intentionally deceptive to men.

⁸⁷ Todd, 'A Swiss Milady in Yorkshire', pp. 205-24.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 220-224.

⁸⁹ Vickery, 'Mutton Dressed as Lamb?', p. 861.

⁹⁰ Susannah Ottaway, *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Pat Thane and Lynn Botelho, eds, *Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500* (London: Routledge, 2014); Yallop, *Age and Identity*.

⁹¹ Ottaway, *The Decline of Life*, p. 44.

⁹² The exception being Vickery, 'Mutton Dressed as Lamb?'.

The treatment of Sarah, Lady Archer (1741-1801), in graphic satire of the 1790s is particularly revealing. Lady Archer was the daughter of a Warwickshire landowner and MP, and wife of Baron Archer of Umberslade. She was notorious as an avid gambler, and was one of the Faro ladies alongside the infamous Duchess of Devonshire, and the Countess of Buckinghamshire.⁹³ She was also known for trying, and failing, to improve her decidedly plain looks. Thomas Rowlandson's 1792 satirical print, *Six Stages of Mending a Face* (Figure 4.9), emphasised the spectacle of difference between the appearance of youthful beauty, and the reality of wrinkled old age.⁹⁴



Figure 4.9. Thomas Rowlandson, *Six Stages of Mending a Face*, 1792, British Museum, 1876,1014.10.

⁹³ Gillian Russell, "'Faro's Daughters': Female Gamesters, Politics, and the Discourse of Finance in 1790s Britain', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33, no. 4 (2000): pp. 481–504.

⁹⁴ On satire and the spectacle of difference, see Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference*.

This image depicts Lady Archer, who would have been 51 at the time, applying makeup, putting in false teeth, hair, and even eye balls, before finally appearing as a youthful beauty in the final stage. Rowlandson was not alone in his treatment of Lady Archer. Similar comments on Lady Archer's dependence on cosmetics were made in other prints, such as James Gillray's *The Finishing Touch* of 1791 (Figure 4.10).⁹⁵ Although in contrast to Rowlandson's image, the final product of this transformation remains ridiculous. These images demonstrate that Lady Archer's continued determination to retain an appearance of youth and beauty, in spite of her age, was seen as an artificial masking of the natural self. Importantly, the creation of beauty was achieved in these depictions through the consumption of cosmetics and clothing accessories. It was Lady Archer's continued engagement as a consumer with goods intended for a youthful, fashionable market, which laid her open to ridicule.

Older women who insisted on continuing to engage in the beautification rituals of fashionable youth, and who wore the bright, fashionable clothing donned by the young, were seen as artificial and deceptive.⁹⁶ Fashionable consumption and luxury were seen to have drawn a veil of deception over beauty and truth, deceiving male onlookers through trickery and deceit. These women 'dressed ewe fashion' had failed to acknowledge that, as a rule of decorum, dress was required to vary with age, as well as social rank and season.⁹⁷ These women were seen as deluded, blinded by vanity into a continued belief in their own desirability.

⁹⁵ McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze*, p. 236.

⁹⁶ Vickery, 'Mutton Dressed as Lamb?', pp. 863-865.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 870.



Figure 4.10. James Gillray, *The Finishing Touch*, 1791, National Portrait Gallery, D12424.

What, then, was it about the dress of these women which was considered inappropriate for their age? Contemporary commentary implies that colour and trimmings were two key issues in deciphering whether a garment was suitable for

women considered to have entered old age. In 1786 William Hayley quipped that the old maid who wore pink ribbons was ‘a vessel displaying signs of distress, and inviting every bold adventurer to come to her relief’.⁹⁸ However, as Amanda Vickery has argued, even society hostess Elizabeth Motagu decided to be painted in frivolous and youthful pink when in her forties in 1762.⁹⁹ Similarly, Jane Austen’s Mrs Allen in *Northanger Abbey* is not ridiculed for the aesthetics of what she wears, but rather for her all-consuming interest in fashion and her relentless concern for her dress and engagement in consumption.¹⁰⁰

Irrespective of the debate about what older women should and should not wear, widows enjoyed a unique position of relative financial freedom. Widows were able to hold property in their own right, and it was probably the only time in most women’s lives when they were not answerable to a male relative for their finances, and were often supported by a jointure.¹⁰¹ However, as Susan Staves has pointed out in her extensive work on jointures, this appearance of financial independence may be a mirage, and should be treated with caution.¹⁰² Even when a widow was entitled to a jointure, she did not necessarily have it to spend, and often returned it in whole or part to the heir to the estate.¹⁰³ When they did hold onto it, they were often seen as a drain upon the estate.¹⁰⁴

For older consumers of dress, therefore, the relationship between fashion and decorum was key. Old age did not mean a lack of consumer engagement, as the

⁹⁸ William Hayley, *A Philosophical, Historical and Moral Essay on Old Maid* (London: T. Cadell, 1786), p. 56.

⁹⁹ Vickery, ‘Mutton Dressed as Lamb?’, pp. 863-865.

¹⁰⁰ Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, p. 10.

¹⁰¹ Ottaway, *The Decline of Life*, p. 93.

¹⁰² Staves, *Married Women’s Separate Property*, p. 96.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹⁰⁴ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 219.

accounts of Barbara Johnson and her contemporary Martha Dodson show.¹⁰⁵ Martha Dodson was the wife of John Dodson, a successful businessman, and member of the Tin Plate Workers' Company, at the Temple Church. She was his second wife, and cared for the two children from his previous marriage, as well as two daughters of her own. Her husband was appointed High Sheriff of Berkshire in 1716, before dying in 1730. Dodson continued to live in the Great House in Cookham during the 1750s and 1760s, even after her husband's death, and continued to steadily spend on fashionable items for her home and for herself.¹⁰⁶

Dodson's accounts provide a fascinating insight into a widowed lady's continuing consumer engagement into old age.¹⁰⁷ Kept between June 1746, when Dodson was sixty-two years old, and June 1765, the accounts cover the final two decades of her life. These accounts do not focus on dress alone, but cover all the minutiae of her everyday life, and the decoration of her home. However, Dodson's consumption of clothing is particularly enlightening. Her records of the alternation and making of clothing present a nuanced picture of fashionable consumption, practical garment maintenance, and the gradual impact of declining health.

Until her health prevented her, age did not dissuade Dodson from delighting in the London season, and she continued to lodge in town throughout most of her old age.¹⁰⁸ This preference for London is also displayed in her consumption of dress. Overwhelmingly, Dodson purchased fabric and had it made up in London, dealing exclusively with metropolitan drapers, milliners, and mantua makers. Mary Delany and Lady Anson were fellow customers at Carr's on Ludgate Hill, from where Dodson

¹⁰⁵ Barbara Johnson's consumption is the focus of chapter five.

¹⁰⁶ Ehrman, 'Dressing Well in Old Age', pp. 28-38.

¹⁰⁷ MOL, 80.71: 'Martha Dodson's account book'.

¹⁰⁸ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 220.

purchased silk, however she generally patronised the shops around Cheapside.¹⁰⁹ When Dodson did purchase fabrics in the country, it was generally not for her own use, and more likely as a gift, such as a length of camlet which she presented to a Mrs Terry in 1750, and who was in Dodson's employ. It was not until Dodson was too frail to make the journey to London that she contented herself with purchasing from local tradesmen, reflecting a similar transition to local patronage in old age and ill health as was displayed by Sabine Winn.

It is not only Dodson's purchase of new garments which is significant, but also the maintenance and repair of her existing wardrobe. Not only do Dodson's accounts record lengths of fabric purchased and the making up of new gowns, but also turning, repair, and resizing. Dodson's engagement as a consumer of dress was not just undertaken in shops, but also with service-providers such as local seamstresses. Significantly, Dodson even preferred to have smaller alternations undertaken by London seamstresses, while larger tasks, such as turning, were undertaken by local woman Hannah Emblin.¹¹⁰ Although Edwina Ehrman has suggested that this may have been because of the economic embarrassment of having to turn a gown, it more likely had a more practical reasoning.¹¹¹ Turning a garment was a longer process than smaller repairs or resizing – effectively requiring the garment to be fully remade, and taking as long as the original construction – therefore it may simply have been more practical to the rhythm and cycles of Dodson's life that this work was undertaken outside of the London season.

¹⁰⁹ Ehrman, 'Dressing Well in Old Age', pp. 30-31.

¹¹⁰ Turning was the process of taking apart a dress and remaking it inside out, so as to lengthen the life of the fabric. See MOL, 80.71: 'Martha Dodson's account book'.

¹¹¹ Ehrman, 'Dressing Well in Old Age', p. 31.

Given the twenty year period covered by the accounts, the rhythms with which Dodson purchased new clothes, or had old clothes altered, become apparent. Dodson's purchase and repair of stays is particularly cyclical. From the start of the accounts, Dodson purchased stays from a London maker every two, or occasionally every three years, until 1762. From this point, a local woman took over the role of maintaining Dodson's existing stays, and expenses were paid for rebinding, new laces, and relining, as well as taking the stays in when Dodson was ill. Here, not only is it apparent that the consumer devised and maintained rhythms of consumption for certain necessary garments, but also that health and frailty impacted the way in which they engaged with consumption. Age and ill health did not preclude continued consumption, but rather shifted its focus and disrupted rhythms. Both decorum and practicality shaped the female consumer of dress in old age, shifting and refocussing her consumer engagement.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that women's engagement with the consumer world cannot be seen as a constant and unchanging phenomenon. Instead, consumers were subject to a variety of short and long term cycles, influenced by changing fashions, the social calendar, billing cycles, and most significantly of all, the life-cycle. Different expectations placed upon women during the different phases of their lives significantly influenced how, when, and what they consumed. Youth and the search for a husband was the context for the most fashion-conscious consumption, while marriage brought with it a duty to house and children, and, amongst the gentry and middling women,

and increased simplicity in clothing.¹¹² Old age, widowhood and spinsterhood was perhaps the most volatile time for the female consumer, when fashionable consumption brought with it connotations of deceit.¹¹³ It was this state of flux, evolution, and cycle which characterised individual experiences of the consumption of fashionable dress, and which was so embedded in the rhythms of eighteenth-century consumer practice.

¹¹² Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 177.

¹¹³ Vickery, 'Mutton Dressed as Lamb?', pp. 856-886.

SECTION THREE

THE MATERIAL LIFE OF THE CONSUMER

CHAPTER 5

Barbara Johnson: Consumer and Chronicler of Fashion

In a small town in Buckinghamshire in 1746, eight-year old Reverend's daughter, Barbara Johnson, began a project to record her sartorial and consumer choices, which she would continue consistently for nearly eighty years.¹ This record, now deposited at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, contains 122 samples of fabric, or patterns as they were known at the time, including sumptuous silk brocades, rough wool 'stuff', and fashionable and novel printed cottons (Figure 5.1).² These samples are accompanied by written notes recording information such as the date of purchase, the name of the material, the garment the material was made up into, how much of the fabric was purchased, its price, and whether it had been worn at or purchased for a specific occasion or life event, such as royal or familial mourning. From 1754, at the age of sixteen, Barbara also started collecting the small, monochrome, fashion plates published in pocket books, which are interspersed between the fabric samples. The Barbara Johnson Album, as it has come to be known, provides a detailed, meticulous, and persistent record of one woman's interactions with the world of fashion and the consumer market during the second half of the eighteenth century.

¹ VAM, T.219-1973: 'Barbara Johnson's Album, 1746-1823'.

² The Album was reproduced in facsimile in the 1980s, accompanied by short introductory essays on the key themes of the Album. See Rothstein, *Barbara Johnson*.



Figure 5.1. Barbara Johnson's Album, 1746-1823, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, T.219-1973, p. 3.

The abundance of information recorded by Barbara, and her family, renders her record unique. Although a precedent existed for the creation of a sartorial record, and the habit of collecting was increasingly common for eighteenth-century ladies, no other known source exists from this period which so consistently records the incoming consumption of an individual for such an extended period, covering not only the nature and cost of the garments, but also providing a physical record of their materiality, and a visual record of the influence of the fashion plate and the women's periodical press. However, using such a limited source as a case study, focusing as it does on one woman's consumption, is also problematic. Barbara's experience and practices – in the very nature of the way she recorded them – are exceptional. She clearly enjoyed and engaged with fashion throughout her life, meaning her consumption of and interest in dress was more apparent than many of her contemporaries. Nevertheless, when placed within the context of her own life-cycle, and within the consumer's broader social and economic context, the substantial and rich material of this visual and economic record provide enlightening insights into the development of the figure of the female consumer through the second half of the eighteenth century.

5.1 Barbara Johnson and her Family

Barbara Johnson was born in 1738, and was the daughter of the Reverend Woolsey Johnson.³ Her father came from an established Lincolnshire family, and had attended Clare College Cambridge. In 1720, he was appointed deacon at Peterborough, and

³ Natalie Rothstein, 'The Family and the Album', in *Barbara Johnson's Album of Fashions and Fabrics*, ed. Natalie Rothstein (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), pp. 9–17.

took his MA in 1721, and can be described as having been a religious pluralist.⁴ He was rector at Wilby in Northamptonshire (1729-56) simultaneously with a post as vicar at Olney in Buckinghamshire (1735-53).⁵ He had also held a number of posts in London. He was comparatively wealthy, and could afford to build a manor house at Witham, where he lived for the three years of his retirement prior to his death in 1756. He also had an address in London at Warwick Court, Holborn.

Woolsey Johnson inherited the Olney parish from his father, William Johnson, and married his wife, Jane, there. Barbara was his first child and only daughter, and was born to the couple in Olney in 1738. She was followed by three younger brothers, George, Robert, and Charles, the latter being ten years her junior. Barbara's mother, Jane, oversaw the children's education, and created an impressive array of didactic materials to educate her children.⁶ Both of Barbara's parents passed away before she was 21, her father in 1756, and her mother in 1759, leaving her with three younger brothers yet to reach maturity. They were left to the care of the executor of Jane Johnson's will, the Reverend Edmund Smythe, a distant relative and family friend. In her will, Jane left each of her children £1,500, which was to be paid to Barbara when she wished, with interest of three per cent in the intervening period, which alone provided her with £45 per annum, a low to average income for a dependant middling woman.⁷ This would have given Barbara a yearly income which would be equivalent to around £6,156 in today's money.⁸

⁴ For further information on eighteenth-century pluralism, see Mark Häberlein, *The Practice of Pluralism: Congregational Life and Religious Diversity in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1730-1820* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009).

⁵ Rothstein, 'The Family and the Album', p. 9.

⁶ LLIU, Set 19: 'Jane Johnson's Nursery Library'.

⁷ TNA, PROB 11/844/305: 'Will of Jane Johnson, 1759'.

⁸ This calculation, based on relative historic standards of living, were made using Economic History Association's calculators on the Measuring Worth website, www.measuringworth.com, accessed 22nd December 2015.

For the remaining sixty years of her life, and possibly because she had to care for her younger brothers during her twenties, Barbara remained unmarried. As an unmarried woman of the middling sort, she provides a fascinating example of dress consumption outside of the traditional household structure, as she was neither wife nor mother. Furthermore, she provides an excellent contrast to the consumption of spinsters such as Gertrude Savile, who lived financially restricted lives.⁹ She spent time living with her brothers and friends, meaning her income would not have needed to cover accommodation costs. Her eldest brother took over the parish at Witham and, considering the references to Barbara attending the races at Stamford in the 1760s, it is probable she stayed in her childhood home regularly. Her brother Robert married the sister of the Earl of Craven in 1773. His new wife was decidedly fashionable, and her family wealthy. Her father commissioned Henry Holland and Capability Brown to design the family seat of Benham Park in the 1770s and, while no record remains of how much the estate was worth, the union undoubtedly brought Barbara into close contact with the fashionable landed elite. The couple lived in Kenilworth, where Barbara also regularly visited them. For the most part, her lifestyle was rather peripatetic, visiting friends and family in an almost annual rotation.¹⁰ Although she made references to a home of her own in Northampton until the 1790s, she appears to have spent very little time there.

One of the biggest influences on her life, and one of her closest friends, was Catherine Ingram, who married Michael Wodhull in 1761. Barbara stayed with her friend and her husband frequently at both their house in Thenford near Banbury, and

⁹ Gertrude Savile, *Secret Comment: The Diaries of Gertrude Savile 1721-1757*, ed. Alan Saville and Marjorie Penn (Kingsbridge: Kingsbridge Historical Society, 1997).

¹⁰ Rothstein, 'The Family and the Album', p. 11.

their address at fashionable Berkeley Square in London. She had her accounts with mercers sent to this address, and seems to have become a regular part of the household, moving in with them fully at some point in the 1790s.¹¹

Barbara spent the majority of her life living off the annuity left by her mother. However, in her later years Barbara benefitted from a series of significant increases to her income. When her brother George died in 1814, he left his elder sister an annuity of £50 per annum. Then, when her friends the Wodhulls died, they left their estate to Catherine's remaining sister Mary, who became a companion to Barbara, and subsequently left her £200 per annum on her death. On 14th April 1814, Barbara wrote to her nephew William following her brother's death and the discovery of her newfound income that:

I have always learn'd to be content with a slender income and have gone very well thro' the World to an advanc'd age. I have I believe met with as much real friendship, affection and esteem (the true blessings of life) as if I had posses'd a much larger fortune, I have always kept myself independent and as I have all the comforts of life, I am not likely to grow rapacious in my old age.¹²

She was financially astute throughout her life, and invested the money she received from George into stocks, making the most of her steady income.¹³ Investing in stocks was increasingly common for eighteenth-century widows and spinsters, and negative attitudes to female financial investment were tempered by a more moderate view.¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid., p. 11.

¹² BOD, MS. Don. c. 192, fols. 1-86: 'Papers of Barbara Johnson'.

¹³ Arizpe, Styles, and Brice Heath, *Reading Lessons from the Eighteenth Century*, p. 25.

¹⁴ Mark Freeman, Robin Pearson, and James Taylor, 'Between Madam Bubble and Kitty Lorimer: Women Investors in British and Irish Stock Companies', in *Women and Their Money 1700-1950: Essays on Women and Finance*, ed. Anne Laurence, Josephine Maltby, and Janette Rutterford (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 95-113.

5.2 The Barbara Johnson Album

The Album itself contains fabric samples for garments which Barbara purchased or was given from childhood to death. There are 122 samples in total, with an average consumption of two to three garments per year. The book was an account book belonging to George Thompson, and it remains somewhat of a mystery as to how Barbara came to possess this book. Each of the samples is attached to a small scrap of paper detailing the purchase, and they are arranged in rough chronological order. As the account book dates from 1738 to 1748, and the first sample is dated 1746, it is clear that the samples were accumulated into the book retrospectively, and were probably stored elsewhere, attached to their little paper labels. That the samples were most likely loose for some years goes some way to explain why there are a number of gaps in Barbara's acquisition of garments. Some of these gaps are single years, whereas other larger gaps, such as 1773-75 and 1783-84 coincide with periods when Barbara was attending numerous balls, and was likely to have been active as a consumer.¹⁵ Furthermore, we know that Barbara received or inherited items of clothing which do not appear in the Album, such as 'a flowered silk and a suit of point lace', which was inherited from a Mrs Williams in 1780. This is probably because the samples, even when taken from items described as gifts, must have been taken during or prior to the construction of the garment, as it would have been impossible to take such large samples from a completed garment. Consequently, we can say with confidence that the Album is not representative of Barbara Johnson's full consumption

¹⁵ Rothstein, 'The Family and the Album', p. 16.

of dress. Nevertheless, the consistency, variety, and relative regularity of the record render it hugely insightful as a source through which to trace trends and the consumer life-cycle.

An analysis of a page from the Album reveals both the diversity of information contained within its pages, and the analytic issues encountered in this source. The seventh page of the Album contains swatches dated 1758 and 1759, as well as one fashion engraving dated 1759, and another undated engraving (Figure 5.2). The information recorded with the fabric samples is typical of that recorded throughout the Album. On this page, the brown silk at the top left of the page is accompanied by a note which reads: ‘a brown figur’d lustring night gown July 1758 3s 6 a yard, half yard wide’.¹⁶ The blue silk is described as ‘a Strip’d buff & blue Taffety negligee June 1758, four guineas the piece sixteen yards, yard wide’.¹⁷ Finally, the red fabric is described as being for ‘a Scarlet Stuff Gown December 1759 1:7 a yard, seven yards’.¹⁸ This pattern – describing the fabric, its intended use, the price, length, and width – was Barbara’s standard practise. However, these entries also demonstrate the complication caused by inconsistencies in the details of how Barbara recorded her purchases. For example on this page the cost is recorded differently on all three purchases, even though they were purchased within an eighteen month period.

¹⁶ VAM, T.219-1973, p. 7: ‘Barbara Johnson’s Album, 1746-1823’. Lustring, alternatively spelt lustring, was a fine, glossy silk with a lustrous finish. Satin was a smooth, glossy silk, created by the weft floating over three or four warp threads at a time.

¹⁷ Taffety was crisp, smooth, plain-woven silk with a slight sheen.

¹⁸ Stuff was a general term for woven fabrics not made of silk. These stuffs were originally wool, but could also be linen or cotton blends.

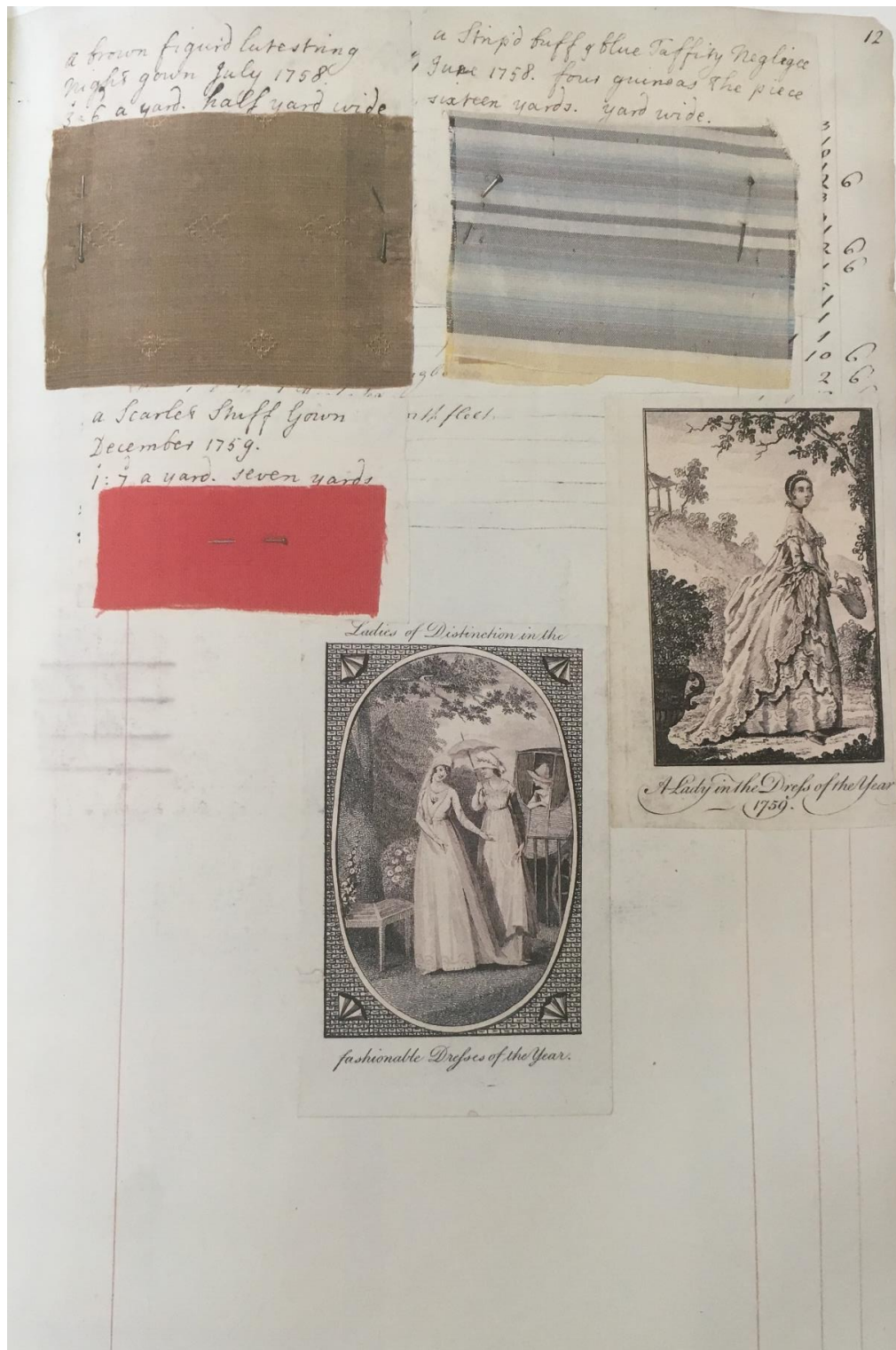


Figure 5.2. Barbara Johnson's Album, 1746-1823, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, T.219-1973, p. 7.

The inconsistency in Barbara's recording methods is also an issue in regards to the engravings. The first engraving, to the centre right of the page, is contemporary with the samples, being dated 1759.¹⁹ Given its style, it is most likely from *The Ladies Complete Pocket Book*, which seems to have been favoured by Barbara.²⁰ The second plate is harder to place. It is undated, and considering the style of the garments depicted, is most likely from the 1800 to 1805 period, making it incongruous with the rest of the page. Although the Album does generally follow a chronological structure, such inconsistencies certainly raise questions about how the Album was authored, and what its purpose was.

How, then, should we approach the Album? Is it a material form of life writing, a scrap book, or an ego document? It bares resemblance to all three genres, yet sits comfortably in none. The self-observing display evident in the Album recalls records such as that of Matthäus Schwarz's *Kleidungsbüchlein*, his 'book of clothes'.²¹ Created in Augsburg in the sixteenth century, and in collaboration with a local artist, the book contains portraits of Schwarz designed to chronicle his dress.²² As with Barbara's Album, Schwarz noted the date, details of the outfit, and how this outfit related to the current events of his lifecycle. The clear difference between the two projects is Schwarz's self-conscious attention to detail, and the public nature of the collaboratively produced document. The informal, and presumably private nature of the Barbara's Album contrasts with this. It does not contain the grandiose overtones

¹⁹ However, it would not have been published until 1760, given the publication process for pocket books. Batchelor, 'Fashion and Frugality', p. 11.

²⁰ Anne Buck, 'The Fashion Engravings', in *Barbara Johnson's Album of Fashions and Fabrics*, ed. Natalie Rothstein (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), pp. 36–43.

²¹ Ulinka Rublack and Maria Hayward, eds, *The First Book of Fashion: The Books of Clothes of Matthäus and Veit Konrad Schwarz of Augsburg* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

²² Ulinka Rublack, 'The First Book of Fashion', in *The First Book of Fashion: The Books of Clothes of Matthäus & Veit Konrad Schwarz of Augsburg*, ed. Ulinka Rublack and Maria Hayward (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 1–26.

of the ego-document, with its regulated structure. While Schwarz carefully records his exact age to the day, Barbara only occasionally mentions the month, and is not consistent in the information that she provides. Barbara appears to record what is important to her, with the informality of a pastime, rather than the rigour of a document designed for posterity.

The fluidity of style, and the casual ordering of the Album perhaps bare closer relation to the nineteenth-century scrapbook.²³ There are precedents for ladies collecting and making albums from prints, trade cards, and fashion plates in the eighteenth century, such as the collecting of Sarah Sophia Banks.²⁴ However, these organised collections are based around specific genres of print, rather than incorporated as a supplement to a more personal record. The scrapbook emerged as a popular pastime in the nineteenth century, in both Britain and America. Indeed, Barbara's niece, also called Barbara but known as Selina, created a scrapbook in the 1860s that included paintings and drawings of houses, table decorations, the church, fashionable hairstyles, and people she may have known.²⁵ This record, although begun in 1863, contained earlier scraps from her childhood, and was continued by family members into the following century.²⁶ These scrapbooks, Ellen Gruber Garvey has argued, allowed their creators to 'make a place for themselves and their communities by finding, sifting, analysing, and recirculating' the writing and images that mattered

²³ James A. Secord, 'Scrapbook Science: Composite Caricatures in Late Georgian England', in *Figuring It Out: Science, Gender, and Visual Culture*, ed. Ann B. Shtier and Bernard V. Lightman (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2006), pp. 164–91; Ellen Gruber Garvey, *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁴ Arlene Leis, 'Displaying Art and Fashion: Ladies' Pocket-Book Imagery in the Paper Collections of Sarah Sophia Banks', *Journal of Art History* 82, no. 3 (2013): pp. 252–71.

²⁵ NA, ZB0702/02: 'Album of Barbara Johnson (Selina) of Witham, 1863'.

²⁶ Mattäus Schwarz's son also continued his father's project, see Rublack and Hayward, *The First Book of Fashion*.

to them.²⁷ They helped to make emotional sense of traumatic experiences, such as war, as well as enabling them to create an object which acted as a material articulation of personal identity and family history. Although Barbara's Album deals only with her interest in fashion, it does act as an articulation of her engagement with dress, both as a consumer and observer. Furthermore, the inclusion of fashion plates dated to after Barbara's death in 1825 are evidence of continuing familial interaction with the book as a chronicle of changing fashions as much as consumption.

Fashion and consumption are tightly linked subjects. Fashion, as embodied in novelty, has been recognised as a key motivation for the consumption of new and innovative goods.²⁸ Fashion undoubtedly drives consumption and, as we will see, this is evident in the Album. In authoring a material and visual autobiography of her engagement with fashion, Barbara created a means of simultaneously recording, considering, and reflecting upon the full expanse of her life through the vehicle of her dress. She did not record whether any of these garments were altered, nor did she record any garments she inherited.²⁹ Instead, she records them at the moment of their purchase and creation as fashionable dress.

5.3 Training Barbara: Jane Johnson, Education, and the Child Consumer

A familial interest in fashion and pretty things was longstanding. Barbara's mother, Jane Johnson, wrote in an undated entry in her commonplace book that 'there is nothing in the World so Beautiful as Virtue!...It is more Becoming than Rich Silks,

²⁷ Gruber Garvey, *Writing with Scissors*, p. 4.

²⁸ Bianchi, 'Taste for Novelty and Novel Tastes', pp. 64-87.

²⁹ This may be a practical decision, as it would be difficult to take a sample from a garment already made up.

Trimmings, Lace Embroidery, & Brilliants...'.³⁰ The words which fill her letters, reading cards, and commonplace books sparkle with religious intensity, and when writing to a friend at the age of thirty-five, she wrote that 'reading the scripture has always been my favourite study'.³¹ The piety and fervent religious beliefs of Jane Johnson seem rather at odds with the picture we have come to paint of her daughter Barbara as a fashion-loving consumer. However, an examination of the pedagogical material which Jane created to educate both Barbara and her sons reveals an inextricable link between the visual and material, and the moral education of her children.³²

Jane Johnson was not adverse to the pleasures of the silks, lace, and embroidery which she classed as being of secondary importance to virtue. In 1749 she wrote to her aunt of the 'intoxicating pleasure' she felt when she spent her time making 'Prizes, Flowers, Stomachers, needle books, cutting watch papers, & many other pretty things'.³³ Yet she also felt the disparity of material circumstances when she visited poor families in want of a change of linen, and chastised herself for her own enjoyment of pretty things.³⁴ Jane's love of making things is certainly evident in the educational materials she produced for her four children, of which 438 separate pieces remain.³⁵ The materials focussed on teaching her children, aged between 21 and 11 at the time of her death in 1759, the fundamentals of reading, as well as moral tales.³⁶ Her methods

³⁰ BOD, MS.Don.c.190, ff. 103-118: 'Jane Johnson papers'.

³¹ BOD, MS.Don.c.190, ff. 21-22: 'Jane Johnson papers'.

³² LLIU, LMC 1649: 'Jane Johnson's Nursery Library'.

³³ BOD, MS.Don.c.190, fols. 11-12: 'Jane Johnson papers'.

³⁴ Arizpe, Styles, and Brice Heath, *Reading Lessons from the Eighteenth Century*, p. 33.

³⁵ LLIU, LMC 1649: 'Jane Johnson's Nursery Library'.

³⁶ Arizpe, Styles, and Brice Heath, *Reading Lessons from the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 69-95.

were in line with contemporary views of education, and she certainly took her role as the moulder of her children's young minds extremely seriously.³⁷

Something which is striking throughout these materials is the importance Jane Johnson placed upon the visual as a supplementary means of reinforcing text. This was in line with the contemporary pedagogical theory of Fénelon and his contemporaries, as considered in chapter three.³⁸ This approach was not unique to Johnson. Visual and material means were often used to reinforce teachings, and were commonplace by the start of the nineteenth century.³⁹ These visual and textual tales were often moral stories, in which the visual reinforced important ethical codes.⁴⁰ Jane Johnson's use of the visual to strengthen the textual emerges at an even earlier point in her children's education. A set of alphabet cards, created by Jane, contained phrases to help her children recall their alphabet, accompanied by images of the person or thing which began with that letter.⁴¹ For example, an Empress was used for the letter E, and a Monkey for the letter M. Perhaps more significantly 'T Was a tra-der, and ga-ther'd pelf', instilling an early weariness of the tricks and greed of merchants in her young children.⁴² The emphasis that Jane placed on the visual in her children's education in these early years would undoubtedly have had a lasting impression on Barbara, and perhaps explains why the material and the visual dominate her Album.

Many of the cards produced by Jane depict ladies in fine and elaborate dresses, and she took meticulous care in colouring their gowns, revealing her own

³⁷ O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child*, p. 4.

³⁸ Arizpe, Styles, and Brice Heath, *Reading Lessons from the Eighteenth Century*, p. 62.

³⁹ *The History of Miss Wildfire*, 1832, Victoria and Albert Museum, T.360:1-3-1998.

⁴⁰ Baggerman, 'The Moral of the Story', pp. 143-163.

⁴¹ LLIU, LMC 1649, Set 5: 'Jane Johnson's Nursery Library'.

⁴² 'Pelf' meaning money, usually gained in a dishonest or dishonourable way.

preoccupation with the subject.⁴³ As the children got older, Jane placed them as the subjects of some of the images. In one series of cards, Barbara is named as the central figure, with an image depicting her in fashionable dress, dancing a minuet with the fictional Lord Mountjoy (Figure 5.3). Through such images, Barbara was taught her alphabet and to read, and also about the social world she would inhabit as an adult.⁴⁴ Not only was she learning how to dress the part in a fashionable, silk gown, but she was also learning about minuet dance, which she undoubtedly practised as an adult.



Figure 5.3. Jane Johnson's Nursery Library, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Indiana, LMC 1649, Set 19, no. 3.

Other cards in this series, which also included flowers, animals, and country scenes, are even more explicit in their intention to teach Barbara what she will need to know as an adult woman, and even more specifically about dress. A series of four cards all depict fashionable young ladies, three mentioning the style and fabric of the gowns they are wearing. For example, card number four of the series depicted 'Miss

⁴³ Arizpe, Styles, and Brice Heath, *Reading Lessons from the Eighteenth Century*, p. 89.

⁴⁴ This aligns with Wollstonecraft's assertion that 'females are made women of when they are mere children'. Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, p. 145.

Carpenter, in a yellow Lutestring Sack, and a red knot, dancing a Rigadoon by herself at Mr Lally's School' (Figure 5.4). The other images depict a girl in a 'blue Sattin Coat' walking to church, and an aristocratic lady in a 'red lutestring coat'. In a similar fashion to the paper doll story books that became popular the beginning of the nineteenth century, such as *The History of Miss Wildfire*, Jane Johnson's story cards brought together fashionable dress, social status, and a specific activity.⁴⁵



Figure 5.4. Jane Johnson's Nursery Library, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Indiana, LMC 1649, Set 19, no. 4.

Barbara began the compilation of the fabrics and notes about the garments they were made into when she was eight years old in 1746, making the Album contemporary with Jane Johnson's didactic materials. It is therefore possible that the initial exercise of taking fabrics from each gown made and recording the garment it was made into was an exercise in self-regulation. Self-regulation, and the power of rationality to keep the passions in order, were key themes in contemporary pedagogical

⁴⁵ VAM, T.360:1-3-1998: 'The History of Miss Wildfire, 1832'. For further discussion, see chapter 3.

writing.⁴⁶ Just as pocket books for children acted as a means of practising financial self-regulation, the task of recording dress consumption could have been conceived by Jane Johnson as a means of helping her daughter manage her interest in dress.⁴⁷ The fact that Jane herself simultaneously confessed a love of pretty things, and taught her daughter about fashion through her childhood games, whilst also chiding her own frivolity lends further credence to this notion.

During these early childhood years, Barbara purchased an average of two to three garments per year.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, the terminology used by Barbara is not always consistent, for example she ambiguously refers to ‘gowns’ and ‘robe-coats’, as well as the adult terminology of nightgowns and negligees, and seems to use some terms interchangeably. However, in this early period of her life, the sack appears to have dominated her purchasing, along with the coat. Previous analysis of the Album has queried what Barbara may have meant by the term ‘coat’, as this term was used both as an abbreviated term for petticoat, or a name for a specialised children’s garment.⁴⁹ However, comparison to the terminology used by Barbara’s mother in her teaching materials in enlightening. Two of the cards depict young ladies wearing what is described as a ‘coat’ (Figure 5.5). In both cases, this appears to be a gown with a closed skirt and bodice, with the blue example appearing to have a short peplum over the hips.

The style depicted in Jane Johnson’s drawings, and referred to as a ‘coat’, bares a strong resemblance to extant children’s dresses. Younger children were carefully

⁴⁶ Catherine Macaulay, *Letters on Education* (New York: Garland, 1974), p. 11.

⁴⁷ O’Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child*, p. 104.

⁴⁸ Barbara Johnson records only fashionable outer garments. She does not include stays, shifts, or other smaller items.

⁴⁹ Madeleine Ginsburg, ‘Barbara Johnson and Fashion’, in *Barbara Johnson’s Album of Fashions and Fabrics*, ed. Natalie Rothstein (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), pp. 18–28.

demarcated through their dress, as a means of visually and materially signalling their inferiority to adults.⁵⁰ This reinforced their subordinate situation, theoretically making them receptive to the authority and instruction of adults. This was materially articulated through specific styles of dress for young girls, which differed in a number of key features from adult dress (Figure 5.6).



Figure. 5.5. Jane Johnson's Nursery Library, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Indiana, LMC 1649, Set 19, no. 2 and 5.

The skirt tended to be cut all in one, rather than with an open front over a petticoat. Furthermore, they fastened with lacings down the centre back, with no opening at the centre front, which would also have given the gowns more flexibility in regards to sizing and fit, extending their wearability as the child grew.⁵¹ Both these characteristics are in line with Jane Johnson's drawing. The fabrics, however, remained fashionable, although very little trimming was used, perhaps with the view that the gown would shortly need to be remade again. It is therefore likely that these

⁵⁰ O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child*, p. 78.

⁵¹ Clare Rose, *Children's Clothes Since 1750* (London: Batsford, 1989), p. 35.

garments recorded by Barbara aged eight were the first she had had some degree of choice and control over as a child consumer.



Figure 5.6. Child's gown, 1760, Museum of Childhood, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, T.183-1965.

At eight years old, the sack gowns were probably Barbara's first adult-style dresses, and the Album undoubtedly marks a first step towards self-regulation of both her love of fashion, and her consumption of it, which her mother must have envisioned would stand her in good stead as an adult, female consumer.⁵² The last garment which Barbara describes in the Album as a 'coat' was purchased in 1755, when Barbara was sixteen or seventeen, and on the cusp of adulthood. After this point, Barbara never used the term again, further supporting the assertion that this coat was a child's or adolescent's garment rather than an abbreviation for petticoat, which, considering the fashionable styles of dress at the time, it is certain Barbara must have continued to purchase and wear into at least the 1770s.

Nearly half of the garments described using the adult term 'sack' or more ambiguous 'gown' were recorded as being purchased for formal or important occasions. Of seven garments purchased by or for Barbara between the ages of eight and sixteen that were not described as a 'coat', three were made for royal or familial mourning. None of the mourning gowns were made in the 'coat' style. The performance of mourning through dress was participated in keenly by the higher ranks of eighteenth-century society, and was also taken up by the middling sort. This ritual of mourning became particularly popular in eighteenth-century Europe, and a commercial market surrounding funerals and memorials grew with it.⁵³ Dress was a significant aspect of this culture of visually and materially expressed grief, and children were taught to participate in the material expression of grief from an early age. Dress was used to articulate levels of familiarity with the deceased, as well as

⁵² Anja Müller, 'Fashioning Age and Identity: Childhood and the Stages of Life in Eighteenth-Century English Periodicals', in *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Anja Müller (London: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 91–100.

⁵³ Lou Taylor, *Mourning Dress* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1983).

how long it had been since the death. First mourning required the wearing of blacks and dark greys, whereas second mourning lightened to whites and light greys.⁵⁴ The frequency with which mourning garments appear in Barbara's Album demonstrates that such social rituals had a profound impact on consumption patterns. Consumer engagement with mourning not only influenced when consumers were compelled to purchase new garments, but also dictated the material qualities of those garments.

5.4 Variety, Novelty, and Choice

The sombre tones of the woollen stuffs consumed for mourning wear contrast to the otherwise vibrant diversity of the colours which appear in the Album, not only in Barbara's youth, but throughout her life.⁵⁵ Although some colours appear to have gone through periods of favour - for example 31 percent of purchases in the 1760s contained white - there is no life-long preference for a specific colour (Table 5.1). Instead, the overall impression is one of extreme variety. The increased variety of the goods available to consumers is one of the key traits of this period, which historians of consumption have recognised.⁵⁶ At the dawn of the nineteenth century, there were certainly more consumer goods, and a wider variety and choice of them, available than there had been one hundred years earlier at the dawn of the eighteenth century.

A similar degree of variety can be found in the fabric samples sent to Lady Sabine Winn of Nostell Priory in Yorkshire in 1798, by the Faulding brothers,

⁵⁴ Linda Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America* (Yale University Press, 2002), p. 177.

⁵⁵ For more on the importance of colour in eighteenth-century textiles, see David M. Mitchell, "My Purple Will Be Too Sad for That Melancholy Room": Furnishings for Interiors in London and Paris, 1660–1735", *Textile History* 40, no. 1 (2009): pp. 3–28.

⁵⁶ Mitchell, *Tradition and Innovation*, p. 10.

proprietors of a fashionable London haberdasher (Figure 5.7). This urban retailer was able to provide Sabine Winn with samples of over forty different fabrics, diverse in colour, motif, price, and quality. Greens, reds, pinks, and blues are all evident in this vast array of fabrics, and the accompanying letters provide very little guidance to the consumer regarding current trends, fashions, or preferences.⁵⁷ Some ribbon samples sent to Sabine Winn in the 1780s by another retailer further support this point (Figure 5.8).⁵⁸ Here, the retailer not only offered a variety of colour and design in their goods, but also size, with one design of ribbon offered in three different widths. Options were abundant. In other words, the consumer was adrift in a market of choice, with, at first glance, very little information to guide and direct her purchasing.



Figure 5.7. Chintz samples sent by Frances Faulding to Sabine Winn, 1798, WYAS, WYL 1352/C4/1/18, author's own photograph.

⁵⁷ WYAS, WYL 1352/C4/1/1: 'Letters from Francis Faulding to Sabine Winn, 1790s'.

⁵⁸ WYAS, WYL 1352/C4/9/1: 'Ribbon samples sent by Ann Charlton to Sabine Winn'.

Table 5.1. Table showing the percentage of appearances of each colour in the Album, totals by decade (in percentage).

Date	Multi	White	Black	Grey	Blue	Red	Pink	Green	Yellow	Brown	Purple
1746-1749	18	18	0	0	29	6	12	12	6	0	0
1750-1759	13	17	9	13	9	9	13	4	0	13	0
1760-1769	3	31	0	0	10	17	10	10	3	0	14
1770-1779	3	25	8	3	12	17	5	7	10	5	3
1780-1789	6	20	15	5	11	2	10	6	2	15	7
1790-1799	15	18	13	3	10	0	18	8	3	10	3
1800-1809	4	19	19	11	11	0	4	7	4	11	11
1810-1819	0	20	13	7	13	0	7	0	0	27	13
1820-1825	0	22	22	0	0	22	0	0	0	33	0

Source: VAM, T.219-197, 'Barbara Johnson's Album, 1746-1823'.



Figure 5.8. Selection of ribbon samples sent by Ann Charlton to Sabine Winn, WYAS, WYL 1352/C4/9/16, author's own photograph.

If, as it would appear, Barbara and her contemporaries enjoyed a great diversity of goods in terms of colour and motif, how did they exercise the power of consumer choice? What drew Barbara to new purchases, and to what extent were her choices dictated by the restrictions of the market?⁵⁹ An exploration of Barbara's consumption of fabrics with different motifs might prove fruitful here. A similar diversity of goods is evident in the available data regarding her choice of motifs (Table 5.2). However, plain and floral fabrics are clear, consistent favourites, and account for the majority of her consumption. The predominance of floral fabrics certainly reflects contemporary tastes and trends in silk manufacture.⁶⁰ Meanwhile the plain fabrics were primarily those purchased for specific purposes, such as the mourning gowns, and predominantly correlate with the dark greys and blacks.

⁵⁹ Bianchi, 'Taste for Novelty and Novel Tastes', p. 64.

⁶⁰ Lesley Ellis Miller, 'A Portrait of the "Raphael of Silk Design"', *V&A Online Journal*, no. 4 (2012); Miller, *Selling Silks: A Merchant's Sample Book 1764*.

Table 5.2. Table showing the percentage of appearances of different motifs in the Album, totals by decade (in percentage).

Date	Plain	Checked	Figured	Striped	Spotted	Floral	Geometric
1746-1749	17	0	0	0	0	83	0
1750-1759	58	4	0	8	0	19	12
1760-1769	35	4	0	9	4	43	4
1770-1779	29	7	0	14	0	43	7
1780-1789	3	0	0	22	0	44	0
1790-1799	27	0	0	27	0	20	27
1800-1809	42	25	0	25	0	8	0
1810-1819	83	0	0	8	8	0	0
1820-1825	33	33	33	0	0	0	0

Source: VAM, T.219-197, 'Barbara Johnson's Album, 1746-1823'.

What is more interesting is the anomalies amongst this preference for florals and plain fabrics, and the patterns which can be deduced from these deviations from Barbara's usual consumer choices. For example, in the 1820s, Barbara suddenly purchased figured silks for a significant proportion of her garments – a fabric which had never appeared before. This undoubtedly reflects technological innovation. The introduction of the 'drawboy' in 1807 (a mechanical loom element which replaced the role previously played by a small boy to operate the loom harness cords) meant that complicated figured fabrics were more easily achieved on the drawloom.⁶¹ By the 1820s, when Barbara purchased these fabrics, the Jacquard loom had also been introduced from France, and become popular amongst Spitalfields silk weavers. Although it is difficult to ascertain whether Barbara would have been directly aware of the technological and industrial innovations behind the popularisation of such fabrics, it is evident that the novelty of this new style of fabric appealed to her.⁶² However, the question of the extent to which this choice was driven by fashion or the personal appeal of novelty remains.

The Album shows further evidence of the influence of changes in international trade and manufacture. During the 1790s, the proportion of floral fabrics purchased by Barbara dropped significantly, and this shortfall was made up by fabrics with geometric designs. This new interest in geometric prints was influenced by the growing popularity of the patterns painted and printed on imported Indian cotton. As

⁶¹ Maxine Berg, *The Age of Manufactures* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 213.

⁶² Bianchi, 'Taste for Novelty and Novel Tastes', pp. 65-67.

Lemire has argued, this cultural fashion stimuli should not be overlooked as a driving force behind consumption and, more broadly, global trade.⁶³

In terms of Barbara's consumption, it is evident that novelty played a significant part in her consumer choices.⁶⁴ Although firm favourites, such as silk brocades with floral designs, are consistently present in her consumption, she interspersed these purchases with new, innovative fabrics. As a consumer, she was keen to experiment with new and novel goods on the market. This undoubtedly reflects her consistent interest in fashion – itself arguably driven by novelty – but also the changing shape of the market as driven by changes in manufacture, industry, and global trade.

5.5 Fashion's Favourite: The Rise of Cotton Textiles

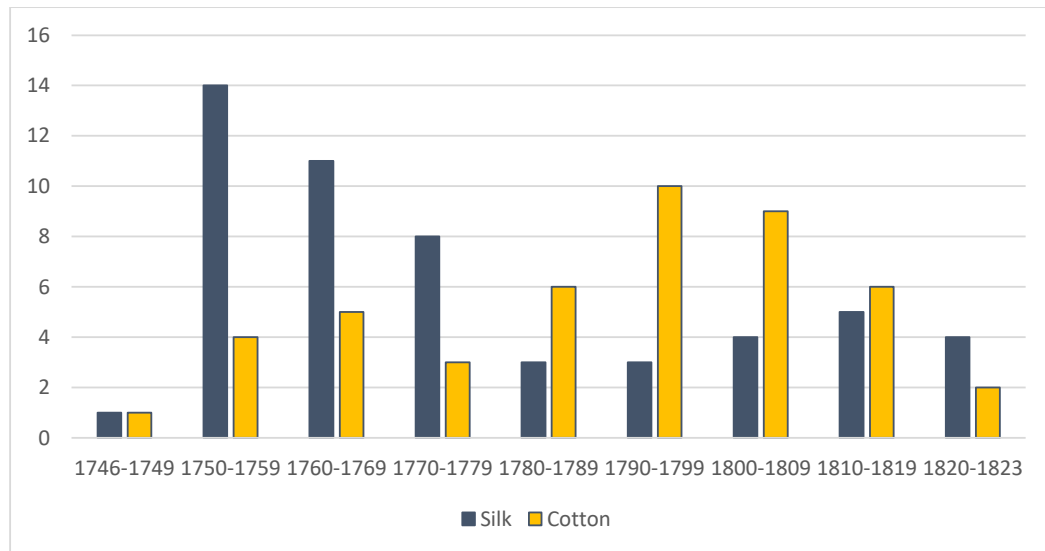
The clearest evidence for the influence of changes in global trade and domestic economic priorities on Barbara's own experience as a consumer is the shifting dominance of silk and cotton textiles. An examination of Barbara's relative consumption of cotton and silk textiles throughout her life reveals a distinct shift (Graph 5.1). During her teens and young adulthood in the 1750s and 1760s Barbara showed a clear and decided preference for silk textiles. Silk brocade, tabby, satin, and lutestring dominate the samples Barbara collected, following fashionable trends. However, during the final decades of the eighteenth century, purchases of calico, muslin, and chintz, which were scattered in the early years of the Album, become

⁶³ Beverly Lemire, 'Fashioning Global Trade: Indian Textiles, Gender Meanings and European Consumers, 1500-1800', in *How India Clothes the World: The World of South Asian Textiles, 1500-1850*, ed. Giorgio Riello and Tirthankar Roy (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 365–90.

⁶⁴ Bianchi, 'Taste for Novelty and Novel Tastes', p. 65.

dominant, before levelling off in the early decades of the nineteenth century. It is clear that personal tastes and the appeal of novelty played a part in the gentler shifts and anomalies that appear in Barbara's spending. However, such a distinct and alternation in Barbara's consumption pattern reflects that, as a consumer, Barbara was undeniably influenced by global trade and domestic industry.

Graph 5.1. Number of appearances of silk and cotton in garments purchased by Barbara Johnson, 1746-1823.



Source: VAM, T.219-197, 'Barbara Johnson's Album, 1746-1823'.

Historically, silk and cotton had consistently been the most popular import items into Britain.⁶⁵ However, during the late eighteenth century the domestic cotton industry was growing, and this cheaper, novel fabric was popular with consumers.⁶⁶ Further nurtured by the mercantilist banning of imported Indian cottons earlier in the

⁶⁵ Giorgio Riello and Tirthankar Roy, eds, *How India Clothes the World: The World of South Asian Textiles, 1500-1850* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 10.

⁶⁶ Berg, *The Age of Manufactures*, p. 35.

century, this protectionist attitude to domestic economics had fostered a shift in consumer spending.⁶⁷ These fabrics were comparatively inexpensive, meaning better prices for consumers and better profits for retailers and merchants, as well as being brightly printed and visually appealing.⁶⁸ This led to a significant increase in cotton consumption, as has been observed in household inventories.⁶⁹

Taking a closer view of the types of cottons Barbara consumed further supports the argument that her consumption reflected broader trends in trade and industry. The early cottons consumed by Barbara tended to be printed calicoes. Calico production in Europe had advanced significantly in the 1740s, with the industry expanding, and increasing the quality of the fabrics it produced.⁷⁰ In the mid-century, Barbara also favoured cotton Chintzes, reflecting the variety of cotton types imported into Europe by the English East India Company. However, as the century progressed, Barbara carefully recorded more specific attributes of the cottons she consumed. For example, it is apparent Barbara was aware when Viscount Stormont protested in Parliament in the 1780s against weaving industries leaving British shores, and set up his own mill.⁷¹ Barbara explicitly engaged with Stormont's patriotic action, purchasing a Stormont cotton in 1788 for mourning.⁷² It is therefore probable that Barbara's specific recording of this Stormont cotton demonstrates a conscious decision to support the British textile industry through her power as a consumer. This support of domestic industry and economics is also evident in her purchase of so-called Manchester cottons. What is evident in both these examples is that these definable characteristics

⁶⁷ Riello, *Cotton*, p. 124.

⁶⁸ Lemire, *Fashion's Favourite*, p. 97.

⁶⁹ Lemire, *The Force of Fashion in Politics and Society*, p. 78.

⁷⁰ Riello, *Cotton*, p. 173.

⁷¹ I have been unable to trace the original source for this, quoted in Will Bowden, *Industrial Society in England Towards the End of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Frank Cass, 1965), p. 115.

⁷² VAM, T.219-1973, p. 29: 'Barbara Johnson's Album, 1746-1823'

of the cotton – that it was domestically produced or connected to a political stance – was important enough to Barbara for her to record it. Here, Barbara uses the Album to not only chart what, when, and why she purchased garments on a personal level, but also how her consumption related to the wider political and economic stage. Furthermore, we do know from her letters that she took a keen interest in politics, and did not approve of Lord North's taxation policies.⁷³ Barbara's actions as a consumer went far deeper than aesthetic taste and material preferences.

5.6 Gifts, the Life-Cycle, and the Dynamics of Ownership

In contrast with Barbara's purchases of British manufactured cottons in her middle age, during her old age she was not adverse to French imports. She accepted a gift of French silk from her friend Mrs Wodhull in 1795, and another of French sarcanet from her brother in 1811, while the two countries were at war. However, a key factor regarding these two items is that they were received as gifts, and were not directly purchased by Barbara. Her brother had given her gifts of gowns throughout her life, possibly as a signal of fraternal patronage and familial care.⁷⁴ These significantly intensified as she progressed in age, as did gifts from Barbara's friend Catherine Wodhull, with whom she lived from the 1790s (Graph 5.2). Between 1799 and 1804 all the garments recorded were gifts. Following the death of Catherine Wodhull in

⁷³ Rothstein, 'The Family and the Album', p. 14.

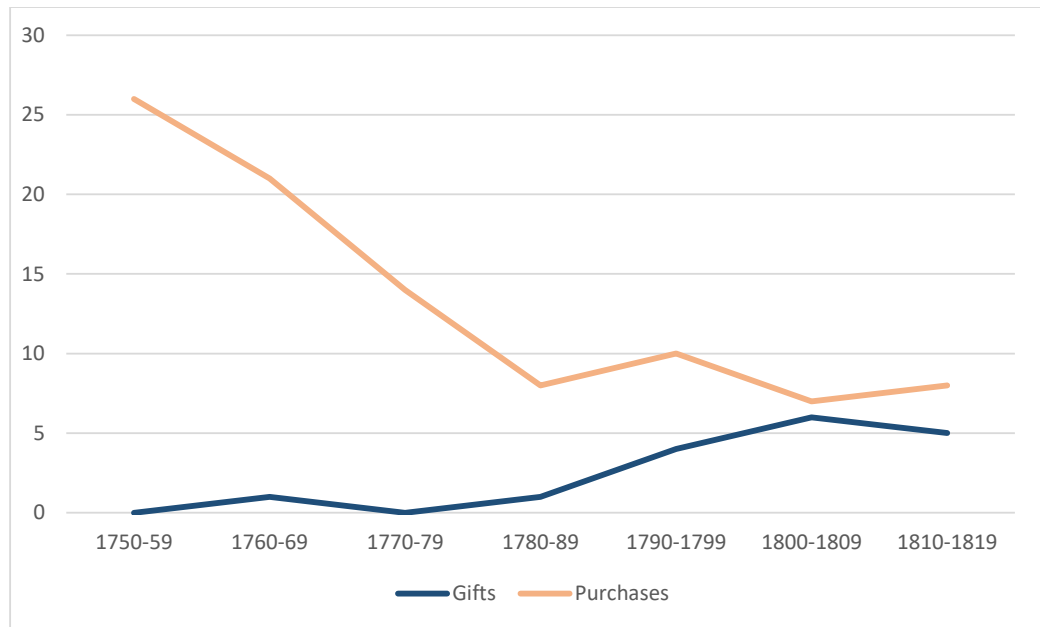
⁷⁴ Linda Zionkowski, *Women and Gift Exchange in Eighteenth-Century Fiction: Richardson, Burney, Austen* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 131; For further work on the nature of gift giving, see Alan Schrift, *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity* (London: Routledge, 1997); Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002); C. Klekar, ed., *The Culture of the Gift in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

1808, her husband continued in the footsteps of his wife, gifting Barbara the material for two further gowns. This is particularly remarkable considering that Barbara acquired additional wealth in these years, and her income must have increased significantly. That there is not a correlating increase in consumption is not in itself necessarily remarkable, however the simultaneous increase in gifts is surprising. The most compelling explanation for this shift is that it was her advancing age, and her greater regular proximity to, and domestic dependence upon, the Wodhulls which caused this increase in gifted garments.

The influence of the life-cycle worked in tandem with the pull of novelty and trade in influencing Barbara's consumption. In her old age, she overwhelmingly favoured plain fabrics, often in dark colours. The earlier dashes of deep and dark shades which had entered her wardrobe had been specifically for mourning wear, however these later occurrences have no such specific purpose recorded. Amanda Vickery has commented that this preference for darker colours and small, busy prints and figured silks, as opposed to the fashionable light muslin gowns depicted in the fashion plates scattered amongst these samples, indicate a clear decision to dress for older age.⁷⁵ To some extent, this is certainly true. On the few occasions Barbara records purchasing a muslin, it is either a printed muslin, or a dark coloured Chambery muslin, which was actually a silk and cotton mix. However, in spite of not engaging with that particular fashion, Barbara consumed a number of new fabrics, such as a sarsanet, given as a gift by her brother in 1809 and made into a gown. This soft, flowing silk contrasts with the stiff silks of Barbara's earlier consumption, demonstrating that she was intent upon continuing to engage with the latest fashions.

⁷⁵ Vickery, 'Mutton Dressed as Lamb?', p. 872.

Graph 5.2. Number of gowns purchased by and gifted to Barbara Johnson, totals by decade, 1750-1819.



Source: VAM, T.219-197, 'Barbara Johnson's Album, 1746-1823'.

The terminology used in these later years also hints that Barbara was keen to wear the latest styles of garment. From 1798 she regularly uses the terminology of round gown, as well as purchasing two pelisses in 1803 and 1811.⁷⁶ Both of these styles were unique to this period, and followed the new raised waistline. The round gown, or closed gown, was a garment made to close at the centre front, with the skirt attached. This was termed a round gown as opposed to the open robe styles of the negligee and nightgown, which were worn over a petticoat. The pelisse was a coat-style over-garment, constructed with the newly fashionable high waistline. Neither of these styles would have functioned without the appropriate undergarments, meaning

⁷⁶ VAM, T.219-1973, pp. 45, 55, 75: 'Barbara Johnson's Album, 1746-1823'.

that they could not be worn in conjunction with Barbara's earlier purchases of negligees and nightgowns.⁷⁷ These were new styles, implying that even as Barbara got older, her full wardrobe, including her stays and petticoats, shifted with the new fashions.

Although Barbara speaks about dress surprisingly little in her letters, they do show that she could be scathing towards ladies of advanced years who dared to wear youthful fashions. When attending a ball, she commented that 'Lady Say...dresses as youthful as ever, a yellow gown with pin gawz ornaments, so that she very much resembles a cousin Betty', meaning a strumpet in eighteenth-century slang.⁷⁸ It is unclear exactly what it was about Lady Say's appearance which Barbara disapproved of. Vickery has argued that Barbara's own consumption of pink gowns into her middle and old age makes this comment confusing.⁷⁹ However, the key difference is that Barbara's use of colour appears to have been as part of gentle prints in her older age, or else she chose more muted tones, such as the pink-brown satin she purchased in 1820.⁸⁰ In general, Barbara's colour palette deepens and darkens becoming, if not sombre, then subdued.

In using the Album to chart the life-cycle of Barbara's consumption, we must also keep in mind that the Album is a representation of garments only as they entered Barbara's possession. Consumption, and indeed an individual's personal material life, was articulated not only through the goods they brought into their possession, but also the circulation of goods within and back out of their possession, and the evolution of

⁷⁷ For insight into these changing styles, see Cristina Barreto and Martin Lancaster, *Napoleon and the Empire of Fashion: 1795-1815* (Milan: Skira, 2010).

⁷⁸ BOD MS. Don. c. 192: 'Papers of Barbara Johnson'.

⁷⁹ Vickery, 'Mutton Dressed as Lamb?', p. 872.

⁸⁰ VAM, T.219-1973, p. 89: 'Barbara Johnson's Album, 1746-1823'.

the goods owned.⁸¹ There is a clear decline in the number of garments acquired by Barbara each year, from an average of two to three per year in her youth, to only one per year in her old age. However, the consumption of garments is a cumulative process. While some are disposed of, others are kept, and some change form or purpose within the ownership of one wearer. For example, we do not know whether the fabrics purchased for earlier garments were remade or altered to reflect changing fashions, elongating their wearability, and consequently their presence in Barbara's wardrobe.⁸² The material possessions of an individual are dynamic: changing, getting worn out, and being worn with varying degrees of intensity. The initial investment in a fabric might relate to a garment that experienced various lives within one wearer's ownership, as it was updated due to changing tastes, wear and tear, or to correspond with the latest fashions.

5.7 The Album as a Chronicle of Fashion

Barbara was keenly interested in the evolution of fashionable styles, and she used the Album to chronicle not only her own consumption, but also the changing styles and trends of the day. This hybrid purpose becomes most evident through an examination of the fashion plates contained within the Album. During her early years as an adult female consumer in the 1750s, fashion plates from pocket books began to appear in the Album. Pocket books emerged in the 1750s, and were instrumental in the development of the eighteenth-century periodical press for women. They were small

⁸¹ Lorna Weatherill's work using inventories is particularly enlightening on the fate of consumer goods within the household. See Weatherill, 'Consumer Behaviour, Textiles and Dress'; Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture*.

⁸² Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, pp. 182-209.

‘pocket-sized’ books, measuring only 12cm x 8cm. They appeared under an enormous number of different titles, and were published both in London, and by local booksellers. Although their titles were diverse, their content was remarkably similar. Their format was heavily indebted to the almanac, and they often contained diary space, as well as information on etiquette, poems and stories, and practical information on hackney coachman rates and tables of social precedence. They were universally priced at one shilling, and were available from at least 1753. Barbara Johnson was an early consumer of the ladies’ pocket book, and the Album is believed to contain the first dated fashion plate from a pocket book, dating to 1754.⁸³ Collecting the images from these books was not unusual. For example, Barbara’s contemporary, Sarah Sophia Banks, sister to the celebrated botanist Sir Joseph Banks, had a collection of over 400 such images, collected between 1760 and 1818 (Figure 5.9).⁸⁴ Although it was not until later in the nineteenth century that a relative compiled the images into an album, Sarah Sophia Banks collected the images in a portfolio. Indeed, the two albums shows some significant crossover between images collected. For example, the 1761 print ‘A Lady in the Dress of the Year’ shown in the bottom left corner of the page from Bank’s album also appears in Johnson’s Album.⁸⁵

In Barbara’s Album, the pocket book images provide an additional visual accompaniment to the fabric samples. However, did Barbara use these images as a means of informing her own consumption? It is well documented that the slow production process of pocket books meant that those consumers who did copy the

⁸³ Batchelor, ‘Fashion and Frugality’, p. 4. Barbara Johnson’s Album, 1746-1823, VAM, T.219-1973, p. 2.

⁸⁴ Leis, ‘Displaying Art and Fashion’, pp. 252-271.

⁸⁵ VAM, T.219-1973, p. 9: ‘Barbara Johnson’s Album, 1746-1823’.

styles in them were mocked and ridiculed for being out of date.⁸⁶ It therefore seems more likely that they in general they were intended to provide a private record for herself, a chronical of fashion in her lifetime, aligning with the conception of the volume as a charter and a means to self-regulate her interest in fashion. Although, as we shall see, they certainly influenced her terminology.

The four earliest pocket book images which appear in the Album depict a lady wearing a sack, also known as a robe à la française, or negligee. Between childhood and youth, Barbara seems to use this terminology of sack and negligee interchangeably for what is, essentially, the same style of garment. The negligee was a long, robe-style gown, with pleated fabric flowing from the centre back, which was attached to the lining at the sides in order to form a fitted bodice in front (Figure 5.10). This was the primary fashionable style of the period, and dominated Barbara's consumption. Between garments termed as a sack, negligee, and short sack (meaning a jacket length version of the negligee), Barbara purchased nine out of eighteen garments in this style. The last reference to a nightgown or negligee was in 1777, with the more general term of gown then becoming almost universal until the round gown of the 1790s.

Barbara's changing terminology was undoubtedly influenced by the fashion plates. Even more significantly, as the styles depicted in these images became more specific, it becomes clear that there are direct links between the consumption of the fashion plate images, and Barbara's own consumer choices. In 1772, Barbara records purchasing a Brunswick made of Manchester cotton in a checked pattern.⁸⁷ A Brunswick was a very unique garment: a three quarter length jacket with a hood and detachable lower sleeves. An undated print shortly before this record in the Album

⁸⁶ Buck, 'The Fashion Engravings', p. 42; Batchelor, 'Fashion and Frugality', p. 12.

⁸⁷ VAM, T.219-1973, p. 16: 'Barbara Johnson's Album, 1746-1823'

specifically depicts this style of jacket (Figure 5.11).⁸⁸ Although we cannot say for certain what other sources Barbara utilised to obtain knowledge of fashion, this clear, direct link in terminology implies that the pocket book images did directly influence her consumption.



Figure 5.9. Sarah Sophia Banks's Collection of Ladies Album, 1760-1818, British Museum, C,4.1-468.

⁸⁸ VAM, T.219-1973, p. 11: 'Barbara Johnson's Album, 1746-1823'.



Figure 5.10. Sack gown or negligee, 1760, Spitalfields silk, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, T.426&A-1990.



Figure 5.11. Fashion plate, Barbara Johnson's Album, 1746-1823, Victoria and Albert Museum, T.219-1973, p. 11.

It is important not to forget the context in which Barbara obtained these prints. They were not purchased independently as fashion engravings, but were purchased by Barbara as part of the complete publication of the pocket book. The pocket book was a key instrument in female financial self-regulation, fulfilling the same dual purpose – as consumer and fashion regulator – as Barbara's Album.⁸⁹ Both acted as a vehicle through which the female consumer could enjoy fashion, and simultaneously record, track, and manage her engagement. The significance of this observation is further intensified by the fact that, even after the turn of the century, when colour fashion plates published in larger women's magazines became prominent, Barbara and the

⁸⁹ Batchelor, 'Fashion and Frugality', p. 2.

subsequent contributor of fashion plates continued to include only images from pocket books. Evidently, it was the characterisation of these books as proponents of frugal fashion, or indulgence in moderation, which enhanced their appeal.

It is possible to trace a number of the prints within the Album to their pocket books of origin. This process reveals that Barbara was not loyal to one title or publisher through her life, but that she purchased a variety of different publications, with occasional exceptions and favourites. The majority of the titles were printed in London, and can be identified clearly through the text which accompanied the image, such as the *English Ladies Pocket Companion or Useful Memorandum Book* of 1792, the title page of which was included in the Album.⁹⁰ Others are more obscure. In the 1750s and 1760s it seems that Barbara was relatively loyal to the *Ladies Complete Pocket Book*, with at least twenty-one of the prints probably originating from this publication. This pocket book, published by Newberry, was one of the earliest which appeared, and it is possible Barbara felt a consumer loyalty towards this publisher.

As with Barbara's consumption of textiles, novelty also held an appeal. Other titles which Barbara sporadically purchased include *Wayland's Annual Present or Pocket Book*, *Lane's Pocket Book*, *The Ladies Museum or Complete Pocket Memorandum Book*, and the *Polite and Fashionable Ladies Companion*. There are plates from at least nineteen different pocket books published in London which are identifiable in the Album, and Barbara certainly showed a preference for these metropolitan editions of the pocket book.

Some of the pocket books were produced by provincial publishers, although only four publications of this kind can be identified for certain. However, the locations

⁹⁰ Buck, 'The Fashion Engravings', p. 36.

of these provincial pocket books do not correlate with Barbara's movements. In 1777 Barbara obtained a print of headdresses which originated from the *Kentish Ladies Journal*, as well as prints from the 1790s for publications based in Canterbury and Bury St Edmunds. This could be taken to imply that, while the format of the pocket book remained important to Barbara, the notion of the Album as a record of fashion led to her accumulating – perhaps as gifts from friends and family who knew of her project – prints beyond those from her own pocket books.

As a collector of pocket book fashion engravings, Barbara was not alone. As well as Sarah Sophia Banks's insatiable collecting of all manner of printed material, other ladies of the period shared Barbara's focus on fashion.⁹¹ Catherine Hutton, daughter of successful merchant William Hutton, wrote in her memoirs about her collecting of images of dress: 'I have been a collector of costumes...and I now have 650 English figures...They are composed eight large folio volumes...I have written on each opposite page of the English figures explanations and remarks of my own, which constitute a history of the habits of this country'.⁹² These collections reflected the interest of the creator, but were made with an eye towards posterity.

5.8 Conclusion

It seems most useful to think of Barbara Johnson's Album as compound document, which simultaneously acted as an exercise in self-regulation, a consumer autobiography and ego-document, and as a consistent chronicle of evolving fashions over

⁹¹ Leis, 'Displaying Art and Fashion' pp. 252-271.

⁹² Catherine Hutton, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman of the Last Century*, ed. C. H. Beale (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1891), p. 214.

a comparatively long lifetime. It is evident that the balancing act between frivolous fashionable interest, and careful consumption and moderate ethics, which was so troublesome to Barbara's mother, was key to how Barbara both perceived the Album and herself as a consumer.

Barbara's Album cannot be read independently of its commercial and social context. It provides substantial evidence of the influence of changing policies on international trade and domestic production on the choices made by the consumer. Furthermore, it demonstrates the enduring potential of economic and visual training in childhood. Begun as a girl of eight years old, the Album was Barbara's charter as she navigated the ever-widening choice of goods available to the consumer, and her moderator as she balanced her own love of clothes with a degree of restraint and control. The abundant information which was recorded in the Album renders it an unparalleled record of one woman's engagement with fashion, both as an admirer and consumer, which was played out against the backdrop of her personal life cycle, and the broader public commercial stage.

CHAPTER SIX

Skill, Needlework, and Making: The Producer and the Consumer

Unlike consumers of china, furniture, or books, consumers of dress engaged in a dynamic process of personal and practical interaction with the goods they consumed, which transformed the material characteristics of the object from fabric to garment. Even if ready-made and second-hand garments enjoyed increasing popularity as the century progressed, the majority of garments purchased by women of the middling and upper ranks of society continued to be made for and to fit them individually.¹ The inherent production relationship, which was therefore required, between the consumer and the producer could be played out through the consumer commissioning a dressmaker to produce a garment for them. Alternatively the consumer and producer could be one and the same, as many women of the middling sort practically engaged in making at home, progressing on from the doll's clothing production discussed previously.

Having dealt extensively with the consumer of fabrics in the previous chapter, this chapter will take the next step along the process of consumption to consider the transformation of fabrics into garments. The choice and purchase of fabric was only the first stage in the consumption of a new garment, and certainly not the only stage at which the consumer's material literacy was an important skill. Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford have observed an increasing distance between the producer and

¹ For work on the second-hand clothing trade, see Lambert, 'Cast-off Wearing Apparell'; Stobart and Van Damme, *Modernity and the Second-Hand Trade*; For work on ready-made garments, see Beverly Lemire, 'Developing Consumerism and the Ready-Made Clothing Trade in Britain, 1750-1800', *Textile History* 15, no. 1 (1984): pp. 21-44; Pamela Sharpe, "'Cheapness and Economy': Manufacturing and Retailing Ready-Made Clothing in London and Essex 1830-50', *Textile History* 26, no. 2 (1995): pp. 203-13.

consumer, which they assert led to the consumer being viewed in more positive terms.² However, the production of garments might be seen as an exception to this otherwise correct assertion. Instead of distancing themselves from the construction of garments, female consumers of dress can instead be seen to readily engage with the practical process of production – either in the role of judge, facilitator, and collaborator, or as the sole producer in their own right.

The material literacy required for practical participation in and assessment of production was, as we have seen, increasingly emphasised in pedagogical materials. This focus spilled over into texts and tools to assist adult women, culminating in the instruction books and paper patterns that became available in the early nineteenth century.³ Consequently, the consumer's perception of and engagement with production, as has been observed by Kate Smith, became ever more complex, as each player struggled to identify and define their position within the process.⁴ The production of dress was an intensely feminised process, meaning that it has rarely been seen to be an artisanal skill, on the same terms as woodworking, pottery, or stonemasonry.⁵ Yet these feminised skills were key to the consumption of women's dress, and to feminine self-expression through making and handicraft.⁶ We are therefore left with two pertinent and interrelated questions when exploring evidence

² Berg and Clifford, 'Selling Consumption in the Eighteenth Century: Advertising and the Trade Card in Britain and France', p. 162.

³ Anon, *The Workwoman's Guide: Containing Instructions in Cutting Out and Completing Articles of Wearing Apparel*, (2nd edn., London: Thomas Evans, 1840); Winifred Aldrich, 'Tailors' Cutting Manuals and the Growing Provision of Popular Clothing, 1770-1870', *Textile History* 31, no. 2 (2000): pp. 163–201; Winifred Aldrich, 'The Impact of Fashion on the Cutting Practices for the Woman's Tailored Jacket 1800-1927', *Textile History* 34, no. 2 (2003): pp. 134–70.

⁴ Smith, *Material Goods, Moving Hands*, p. 160.

⁵ For work on skill and artisanal skill, see Puetz, 'Design Instruction for Artisans'; Farr, *Artisans in Europe*; Smith, 'Sensing Design and Workmanship'; Smith, *Material Goods, Moving Hands*.

⁶ Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin, eds, *Women and Things, 1750-1950: Gendered Material Strategies* (Farnham: Routledge, 2009); Gowler, 'Gender, Craft, and Canon'.

of the garment production process: what knowledge did the consumer need to possess; and what skills did they need to acquire, in order to navigate this stage in the consumption of dress?

This chapter will first explore how the commissioning process functioned, and how consumers navigated the market, before moving on to assess the consumer's role as a home-producer. Finally, this chapter will consider how a knowledge of production enabled the consumer to effectively judge the craftsmanship of the producer, and how this was situated within the broader discourse surrounding taste, judgement, and commerce. In doing so, this chapter will demonstrate that the ability to navigate production was an increasingly important skill to the figure of the consumer.

6.1 Consumer-Producer Relations

That women regularly commissioned dressmakers, milliners, mantua-makers, and seamstresses to produce garments for them is a widely acknowledged fact.⁷ Yet we know surprisingly little about how, where, or when this transaction was carried out. The process behind the production of commissioned garments was intensely confidential and intimate, at both a bodily and, potentially, a personal level. The producer would be privy to knowledge of any physical deformity or flaw which, by contemporary standards of beauty, the consumer might desire to be hidden. In 1747, Campbell's *London Tradesman* elaborated on the confidentiality of the mantua-maker's craft, saying that she 'must keep the secrets she is entrusted with...for, though

⁷ Ginsburg, 'The Tailoring and Dressmaking Trades 1700-1850'; Wendy Gamber, *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressing Trades, 1860-1930* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), pp. 96-124.

the stay-maker does his business as nicely as possible, and conceals all deformities with the greatest art, yet the mantua-maker must discover them at some times; she must see them, and pretend to be blind, and at all times she must swear herself to an inviolable secrecy'.⁸ This is again referenced by John Souter in his *Book of English Trades*, in which he stated that the dressmaker 'must be an excellent anatomist...she must know how to hide all defects in the proportions of the body'.⁹ As an interesting contrast, in his summary of the tailoring trade, Campbell remarked that the tailor must 'bestow a good shape where nature has not designed it', however the language focused on workmanship and skill, rather than secrecy and intimacy.¹⁰ To Campbell and Souter, the mantua-maker's position of confidential and private access to the body of her client was comparatively unique and remarkable.

The significance of this intimate access to the body can be demonstrated through the experience of the Countess of Strathmore (1749-1800). In 1788 the Countess took her husband, Andrew Robinson Stoney Bowes, to court claiming that a deed in which she allowed her fortune to pass to him had been signed under duress. In an attempt to claim her fortune, he had also abducted her and threatened to rape and kill her. During the court case, Ann Charlton, Strathmore's milliner, was called upon to testify. The statement which Charlton was able to give substantiated claims of domestic abuse, both physical and mental.¹¹ In 1777, the year of the marriage, Charlton frequently called on the Countess, conducting their business not from her fashionable shop on Holles Street, off Oxford Street, but from within the Countess's private rooms

⁸ Campbell, *London Tradesman*, p. 227.

⁹ John Souter, *The Book of English Trades* (London: John Souter, 1818), p. 224.

¹⁰ Campbell, *London Tradesman*, p. 192.

¹¹ Anon, *A Full and Accurate Report of the Trial of the Reverend John Stevens, Trustee to the Countess of Strathmore and Andrew Robinson Stoney Bowes* (London, 1788), p. 16.

in the house she shared with her husband. She was therefore able to testify that ‘Mr Bowes’ conduct to Lady Strathmore was ill natured and contemptuous’ from the access she obtained to the domestic space of the home.¹² The bodily intimacy she shared with the Countess is evident in the declaration that she recollected ‘seeing a mark on her Ladyship’.¹³ Ann Charlton was entrusted with the full and intimate access to the Countess’s body, which was necessary to clothe it. She was therefore aware of the marks of domestic violence, bodily changes and physical defects.

Strathmore was not alone in permitting her milliner intimate access to her body. Throughout the 1760s, Lady Mary Coke’s (1727-1811) diaries reference regular visits from various tradespeople to her home. Lady Coke was the daughter of the Duke of Argyll, and later the wife of Viscount Coke, and enjoyed a more privileged lifestyle than many of the other characters in this thesis.¹⁴ However, her descriptions of the process of fitting were not unique to her higher social status. Coke recorded that she received mantua-makers and milliners as visitors in her dressing room, whilst in a state of undress. On one occasion, she complained that she had ‘waited for a Mantua Maker to alter [her] Gown’ for so long that she ‘was not dress’d when Lady Strafford called’.¹⁵ Coke’s state of undress, and that the mantua-maker had been called to physically carry out alterations in her client’s presence, is noteworthy. Undress, here being literal, rather than the informal eighteenth-century undress style of garments, indicates a level of physical and bodily intimacy necessary to fit garments to the body.

¹² Ibid., p. 16.

¹³ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁴ Hannah Greig discusses an incident which occurred between Lady Mary Coke and the Duchess of Hamilton and Lady Sarah Stewart. The latter were accused on having spread rumours that Coke was wearing an ‘old’ dress for Queen Charlotte’s birthday at court, damaging her reputation. Greig, *The Beau Monde*, pp. 124-5.

¹⁵ Mary Coke, *The Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1889), p. 247.

The confidentiality of the mantua-maker's position also sometimes extended to a more personal intimacy. Writing about the seamstresses of pre-revolutionary France, Clare Haru Crowston has emphasised the importance of an intimate service-oriented interaction, which took place in the client's home, and through which they were charged with the task of producing female beauty.¹⁶ The consumption of dress was not simply conducted over the counter, or in a showroom, but also in the dressing rooms and private apartments of the consumer. This is also exemplified in Strathmore's case. Charlton was also able to testify that: 'after Lady Strathmore's marriage with Mr Bowes, she was melancholy; but before it always smiling. She was not the least mistress of her own actions. When she heard Mr Bowes on the stairs, she was agitated, and trembled'.¹⁷ Through making frequent visits to Strathmore's home over an extended period of time, Charlton was able to gain an awareness of her client's disposition and temperament, and her home life. Confidential details about the client easily became known to the milliner within the privacy of the home. It was therefore not only bodily intimacy that was engendered by the production process, but a more personal awareness of the client's character, taste, and whims.

Souter's *Book of English Trades* further elaborated upon the process of garment production by furnishing us with a visual interpretation of what Crowston has termed the 'imaginary world of client-seamstress relations' (Figure 6.1).¹⁸ This image depicts an early stage in the fitting of a *toile*, or mock-up, which would later be used to create a pattern for the final garment. Various elements within this image illustrate the

¹⁶ Haru Crowston, *Fabricating Women*, p. 138.

¹⁷ Anon, *A Full and Accurate Report of the Trial of the Reverend John Stevens, Trustee to the Countess of Strathmore and Andrew Robinson Stoney Bowes* (London, 1788), p. 16.

¹⁸ Souter, *The Book of English Trades*, p. 223; Haru Crowston, *Fabricating Women*, p. 138.

compromises necessary in order to both maintain the client's privacy, and facilitate the practical task of dressmaking.



Figure 6.1. 'The Ladies' Dressmaker' in *The Book of English Trades*, 1817.

Let us first consider the setting for the image. It is unclear whether this image depicts a client's home or a private room within the dressmaker's shop. However, key adaptations have been made. For example, an opaque drape has been neatly tied across the window to prevent spying eyes. However, the top half of the window has been left

clear in order to allow light in to work. The client stands directly in the path of this stream of light, with her back – the portion of her body which the dressmaker is focused upon – directed towards the light source. The mirror, towards which the client poses, enabled her to fully observe the work of the dressmaker as it progressed, and not simply the finished product. Furthermore, the client is clearly depicted wearing her shift, petticoat, and stays – the key undergarments which would have been worn underneath a gown of this period. Although these garments are not particularly revealing, in the sense that they do not show comparatively more flesh than when the wearer was fully clothed, the connotations of undress mean that this interaction transcended traditional sartorial boundaries.

The references made in Coke's diaries reflect a distinctly distant and detached attitude towards the mantua-maker on a personal level. It is unclear whether there was one or many women of this trade who called on Coke, as they are never referred to by name, and are instead defined through their trade, as simply 'a Mantua Maker'. There is a disparate notion of physical and personal intimacy at play here, in which the body of the client is intimately revealed, but a personal relationship is not overtly formed. The focus is on their useful skill as producers, rather than as individuals. The intimacy in the relationship is born of practical skill and necessity.

There is a striking similarity between the role of the mantua-maker, and the role of the lady's maid. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that local seamstresses were often called in as day servants in some households in order to construct smaller items of clothing.¹⁹ For example, in 1772 Elizabeth Shackleton called in local tradeswoman Betsy Shaw to 'make up two Dress'd and two undress'd Caps – As she's

¹⁹ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 139.

esteemed a Profficient in that way & just arrived Piping Hot from Manchester'.²⁰ That Elizabeth Shackleton specifically acknowledged that Betsy Shaw had a connection to the Northern mercantile hub implies that the kudos applied at the fabric production stage had also been transferred to the skill of garment production.

It was not only the mantua-maker who called upon Mary Coke, but a number of other tradesman related to the clothing trade. In 1767, when organising the manufacture of her gown for a court birthday, Coke recorded that 'the weather as severe as ever, sent for the lace man & chose some silver lace to trim my gown' and that she also 'sent for the mercer to bring the silk for my Birthday Gown'.²¹ Coke made the decision to call for the tradespeople to visit her at home based upon practicality and comfort. It is the weather which drives her to call for the lace man and mercer, implying an obligation on the part of the retailer to trudge through poor weather to the homes of customers when called for.

The most significant point to be drawn out from Coke's diary here is that the act of inviting different tradespeople into her home at the same time enabled her, as the consumer, to compare and contextualise the products of different retailers. If these products were to become components of one garment, in this case Coke's birthday gown, then a comparative analysis was essential. Unlike visiting a series of different shops, this home-based browsing allowed the consumer to visually and haptically assess potential purchases in relation to each other, in relation to existing possessions, and in relation to the production process.

²⁰LRO, DDB/81/17: 'Elizabeth Shackleton's Diaries, 1772'.

²¹ Coke, *The Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke*, p. 247.

6.2 Production at Home: Consumers as Producers

The material literacy of the consumer also enabled middling women to consume in an alternative way – by making garments for themselves. This was particularly prominent amongst women of the middling sort, and appears to have enjoyed increasing popularity in the latter part of the eighteenth century. This home sewing did not make these women any less consumers. Firstly, they still engaged in the retail market by consuming fabrics and notions. However, we must be careful not to confuse the history of retailing with the history of consumption. Garments made at home were still consumed, and still impacted upon the consumer market. In Frances Burney's 1779 play *The Witlings*, the milliner, Mrs Wheedle, laments that a tippet made by one of her shop girls will 'be fit for nothing but the window, and there the Miss Notables who work for themselves may look at it for a pattern'.²² Here, Burney reveals a key factor in the consumption of dress in eighteenth century England: that many women could produce and adapt their own garments, and were skilled enough to replicate a garment from sight. That elite and middling rank women were taught how to sew as part of a standard range of female accomplishments is often repeated in work on eighteenth-century genteel femininity.²³ However, this work is often only considered in relation to the domestic economy of the household, or as part of a broader range of feminine accomplishments, rather than in relation to an economy of consumer knowledge. Furthermore, dress historian Anne Buck referred to women sewing clothes for

²² Burney, *The Witlings*, p. 48.

²³ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 150.

themselves only as an amusement for people of fashion, and not as a serious method of obtaining garments.²⁴

For middling-rank women, sewing had multiple purposes.²⁵ Primarily, it was practical. Elizabeth Shackleton regularly oversaw, and personally made, neckcloths, stocks, shirts, shifts and bed linen for her household and for her sons in London.²⁶ She often recorded the exact yardage required for different projects, writing in 1772 that ‘a piece of Irish cloth 25 yards long makes John Parker 8 shirts complete. And 9 pairs of sleeves. A piece of Irish cloth 25 yards long makes Robert Parker 9 shirts entirely complete. All this cloth yard wide’.²⁷ She also worked on her own clothes, and those which she considered out of fashion, worn, or faded were unpicked and sent to Manchester or London to be re-dyed, before being made up again at home afresh. Shackleton also used her sewing skills to repair old clothes, and after falling out with her son in 1778, attempted to repair the relationship by repairing his clothing.²⁸

Although Elizabeth Shackleton was remarkably thrifty in her approach to household economy, she was not alone in using her sewing skills to the benefit of herself and her family. Jane Austen repeatedly refers to sewing at home in her letters. On six occasions, Austen references making and sending out shirts for her brothers. In 1800 she records that she is to send one of her brothers his shirts as they are finished, in sets of a half-dozen.²⁹ Although she refers to this work as part of a continuous round

²⁴ Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth Century England*, p. 180; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 324-5.

²⁵ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 231-256.

²⁶ LRO, DDB/81/22 (1774), f. 97. See also LRO, DDB/81/11 (1770) f. 53, LRO, DDB/81/14 (1772), f. 2 for accounts of similar making, mending, and repairing. For example, in 1777 and 1778 Shackleton recorded rebinding and repairing sleeves in various garments. See LRO, DDB/81/31 (1777), fs. 32, 76, LRO, DDB/81/33A (1778), f. 52.

²⁷ LRO, DDB/81/14 (1772), f. 2.

²⁸ LRO, DDB/81/33A (1778), fos. 60, 246.

²⁹ Jane Austen, *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Fay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 55.

of tedium, Austen also takes pride in her workmanship, stating in 1796 that ‘we are very busy making Edward’s shirts, and I am proud to say I am the neatest worker of the party’.³⁰

It was not only shirts for the men of the household, or the maintenance of existing garments to which middling and upper rank women turned their needle. It was also a viable method of acquiring fashionable gowns. In 1755 Lady Heathcote made a gown for a masquerade to her own design, demonstrating not only construction knowledge, but also skill in design.³¹ At the end of her life, Catherine Hutton (1756-1846) recalled that she had made ‘all sorts of wearing apparel for myself, with the exceptions of shoes, stockings and gloves’.³² There is a clear hierarchy of skill at play in Hutton’s comment here, which is reflected elsewhere by a silence in women’s correspondence in regards to the making of these more complex items. It is also of note that this split is also demarcated by gender at a professional level. While women were regularly employed as dressmakers and milliners, it was generally men who worked as shoemakers, hosiers, and glove-makers. The training girls received in childhood uniquely equipped them to both make and assess the workmanship of garments, but did not extend to a knowledge of masculine-dominated production.

Women not only engaged in plain sewing but, along with their elite counterparts, they also engaged in more intricate needlework, such as embroidery and netting. These sewing skills contributed to a broader material literacy, which enabled home-sewers to create intricate and stylish garments, and to critically judge professional craftsmanship as a consumer. Embroidery had been a popular and

³⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

³¹ BA, L/30/9a/7, p. 5: ‘Wrest Park Papers, Letter from Jemima Yorke to Miss Catherine Talbot’.

³² Hutton, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman of the Last Century*, p. 213.

acceptable female pastime for centuries, but by the eighteenth century, as Rozsinka Parker has identified, embroidery's key role in the 'inculcation of femininity'.³³ It was part of the core curriculum for girls' boarding schools, alongside music and dancing. In the late seventeenth century, Ann Fanshawe recorded that girls who did not conform to this mould of femininity were termed 'hoyting girls', the contemporary equivalent of a tomboy.³⁴

In the early years of the eighteenth century, contemporary writers wrote scathingly about the amateur female embroideress. In a 1716 edition of the *Spectator*, Addison satirically wrote 'what a delightful entertainment it must be to the fair sex, whom their native modesty...exempts from publick business, to pass their hours imitating fruits and flowers, and transplanting all the beauties of nature into their own dress or raising a new creation in their closets.'³⁵ The concerns which were raised previously, regarding women's occupation of their time in unproductive shopping, are echoed in Addison's appraisal of embroidery. It was seen as a frivolous indulgence of a leisured lifestyle, relegated by its status as a pastime.³⁶ In spite of its productivity, in the sense that items of beauty and purpose were being produced, embroidery was not seen as a task which worked towards the public good. The explanation for this lies in the gendered rhetoric used. Women were unproductive whenever their tasks held benefit for neither the state, nor the father or husband to whom they were bound. Pastimes which evidenced no public good were seen as an indication of degenerate effeminacy.

³³ Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*, p. 82.

³⁴ Ann Fanshawe, *The Memoirs of Ann, Lady Fanshawe* (London: John Lane, 1906), p. 22.

³⁵ Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Spectator* (London: Payne, Rivington, Davis etc., 1716), no. 606.

³⁶ Borsay, *A History of Leisure*, p. 3.

However, the latter years of the century saw a shift in attitude to embroidery as a feminine pastime, which correlated with changing views of the consumer. The popularisation of Jean Jacques Rousseau's theories on education went some way to influence this shift. His views were espoused in his 1762 work *Emile*, which was serialised in *The Lady's Magazine* in 1780. In *Emile*, Rousseau claimed that a love of 'sewing, embroidery, [and] lace-work' came naturally to women.³⁷ The notion that embroidery was intrinsic to femininity, whether by nature or nurture, was supported by the content of *The Lady's Magazine*, which published a wide range of embroidery patterns from the late eighteenth century. These pull-out supplements contained patterns for shoes, children's caps, and accessories such as muffs, as well as for general embroidery motifs.

In order to fully comprehend the implications of the availability and use of these patterns for the female consumer of dress, let us examine one example in greater detail. In 1796, *The Lady's Magazine* published five embroidery patterns.³⁸ These were for a gentleman's cravat, a pattern for a gown or apron, a winter shawl, a gentleman's handkerchief and, finally, a woman's gown. It is the last of these which will be examined here (Figure 6.2). The trailing floral pattern of berries, leaves, and flowers exactly fits the 'glorification of the natural', which Parker has identified as dominant in the period.³⁹ The design resembles that seen embroidered on a dress of the same period in the collection of the Royal Ontario Museum, but which originated from 1790s England (Figure 6.3). This gown is made from a cotton muslin, embroidered with gilt lamella or lamé.

³⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile: Or, Treatise on Education* (New York: D. Appleton, 1892), p. 266.

³⁸ *The Lady's Magazine* (London: George Robinson, 1796).

³⁹ Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*, p. 122.

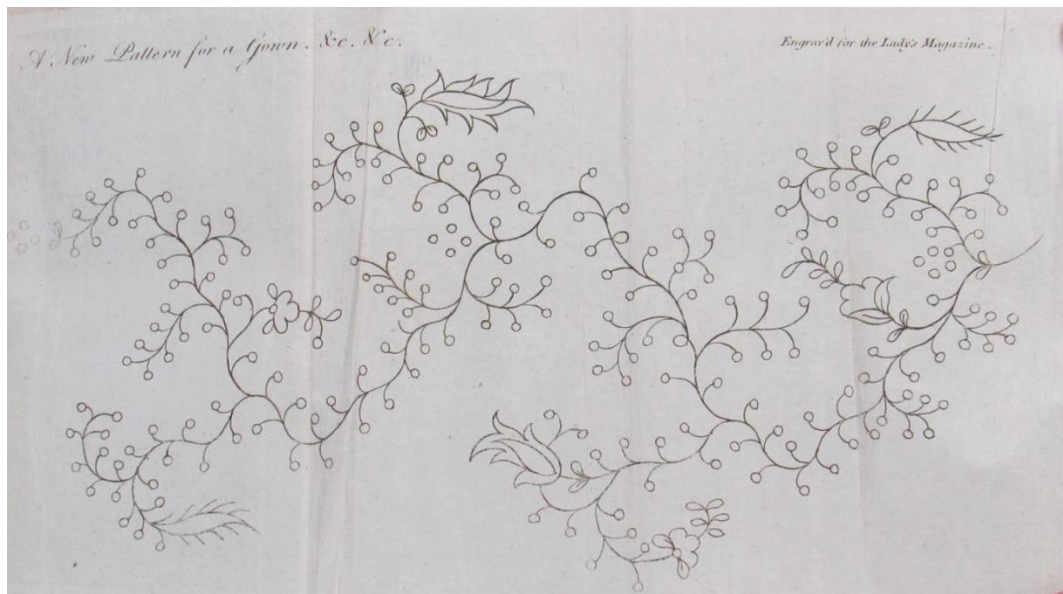


Figure 6.2. A New Pattern for a Gown &c. &c., *The Lady's Magazine*, 29cm x 15cm, London, 1796, copyright Jennie Batchelor, available online at <https://www.kent.ac.uk/english/ladys-magazine/patterns/index.html> (last accessed 15th April 2016).



Figure 6.3. Open Robe, 1795-1800, English, Royal Ontario Museum, Canada, ROM 959.243.6.

If this finished gown is compared to the paper design, it is possible to begin to comprehend the level of skill and knowledge required by the consumer in order to manufacture this garment. This skill as a producer goes beyond that of embroidering samplers, or other simple flat work, but also requires a knowledge of the anatomy of a garment. While elements such as the skirt, which was cut on the straight, would be relatively easy to embroider with the shape of the final garment in mind, other elements, such as the bodice and sleeves, necessitated that the embroiderer had a pre-existing knowledge of how the garment would be cut and stitched in order to work efficiently. Furthermore, they needed to know the grain on which the garment would be cut in order to show the pattern to its best advantage.

The skill of these female consumers of dress also extended to the design and creation of their own patterns. Rousseau wrote that a knowledge of ‘foliage, fruits, flowers and drapery is all [women] need to know to create their own embroidery pattern, if they can’t find one that suits them’.⁴⁰ Sabine Winn’s papers hold a number of these ink drawn paper patterns.⁴¹ One pattern, probably for a pair of lappets, hints at how this process was carried out (Figure 6.4). A faint pencil mark can be seen around the edge of the design, which indicates the edge of the fabric to be embroidered. The design was then created specifically to fit this desired shape. In 1787 Elizabeth Yorke wore an embroidered gown to court which was ‘her own making’, demonstrating that even amongst the upper ranks of fashionable society, amateur skill was still valued and admired.⁴² Indeed, even Queen Charlotte engaged in embroidery for her own dress.⁴³

⁴⁰ Rousseau, *Émile*, p. 266.

⁴¹ WYAS, WYL 1352/C4/7/3: ‘Embroidery patterns probably designed by Lady Sabine Winn’.

⁴² BA, L30/11/339/100: ‘Wrest Park Papers, Letter from Mary Yorke, 1787’.

⁴³ Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth Century England*, p. 181.



Figure 6.4. Embroidery pattern probably designed by Lady Sabine Winn, WYAS, WYL 1352/C4/7/3.

Embroidery was not the only evidence of advanced material literacy amongst female consumers of dress. Women also made intricate items of fashionable dress for themselves. The increasing popularity of home sewing is evidenced by the increasing number of pattern books, which began to be published at the start of the nineteenth century. These books, such as the *Workwoman's Guide* and *The Art of Needlework*, gave instructions on how to make the various components of a gown, such as sleeves and bodices, as well as more traditional plain work caps and aprons.⁴⁴ They not only gave basic patterns, but also provided complete instructions for how to cut out and construct the garments depicted. They even provided instructions for complex items such as oiled hoods and calash bonnets.⁴⁵ Initially, such books were intended for use in a school environment, or even by those wishing to enter the dressmaking trades, a

⁴⁴ Anon, *The Workwoman's Guide*, p. 1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

tradition that would continue well into the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries. The overwhelming connection between needlework and femininity meant that such skills were invaluable to poor and wealthy alike.⁴⁶

Intimate and detailed knowledge of production processes could also be sought more directly by women wishing to learn. While preparing for her marriage to a clergyman, Elizabeth Woodhouse not only spent a vast amount of money on new clothes, but also paid ten pounds to a local milliner, J. Volans, to instruct her in her art.⁴⁷ In setting herself up as a genteel clergyman's wife, Elizabeth Woodhouse not only sought to dress herself and equip her house with the necessary tools for married life, but also to equip herself with knowledge and skills of production. However, whether this training is intended to enhance her knowledge, as Gregory suggests, or to enable her to be a more frugal wife and sew for herself, is unclear.⁴⁸

Although consumers like Elizabeth Woodhouse looked to professional producers in order to obtain the skills she required, this deference was not universal. In 1781 Lady Carlow wrote to her sister about a gown she had made:

My chief amusement since I came from town has been making myself a white polonaise, in which I have succeeded to a miracle, and repent having given one to a famous mantua-maker in Dublin who spoilt it entirely for me.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Vivienne Richmond, *Clothing the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 93.

⁴⁷ YCA, Munby Papers, Acc. 54.19: 'Receipt by J Volans for £10 for instructing Miss Woodhouse in the millinery'.

⁴⁸ Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters*, p. 22.

⁴⁹ Louisa Stuart, *Gleanings from an Old Portfolio, 1785-1799*, ed. Godfrey Clark, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: D. Douglas, 1895), p. 169.

Although Stuart perceived the production process partially as an amusement, and her own success and skill in making the gown ‘a miracle’, she also classed her own skill above that of a professional dressmaker. This comment is enlightening as it provides a clear indication that female consumers not only engaged in production, but also felt qualified and able to judge the skill of professional producers in relation to their own.

By the close of the century, middling, and even aristocratic women could be undeniably adept producers. Priscilla Wakefield wrote in *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex* (1798) that ‘useful needlework in every branch, with complete skill in cutting out and making every article of female dress...ought to employ a considerable part of the day’.⁵⁰ In 1794 Lord Sheffield’s daughter was actively engaged in garment making, and boasted of her efforts to relatives.⁵¹ Further down the social scale, Jane Austen recorded in 1798 that an acquaintance, a Miss Debary, was netting herself a gown in worsteds.⁵² Other, arguably more complex skills, such as millinery, were also common. A mezzotint, entitled *Beauty and Fashion*, from 1797 (Figure 6.5) depicts two fashionable young women engaged in the practical fashioning of their own ‘beauty’ and ‘fashion’. This genre print depicts a scene from everyday life, gently satirising the subject of fashion. The women are shown in the comfort of their sitting room, busy sewing garments which can primarily be identified as headwear. Many women engaged in the redecorating of bonnets at home, and it was a relatively simple task, only involving taking off and reapplying ribbons. In Austen’s 1813 novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, Lydia Bennet declares that she

⁵⁰ Priscilla Wakefield, *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex* (London: J. Johnson, 1798), pp. 144-45.

⁵¹ Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth Century England*, p. 183.

⁵² Austen, *Jane Austen’s Letters*, p. 22.

will remake a bonnet herself at home: ‘when I have bought some prettier-coloured satin to trim it fresh, I think it will be very tolerable’.⁵³

However, this image depicts a more skilful engagement with making than implied in Austen’s novel, and raises questions regarding the status of female artisanal skill. The contemporary conceptual devaluation of feminine skill, particularly at a professional level, left seamstresses classed by artisans as comparatively unskilled, while men in the tailoring or other textile related professions might be classed as skilled.⁵⁴ In an artisanal sense, skill was defined through a professional system of status, rather than through the practical articulation of production.⁵⁵ Therefore, within the broader eighteenth-century labour market, women’s sewing skills were generally undervalued and dismissed as feminine amusement. Yet, as Jennie Batchelor and Chloe Wigston Smith have demonstrated, women’s skill at sewing could be key to the portrayal of female figures in eighteenth-century literature, singling them out as practical and proficient.⁵⁶ Furthermore, production was a key means of feminine self-expression, not only in relation to textiles, but handicrafts in general.⁵⁷

⁵³ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 166.

⁵⁴ Farr, *Artisans in Europe, 1300-1914*, p. 285.

⁵⁵ For more on perceptions of production, see Smith, *Material Goods, Moving Hands*.

⁵⁶ Batchelor, *Dress, Distress and Desire*, p. 60; Wigston Smith, *Women, Work, and Clothes in the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, pp. 86-88, 181-82.

⁵⁷ Vickery, ‘The Theory and Practice of Female Accomplishment’; Gowrley, ‘Gender, Craft, and Canon’, p. 217.



Figure 6.5. *Beauty and Fashion*, 1797, LWL, 797.01.24.01.

In *Beauty and Fashion*, a full process of production is depicted, mimicking the production processes of artisanal work.⁵⁸ The first stage, the cutting out, is evident on the table, where the pattern pieces for a cap have been arranged, next to a spool of ribbon, some pins, and a pair of scissors – the tools and notions needed for this project. Next, the figure to the right of the image begins to put together these pieces of fabric, signifying the main stage of production. Thirdly, her companion stitches trims on the now recognisable headdress, dressing it with fashionable feathers and ribbons. Finally, a finished headdress sits on a hat stand on the table. Interestingly, the woman conducting the third stage of construction is wearing a headdress very similar to the one she is constructing, emphasising this link between the process of production, and the women wearing these items. These were not items produced for a third party, but were produced for oneself or close family. This was self-fashioning in a very literal sense. However, in spite of the amateur nature of the work, it is depicted as being conducted in an organised, processual fashion, transforming the domestic setting into a scene of practical production and manufacture. Although middling and elite women's production skill was still limited to the feminised realm of fashion, the advanced and proficient level of skill is clear.

The image itself can be read as a comment both on the fabrication of the fashionable female, and on feminine preoccupation with fashion. The inclusion of sprays of ostrich feathers hints at a moral tendency toward vanity, and the coquettish nature of women who were so wholly engrossed in their appearance.⁵⁹ This appearance, importantly, had been manufactured by these women, echoing concerns raised in contemporary satire regarding the deceptive and contrived nature of women's

⁵⁸ Smith, *Material Goods, Moving Hands*, pp. 123-28.

⁵⁹ McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze*, p. 140.

beauty.⁶⁰ Meanwhile the fact that the women are in the process of making three new hats, when they are already both wearing similar elaborate and fashionable headwear, hints at a tendency to frivolity and over-indulgence – traits which were often linked with the consumer in contemporary rhetoric. These women were over-consumers as much as their contemporaries who rifled through the stock of milliners in order to satisfy their desire for new, fashionable items of dress.⁶¹

6.3 Judgement and Taste: Navigating the Retailer

The skills required to create and adapt garments for their own sake was not the only purpose intended for this knowledge of production. Such skills also enabled the consumer to judge the quality and workmanship of goods: both bespoke and ready-made.⁶² Moralist John Gregory, in his 1774 work advising his now motherless daughters, informed them that ‘the intention of your being taught needle-work, knitting and such like, is not on account of the intrinsic value of all you can do with your hands, which is trifling, but to enable you to judge more perfectly of that kind of work, and to direct the execution of it in others’.⁶³ In other words, when women commissioned mantua-makers or milliners to construct a garment to order, they were

⁶⁰ Donald, *Followers of Fashion*, p. 61; McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze*, p. 139; Heard, *High Spirits: The Comic Art of Thomas Rowlandson*, p. 116; For further reading on beauty, see Robert Jones, ‘The Empire of Beauty: The Competition for Judgement in Mid Eighteenth-Century England’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of York, 1995).

⁶¹ Guest, *Small Change*, p. 76.

⁶² For work on ready-made items, see Lemire, ‘Developing Consumerism’; Sharpe, ‘Cheapness and Economy’; Michael Zakim, ‘Sartorial Ideologies: From Homespun to Ready-Made’, *American Historical Review* 106, no. 5 (2001): 1553–86; Lynn Sorge-English, *Stays and Body Image in London* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2011), pp. 158–64.

⁶³ Gregory, *A Father’s Legacy to His Daughters*, p. 22.

expected to be able to assess the workmanship of the product being created, and to supervise this process.

The importance of developing judgement as a consumer was heightened by contemporary discourse surrounding taste. Taste was a dynamic and nuanced concept, which divided the aristocratic from the bourgeois, and was hotly debated.⁶⁴ The stylistic and cultural aspects of taste were interlinked with moral and social issues, meaning that good taste was judged not only upon aesthetics, but also virtue.⁶⁵ In Mark Akenside's 1744 poem, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, he described English taste as shrouded in a 'Gothic Night' of ignorance and interest, brought on by commercialisation.⁶⁶ Taste was perceived to have been corrupted by the 'vile, effeminate' consumer.⁶⁷ True taste and discernment were the assets of the well-bred and aristocratic, associated with fashion and the beau monde, rather than modish trends.⁶⁸ Significantly, a consideration of the importance of taste also reminds us that historical enquiry into the figure of the consumer cannot be confined to the novelties and trends which dominated the luxury market. Such commodification did not dispel other considerations from the consumer's mind, such as the longevity, beauty, and virtue of an object.

The tension between the fashionable significance of taste, and the disposable commodification of many items of dress, was further intensified in the figure of the retailer. The newly wealthy merchant class were perceived to have abnegated

⁶⁴ For general work on the concept of taste, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984).

⁶⁵ Jeremy Black, *Culture in Eighteenth-Century England: A Subject for Taste* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 16.

⁶⁶ Mark Akenside, *Pleasures of the Imagination* (London: R. Dodsley, 1744), p. 38.

⁶⁷ Jones, 'The Empire of Beauty', p. 9.

⁶⁸ Greig, *The Beau Monde*, p. 244.

established definitions of good taste, preferring the disposable and novel to lasting items of beauty.⁶⁹ Retailers and merchants adopted the vocabulary used to denote quality and style, playing off its seductive and persuasive nature, but in doing so voided its meanings.⁷⁰ Contemporary commentators complained that taste had been nullified, for ‘who has not heard it frequently pronounced by the loveliest mouths in the world, when it has evidently meant nothing’.⁷¹ The established order of taste and criticism, which had prevailed in the previous century, had been unsettled by commerce.

Just as the concept of taste was unsettled in the marketplace, so too was the consumer’s ability to trust the retailer’s opinion of goods. A great deal of emphasis has been placed upon trust in scholarship on retail history. Trust was undoubtedly a significant ingredient in retailing, but we must question the extent to which consumers were willing to trust retailers. Trust covered a vast array of aspects of the retailing process – from billing procedures and pricing, to the correctly labelling lengths cut of goods.⁷² However, as has been demonstrated through the rise of the cultural stereotype of the consummate consumer, this shift was accompanied by an increasing distrust of the retailer.⁷³ This distrust related not only to financial and mercantile conniving and dealing, but also extended to the consumer’s reliance on the aesthetic and fashionable judgement of the retailer.

Retailers were evidently adept at attempting to fool the consumer into taking items they no longer wanted off of their hands, and could therefore not be fully trusted

⁶⁹ Jones, ‘The Empire of Beauty’, p. 9.

⁷⁰ Berg and Clifford, ‘Selling Consumption in the Eighteenth Century’, p. 155.

⁷¹ Adam Fitz-Adam, *The World* (Edinburgh: A. Donaldson, 1770), p. 55.

⁷² Mitchell, *Tradition and Innovation*, p. 53.

⁷³ Rauser, *Caricature Unmasked*, p. 56.

as independent arbiters of taste. Ann Charlton often attempted to vindicate her goods to Sabine Winn, which was likely motivated by her sending older fashions or goods which would no longer sell in London. Charlton often stated that she had no desire for the return of some of the unwanted goods, and that there was certainly no strategy for such an occurrence in place. In 1783 Ann Charlton wrote that she would ‘take it as a favour if it quite suits your Ladyship if you could dispose of the other’ items she had sent speculatively.⁷⁴ Elizabeth Griffith, another London milliner, also sent items which were not requested to Lucy Smythe, along with an existing order, apparently in an attempt both to generate extra sales and to dispose of excess and out of date stock.⁷⁵ These garments may have been of inferior quality or poorly made, out of fashion, or simply aesthetically undesirable. This stock clearance tactic was also depicted in Frances Burney’s *The Witlings* (1771), Mrs Wheedle, the milliner, sends goods which she does not think good enough quality for her more fashionable and elite clients to lesser tradespeople. For example a cap which has been poorly stitched is sent ‘with the other things to Mrs Appeall’ for whom it will ‘do well enough’.⁷⁶ The retailer was shown to be, if not menacing, then at least mercenary in her treatment of her clients. She was aware of the material literacy of her middling and elite clients, and attempted to circumvent this to dispose of unwanted goods wherever possible.

The development of the female consumer’s material literacy was therefore not only pertinent for the creation of garments by their own hand, but also in that it allowed them to judge the workmanship, quality, and suitability of the goods they purchased, or were encouraged to purchase. It was to this end that the consummate consumer

⁷⁴ WYAS, WYL 1352/C4/9/16: ‘Letters from Mrs Ann Charlton to Sabine Winn, 1783-1785’.

⁷⁵ SRO, D641/3/P/21/93: ‘Letter from Elizabeth Griffith, milliner, to Lucy Smythe, 1826’.

⁷⁶ Burney, *The Witlings*, p. 47.

developed a careful browsing methodology, which Kate Smith has demonstrated to have been central to shopping practice.⁷⁷ Through engaging in Smith's model of haptic browsing, the consumer was able to step back from the rhetoric of retail, and physically judge goods. The female consumer who actively browsed under her own agency focussed her attention upon the object. Correspondence networks between female consumers undoubtedly contributed to the exchange and management of consumer knowledge which circumvented the tricks and priorities of the retailer. However, the majority of this sensory assessment process was intensely personal, and required the application of both personal judgement and trained skill. This assessment had little to do with the virtuous discernment which had dominated discussions of taste earlier in the century. As Jones has argued, to the aristocratic consumer of the late seventeenth-century, if indeed we can call them that, it was possible to represent purchased goods as something other than commodities.⁷⁸ The virtuous judgement perceived to have taken place prior to the purchase elevated the status of goods, enabling such patrician disclaimers to consumption.

The shift in the conceptualisation of taste and judgement, and what this meant when assessing objects, was central to Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, published in 1790.⁷⁹ Kant insisted that 'all judgements of taste are singular judgements...I must hold the object directly up to my feeling of pleasure or displeasure, and without using concepts'.⁸⁰ This abstract, intuitive assessment of taste was intrinsically distinct from the capricious and fickle trends of modish commodities.

⁷⁷ Smith, 'Sensing Design and Workmanship', pp. 1-10.

⁷⁸ Jones, 'The Empire of Beauty', p. 8.

⁷⁹ James Noggle, *The Temporality of Taste in Eighteenth-Century British Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 17.

⁸⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), p. 59.

James Usher's *Clio, or a Discourse on Taste*, published in 1767, anticipated Kant's views on taste. Usher argued that the 'image of the times' had engendered a 'vulgar sense' of the word, and that taste which was 'perceived instantaneously, and obtruded upon the mind, like sweet and bitter upon the senses' should prevail.⁸¹ James Noggle has argued that this innate and visceral attitude to taste was distinct from aesthetics.⁸² The consumer, in exercising their taste through judgement, assessment, and ultimately consuming objects, worked not only from the tangible and definable aesthetics of an object, but also from an instinctive awareness of the object. The training of a consumer's material literacy can therefore be seen to not only have ensured an ability to recognise quality or workmanship, but also engendered an intrinsic awareness of what drew them to objects, and made them want to consume.

6.4 Conclusion

The eighteenth-century female consumer of dress did not passively accept the continual round of commodities paraded as novel and exciting. Instead, she can be seen to have actively engaged with the production of these objects, taking a key role in shaping them to fit her personal needs and desires. While earlier in the century feminine handiwork was derided, by the end of the century perceptions had been complicated by an increasingly popular view of needlework as a gainful and virtuous employment for feminine hands.

The consumer's ability to undertake, judge, and assess this process of production was the result of material literacy and sewing skills developed from

⁸¹ James Usher, *Clio, or a Discourse on Taste* (London: Lackington, Allen and Company, 1809), p. 36.

⁸² Noggle, *The Temporality of Taste*, p. 17.

childhood. However the consumer's ability to judge garments must also be considered within the broader narrative of taste. With the retailer perceived as a corruptor of taste, who would promote goods for their own mercantile ends, rather than for their beauty or suitability, it fell to the consumer to take an active role as assessor and adjudicator of taste. Consequently, the consumer's material literacy was applied both through the assessment of practical skill, and through an appreciation of the inherent properties of a garment's beauty.

SECTION FOUR

CONTEXTUALISING THE CONSUMER

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Patriotic Consumer in England and France

Writing in 1747, Abbé Le Blanc wrote in his *Letters on the English and French Nations* that in 'Paris, the *valets de chambre* and ladies-women are frequently the apes of their masters and mistresses in dress,' however, in 'London 'tis just the reverse: masters dress like their valets, and the duchesses copy after their chamber maids'.¹ Parisian fashion was led and dominated by extravagant court culture, while English fashion was comparatively sedate, restrained and lacked the showiness of French *modes*.² Le Blanc's comments, while undoubtedly employing literary hyperbole, nonetheless highlight a key point of contention in the figure of the consumer of fashionable dress of each country. Since at least the seventeenth century, Europe's division along religious lines had been echoed in economic and political conceptualisations of the morality of the consumers of each nation. France was seen as excessive, feminine, and led by the frivolities of the court.³ In contrast, the 'embarrassed riches' of England and the Dutch Republic were conceptualised as restrained, virtuous, and masculine.⁴ It is within the framework of these national stereotypes and foreign exchange which the English, female consumer of dress must be contextualised.

The economy of virtue, so integral to the development of the ideas which led to the French Revolution, was at the core of many ideas regarding the figure of the

¹ Le Blanc, *Letters on the English and French Nations*, 1, p. 13.

² Jennifer M Jones, *Sexing La Mode: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

³ Sheryl Kroen, 'A Political History of the Consumer', *The Historical Journal* 47, no. 3 (2004): pp. 709–36.

⁴ For more on the Dutch Republic, see Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*.

consumer.⁵ This potent rhetoric of difference, which separated the virtuous from the vilified consumer, was drawn not only along gender lines, but also along national borders. Consequently, competing notions of economic and material virtue shifted in tune with the political compass of each nation. In practise, not only was fashion highly visible and versatile as a means of expression, it also enabled and embodied the dissemination of new political and philosophical ideas.⁶ Fashion facilitated the material articulation of political rhetoric - garments were named for current events, to support political causes, and state allegiances. However, they were also used to express difference and formulate national identities.

At odds with this moral and political disparity between England and France was the persistent belief in France's superiority in terms of design and fashion.⁷ France had long seen fashion as integral to the cultivation of commerce, and instrumental to the success of its national economy; and so, both culturally and economically, fashion had been prioritised.⁸ As the English poet Soame Jenyns wrote in his 1742 *Fashion, a Satire*, it was 'France, whose Edicts govern Dress'.⁹ To the English, these French fashions were simultaneously desirable and distasteful. As Aileen Ribeiro has argued, Anglo-French attitudes consisted of 'a complex mixture of envy, bafflement and dislike'.¹⁰ The cache of fashions from France was consistently strong throughout the

⁵ Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*; Ribeiro, *Fashion in the French Revolution*; Aileen Ribeiro, 'Fashion in the Eighteenth Century: Some Anglo-French Comparisons', *Textile History* 22, no. 2 (1991): pp. 329–45; John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (London: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 15–16.

⁶ Kimberley Chrisman-Campbell, *Fashion Victims: Dress at the Court of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette* (London: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 7.

⁷ John Styles, 'Manufacturing, Consumption, and Design in Eighteenth-Century England', in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 527–54.

⁸ Chrisman-Campbell, *Fashion Victims*, p. 7.

⁹ Soame Jenyns, *A Collection of Poems* (London: Robert Dodsley, 1748), p. 250.

¹⁰ Aileen Ribeiro, 'Fashion in the Eighteenth-Century: Some Anglo-French Comparisons', in *The Fashion History Reader*, ed. Giorgio Riello and Peter McNeil (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 217–34.

century, and French a byword for style, elegance, and modishness. Yet France's fashionable superiority was diluted by the increasing desirability for decidedly English, rational styles of dress. Moreover, in the latter decades of the century, the English consumer emerged as a patriotic economic force, harnessing purchasing power for the nation's economic good – an economic strategy which the French had long been aware of, yet in the heat of political turmoil, failed to fully realise.¹¹

This chapter charts the relationship between the English and French consumer – or more specifically, the consumers of London and Paris. Focussing on these cultural and commercial hubs – arguably the two most influential cities in eighteenth-century Europe – from the time of the Seven Years War of the 1750s through to the Napoleonic conflict of the 1810s, this chapter will unpick the key characteristics of the Anglo-French consumer, and reflect upon how this international relationship of conflict and cultural exchange moulded and influenced the English consumer. It will primarily engage with graphic satire and material culture, knitting these visual articulations of consumer tensions together with contemporary literature and archival sources in order to unpick how the consumer was appropriated for economic patriotism.

7.1 The Reign of French Fashion, 1750-1770

In early eighteenth-century England, the sartorial superiority of the French was widely acknowledged. English wool, central to the domestic textile industry, failed to capture the attention of the English consumer in the same way as French silks, and even

¹¹ Paul R. Sharp and Jacob L. Weisdorf, 'French Revolution or Industrial Revolution?: A Note on the Contrasting Experiences of England and France up to 1800', *Cliometrica* 6 (2012): pp. 79–88; Chrisman-Campbell, *Fashion Victims*, p. 7.

German, French, and Dutch linen did.¹² *A Man of Taste*, published in London in 1733, scoffed at the concept of patriotic consumption by the English consumer, asking ‘Shall I wear cloaths [sic], in *awkward England* made? / And sweat in cloth, to help the *woollen trade*? / In *French* embroidery and *Flanders* lace / I’ll spend the income of a treasurer’s place’.¹³ In France, on the other hand, courtiers were required to wear expensive silks produced domestically in order ‘to promote the country’s manufactures’ – a custom encouraged but not enforced in the English court.¹⁴ Although a call for the consumer to support English manufactured goods was evident on the English side of the channel, the call came primarily from religious quarters, and was largely unheeded in the mid-century.¹⁵

Even in the tumultuous years leading up to England and France’s military conflict in the Seven Years War, the English consumer looked to France for guidance in all sartorial matters. ‘As for fashions, according to English custom we follow the French Ambassadors’ wrote Lady Jane Coke in 1750 to her friend Mrs Eyre.¹⁶ In a letter from 1754, the year the first signs of war began, a correspondent of Yorkshire gentleman John Grimston commented that ‘the French dress is much more gracefull

¹² Beverly Lemire, ‘Fashion and Tradition: Wearing Wool in England during the Consumer Revolution, c.1660-1820’, in *Wool: Products and Markets, 13th-20th Century*, ed. Giovanni L Fontana and Gérard Gayot (Padova: Cleup, 2004), pp. 573–94; Beverly Lemire, ‘Products and Markets from the XIXth to the XXth Century’, in *Wool: Products and Markets, 13th-20th Century*, ed. Giovanni L Fontana and Gérard Gayot (Padova: Cleup, 2004), pp. 22–24; Pat Hudson, ‘The Limits of Wool and the Potential of Cotton in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’, in *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200-1850*, ed. Giorgio Riello and Parthasarathi Prasanna (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 327–50; Riello, *Cotton*, p. 249; John Smail, *Merchants, Markets and Manufacture: The English Wool Textile Industry in the Eighteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

¹³ Anon, *The Man of Taste* (London: George Faulkner, 1733), p. 16.

¹⁴ Marquis de Bombelle, *Journal*, ed. Jean Grassion and Frans Durif (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1978), p. 246.

¹⁵ Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*, p. 100.

¹⁶ Florence Rathborne, ed., ‘Lady Jane Coke to Mary Eyre, Saville Row, 2 January 1750’, in *Letters from Lady Jane Coke to Her Friend Mrs Eyre at Derby 1747-1758* (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1899), pp. 41-43.

[sic] and becoming than the English'.¹⁷ Although the superiority of French fashion was evidently felt and acknowledged by both genders, it was perhaps most keenly felt by aristocratic women, who sent their maids to France to learn to dress hair in Parisian styles, and had an enduring admiration of and delight in French culture.¹⁸

Boitard's famous *The Imports of Great Britain from France* (Figure 7.1), published in 1757, illustrates the ravenous appetite in London for French imports, even as the war raged on.¹⁹ In the image, French wine, brandy and cheeses, as well as cosmetics, fabrics, and accessories, have landed upon the dock for sale to English consumers. Behind them, a swarm approaches, ready to consume the goods, containing not only the fashionable ladies and gentlemen who might purchase such items, but also mantua-makers, tailors, and milliners, keen to acquire French goods to sell in their shops, aware of the cache of French goods.

The desirability of these goods to the English consumer, primarily represented as female in this image, is explicitly evident. This desire is not manufactured by elegant shop displays, or even by the material qualities of the as yet unseen goods, but by their cache as being *French* goods. The thronging mass of tradesmen and consumers on the dock is mirrored in the forest of masts, which dwarf the Tower of London in the far distance. Two porters carry a box marked 'Birth-Night Cloaths', addressed to a fashionable London viscount. These garments were undoubtedly purchased to be worn on the birthday of the King or Queen – supposedly a patriotic occasion – and yet the consumer of these garments is so influenced by French fashion

¹⁷ ERYA, DDGR/42/4: 'Letters relating to John Grimston, 1754'.

¹⁸ Greig, *The Beau Monde*, p. 24.

¹⁹ John V. C. Nye, *War, Wine, and Taxes: The Political Economy of Anglo-French Trade, 1689-1900* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007).

French brocades, and cottons had all been prohibited.²¹ When import was permitted, English customs could raise their price by nearly half.²² State regulation was central to the protectionist economy of the early- and mid-century, but the will of the state, and the will of the consumer, rarely align. Even during the wartime blockade, desirable French commodities were so intently wanted by consumers that they were not always acquired legally. Silk lace, edging, and ribbons – easy to transport yet sometimes extremely high in value – regularly found their way over the channel, both amongst the wares of professional smugglers, and in the pockets and boxes of English travellers.²³ Emily, Duchess of Leinster, who often sent and received foreign textiles amongst her family and friends, intentionally hid such items in her luggage, for fear of being discovered by the customs men.²⁴

Contemporary writers bemoaned the impact of duties and restrictions on trade, not only at a mercantile level, but also as felt by the consumer. Writing in 1750, Sir Matthew Decker wrote *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade* in which he declared that ‘a Prohibition on the Goods of any one Nation gives a Monopoly to other Nations...all Monopolies raise the Prices of Goods...and further enhance their Prices vastly to the Consumer’.²⁵ Such authors placed the blame for

²¹ Tim Kerin, ‘Parliament, Legislation and the Regulation of English Textile Industries’, in *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems in England, 1689-1750*, ed. Lee Davison et al. (Stroud: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), pp. 1–24; Raymond L. Sickinger, ‘Regulation or Ruination: Parliament’s Consistent Pattern of Mercantilist Regulation of the English Textile Trade, 1660–1800’, *Parliamentary History* 19, no. 2 (2000): pp. 211–32.

²² Miller, *Selling Silks*, p. 10.

²³ Margot Finn, ‘Colonial Gifts: Family Politics and the Exchange of Goods in British India, C. 1780–1820’, *Modern Asian Studies* 40, no. 1 (2006): pp. 203–31; Farrell, ‘Smuggling Silks into Eighteenth-Century Britain’, p. 290.

²⁴ Brian Fitzgerald, ed., *Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster (1731–1814)* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1949), pp. 82–95; quoted in Farrell, ‘Smuggling Silks into Eighteenth-Century England’, p. 291.

²⁵ Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade, Consequently of the Value of the Lands of England, and on the Means to Restore Both* (London: John Brotherton, 1750), p. 132.

smuggling not upon smuggler or the consumer, but upon the state which passed laws restricting and confining free trade. Malachy Postlethwayt's translation and revision of the *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*, published in England in 1757, levied similar accusations, arguing that 'high duties give encouragement to smuggling' and that many a 'fair trader' has been compelled to 'turn smuggler too' in order to be competitive in the marketplace.²⁶

Often considered from a purely economic standpoint, the smuggling of silks should also be explored in a material light.²⁷ Telling apart these silks was not easy. Members of the Weavers Company, who protected the interests of London's textile workers, were called in to consult on new seizures of silks in order to examine and determine whether the silks were of domestic or foreign manufacture.²⁸ A silk sample book, now in the collections of the Victoria and Albert museum, is a known example of one such seizure.²⁹ It is therefore highly unlikely that most middling and elite female consumers would have had the technical knowledge and skill required to correctly discern between an imported or domestically produced textile in the same style, in spite of their material literacy.

Two mantuas from the early 1750s provide an opportunity for an insightful comparison of French and English manufactured silks. The mantua was a fashion which arose in the late seventeenth century, and by the mid-century was principally worn for highly formal occasions, such as court gatherings and presentations.³⁰ In spite

²⁶ Jaques Savary, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*, trans. Malachy Postlethwayt (London: John Knapton, 1757), p. 408.

²⁷ Susan North, 'The Physical Manifestation of an Abstraction: A Pair of 1750s Waistcoat Shapes', *Textile History* 39, no. 1 (2008): pp. 92–104.

²⁸ Farrell, 'Smuggling Silks into Eighteenth-Century England', p. 274.

²⁹ This is produced in facsimile in Miller, *Selling Silks*.

³⁰ Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 35.

of these primarily aristocratic associations, consumers outside the *beau monde* and aristocratic elite still occasionally had a need for such formal styles. One such lady was Anne Fanshawe, wife of Essex gentleman Thomas Fanshawe, and daughter of Crisp Gascoyne, a London businessman who rose to become London's Mayor. Her mother being dead, Anne Fanshawe acted as Lady Mayoress for her father. The gown which she purportedly wore to her father's swearing into office is now cared for by the Museum of London, and is almost certainly made from domestically produced Spitalfields silk (Figure 7.2). Spitalfields silk was woven in the East End of London by French Huguenot refugees, later joined by Irish weavers, and dominated the English manufacture of silk.³¹ This silk was almost certainly woven specifically for this mayoral occasion, as its iconography makes clear and specific statements about the wearer, although from a consumer perspective, it was probably still obtained through a mercer. The silk depicts horns of plenty, bales, anchors, hops, and barley, directly referencing Gascoyne's origins as a prosperous merchant and brewer. This garment made clear statements not only about the wealth and status of the wearer, but also the origins of that wealth in trade, and the patriotic patronage of English manufacturers. This was a dress for a woman who desired to materially articulate her association with the rising power of commerce and mercantilism. In other words, she used her own power as a consumer to further promote the English merchant and manufacturer.

A mantua, cut in a similar style, which is now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, provides a comparison (Figure 7.3). This gown was made from silk which was probably manufactured in France, specifically Lyon, in the years 1753-

³¹ See Rothstein, *Spitalfields Silks*.

1755, while the gown itself is estimated to have been constructed in the late 1750s. The manipulation and disregard of royal sartorial regulations could be used to express opposition, whether through the wearing of the ostrich feathers disliked by Queen Charlotte, or through the wearing of a silk which supported a foreign economy over that of the home nation.³² The silk, with a cream ground woven with metallic threads, is elegant, and far less busy than Fanshawe's Spitalfields silk gown. A broader comparison to the silk samples contained in the Lyons silk merchant's sample book seized in England in 1764 shows that French-manufactured silks were not all so simple and elegant, and in fact display striking diversity.³³



Figure 7.2. Mantua belonging to Ann Fanshawe, 1751-1752, Spitalfields Silk, Museum of London, 83.531.

³² Greig, *The Beau Monde*, p. 125.

³³ Miller, 'Material Marketing'; Miller, *Selling Silks*.



Figure 7.3. Court Mantua, 1750s, Lyons Silk, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, T.592:1-15-1993.

Wearing a French silk could subvert sartorial codes, however it remained extremely difficult to visually distinguish between Lyons and Spitalfields silk without expert knowledge. What is perhaps more significant, especially in relation to court garments, is the clear distinction in cut and construction between the gowns worn at the English court, and those worn at the French, and indeed the majority of other European courts. Jean-Marc Nattier's portrait of Princess Henriette of France (Figure 7.4), painted in the early 1750s, depicts the sitter in French court dress, and demonstrates how stylistically different continental styles were to those worn at the English court. The separate lace ruffled sleeves, and heavily boned, back-closing bodice, with its low scooped neckline characterise this continental style, which in

many ways echoed and maintained earlier seventeenth-century styles.³⁴ In contract, the English style used a bodice and sleeve design almost identical to that used for contemporary fashionable dress outside of court and state occasions. Although court fashion was decidedly separate from the more generally worn dress of the elite and middling sort, the international distinctions should be read as the articulation of national difference. War may not have disrupted consumer desire for French silks and styles, but pressure to create and retain sartorial distinction between England and her European neighbours, especially at court, was undeniably present.

³⁴ Madeleine Delpierre, *Dress in France in the Eighteenth Century*, trans. Caroline Beamish (London: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 92-93.



Figure 7.4. Jean-Marc Nattier, *Princess Henriette of France*, 1754, National Museum of the Castles of Versailles and Trianon, INV 6887.

7.2 Extravagant Extremes: *à l'Anglaise* and *à la Française*, 1770-1789

The distinctions between French and English fashionable dress intensified as the century progressed. In his *Account of the Character and Manners of the French*, John Andrews emphasised that the concern for dress and affected social behaviour were enforced in France in order to cement monarchical absolutism, and that consequently, conforming to such behaviours could identify you as a court sycophant.³⁵ Rousseau, Mercier, and other enlightenment thinkers associated the freedom of clothing, embodied in the easy-fitting English styles, with increasingly popular notions of liberty.³⁶ This contest between French foppery and English sobriety characterised the decades leading up to the French Revolution, enlivening a disdainful rhetoric of difference. Graphic satire blossomed in this period, vociferously articulating national difference through dress and appearances.³⁷

Swiss born Samuel Grimm's twin prints, *The French Lady in London* (Figure 7.5) and *The English Lady at Paris* (Figure 7.6) directly compare the fashionable female consumer of the two nations. The former exaggerates the extreme nature of French fashionable headdresses. Donaldson has described this lady's headdress as quasi-phallic in its proportions, as it threatens to penetrate English drawing rooms.³⁸ Comparisons with the mountain at Tenerife, depicted in the painting behind, are explicit. The headdress, or *pouf*, had become increasingly important in French fashion

³⁵ John Andrews, *Account of the Character and Manners of the French* (London: Dilly, 1770), p. 16, 69.

³⁶ Ribeiro, 'Fashion in the Eighteenth-Century', p. 228.

³⁷ Rauser, *Caricature Unmasked*, p. 118.

³⁸ Donald, *Followers of Fashion*, p. 40.

in the 1770s. It first appeared during the last days of Louis XV's reign in 1774 as a means of personal expression, known as a *pouf aux sentiments* (sentimental pouf) – it might contain portraits of family members or pets, and might be trimmed with locks of hair from a father, husband, or close friend.³⁹ Following Louis XVI's succession, these poufs became increasingly political, known as *pouf aux circonstances*. These styles provided a commentary on contemporary politics or events, such as the opening of parliament, great battles, or gardens. These poufs were very large, and were constructed from a length of gauze trimmed with silk, ribbons, and feathers.⁴⁰ The French lady's counterpart in *The English Lady at Paris* sports a timid imitation of the French fashion; however, it fails to reach the proportions of the exaggerated French style. This diluted imitation is the general theme of these two images. Although the English lady attempts to mimic some of the key characteristics of the French fashion – note the flounced cuffs at the elbow, or *engageantes* – her interpretations are tempered by restraint and, ultimately, achieve only a poor imitation of French fashionable extremes. Her short, stout figure in particular making it physically impossible to fully encapsulate the elegance of French style.

³⁹ Chrisman-Campbell, *Fashion Victims*, p. 6.

⁴⁰ Delpierre, *Dress in France in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 141.



Figure 7.5. *The French Lady in London, or the Head Dress for the Year 1771*, after Samuel Hieronymus Grimm, 1771, British Museum, J,5.111.



Figure 7.6. *The English Lady at Paris*, after Samuel Hieronymus Grimm, 1771, British Museum, J,5.73.

In England, the general distaste for continental styles was articulated through the ridicule of the macaroni figure. Although predominantly aimed at men, who were seen to have been corrupted and feminised by Frenchified fashion, the female consumer was also a subject of derision for her macaroni tastes.⁴¹ The macaroni's social origin could be from 'all ranks of people', as *The Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* explained in 1772.⁴² Cooks, maids, and farmers' daughters could all be corrupted by the macaroni style, and the figure was instead defined through manners and consumption of dress. Images which depicted the horror of middling, predominantly provincial parents when faced with the macaroni styles donned by their sons and daughters became a trope of graphic satire.⁴³ Another engraving after a drawing by Grimm, entitled *Be not amaz'd Dear Mother - It is indeed your Daughter Anne* (Figure 7.7) depicts a mother's horror at her daughter's fashionable, Frenchified excess in dress consumption. The key components of French dress – the huge hair, draping *engageantes*, and nosegay at the bosom – are shown in juxtaposition to her mother's black silk bonnet and cloak, simple gown, and the plain cuffs of her shift.

Undoubtedly, it is her daughter's hair which has most prominently caught the mother's attention. These styles were constructed using false hair and pomades, rather than full wigs, and were directly inspired by the French *poufs*.⁴⁴ It would be tempting to believe that these satirical images grossly exaggerated the styles worn by most middling, gentry, and even elite women. However, the fashion press, which was growing with increasing momentum during the 1770s, indicates that similar, if more

⁴¹ Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*, p. 63; Peter McNeil, 'Macaroni Masculinities', in *The Men's Fashion Reader*, ed. Peter McNeil and Vicki Karaminas (London: Berg, 2009), pp. 54-71.

⁴² *The Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* (London, 1772), p. 1.

⁴³ Donald, *Followers of Fashion*, p. 25.

⁴⁴ Rauser, 'Hair, Authenticity and the Self-Made Macaroni', p. 103.

restrained styles, were worn.⁴⁵ Two pocket book engravings pasted side-by-side in Barbara Johnson's Album demonstrate that such exaggerated French styles could influence the consumption of a vicar's daughter (Figure 7.8). The large double page print from *the Ladies Compleat Pocket Book* from 1777 depicts the new, heart-shaped styles coming into vogue in the late 1770s, while the left-hand image, from the *Kentish Ladies' Journal* of the same year depicts slightly more outdated, stretched styles. These styles more closely resemble the reduced version of the exaggerated hairstyles, as depicted in *The English Lady at Paris* (Figure 7.6) rather than the extreme styles of her French counterpart. Whether these styles were in fact mimicked by Barbara Johnson and her peers is, of course, difficult to say. A few years later, in 1785, playwright Richard Sheridan's fashion-conscious sister Betsy wrote that women she had observed at the opera wore 'the most disfiguring head-dress' she had ever seen.⁴⁶ She described the prevailing style as 'a Mob of a most immense size, simply illustrated with blue or yellow ribbons – this over friz'd Heads'.⁴⁷ Although such extreme styles were certainly mimicked, with varying degrees of aesthetic success, even fashionable young ladies questioned such styles.

⁴⁵ Leis, 'Displaying Art and Fashion', p. 262.

⁴⁶ Sheridan, *Betsy Sheridan's Journal*, p. 51.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 51.



Figure 7.7. *Be not amaz'd Dear Mother - It is indeed your Daughter Anne*, after Samuel Hieronymus Grimm, 1774, British Museum, 1935,0522.1.39.

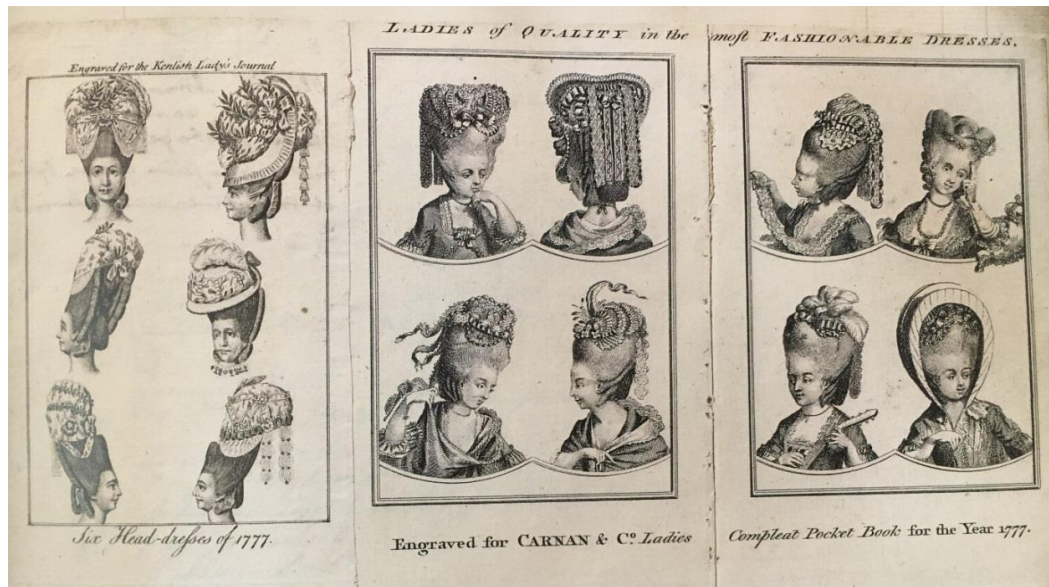


Figure 7.8. Fashionable headdresses, Barbara Johnson's Album, 1746-1823, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, T.219-1973, p. 19.

The aesthetic divide between the two nations, though perhaps most explicitly seen in men's dress, was also evident in the terminology used to describe fashionable styles. The two most dominant dress styles in this period were known in French as the *robe à l'Anglaise* and *robe à la Française*, and in England as the nightgown, and the sack or saque respectively.⁴⁸ Although the terminology was not widely used in England at the time, a comparison of the styles nevertheless provides an insight into French conceptualisations of the differing styles. The nightgown, or *robe à l'Anglaise* was certainly the more retrained style (Figure 7.9). Its closely fitted bodice characterised the style, and gave a general impression of neatness and simplicity. The sack, or *robe à la Française* (Figure 7.10), on the other hand was characterised by its flowing pleats at the centre back – a far more luxurious and impractical, although

⁴⁸ Pascale Gorguet Ballesteros, *Modes En Miroir: La France et La Hollande Au Temps Des Lumières* (Paris: Paris Musées, 2005), p. 109.

elegant style. Both styles were worn on both sides of the channel, so practically there was very little difference in which styles the two countries consumed. However, there are two significant points to be made. Firstly, that the conceptual association of restraint and practicality with the English consumer of dress, and frivolity and elegance with her French counterpart prevailed through this terminology. Secondly, that as the 1770s progressed in the 1780s, the *robe à l'Anglaise* gradually began to dominate wardrobes on both sides of the channel, signally as aesthetic shift in the consumption of dress, as England began to draw further distinction between French and English fashion.⁴⁹

In 1786, London's *Fashionable Magazine* even claimed 'that London now, generally speaking, gives Fashions to Paris and, of course, to all Europe, not Paris to London'.⁵⁰ Not that Parisian fashion journalism necessarily agreed.⁵¹ Nevertheless, in the years leading up to the Revolution, Anglomania was rife, especially in men's fashionable dress.⁵² In the same year as London's *Fashionable Magazine* commented on London's fashionable influence, the *Cabinet des Modes* rebranded itself as the *Magasin des Modes Nouvelles Français et Angloises*.⁵³ The masculine woollen styles of the riding habit, or *redingote*, appealed to the increasingly egalitarian ideologies of the French, and reinforced the effeminate connotations of French fashions. Although Louis XVI did his best to stem the Anglomania tide, France continued to rely upon

⁴⁹ Ribeiro, 'Fashion in the Eighteenth-Century', p. 228.

⁵⁰ *Fashionable Magazine* (London: Harrison, 1786).

⁵¹ Valerie Steele, *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 36.

⁵² Andrew Bolton, *AngloMania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006), pp. 19-28.

⁵³ Chrisman-Campbell, *Fashion Victims*, p. 226.

English imports of silk gauze (actually woven in Scotland), wool, and East India Company imported muslin.⁵⁴



Figure 7.9. *Robe à l'Anglaise*, 1770s, England, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009.300.648.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 236.



Figure 7.10. *Robe à la Française*, 1770s, England, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, T.471 to B-1980.

The increased success of London fashions on the European market contributed to an increasingly patriotic feeling amongst English consumers, visually articulated through the characters of John Bull and Britannia. The beef-eating, stout Englishman, who evolved into the stereotype of John Bull was drawn in direct contract to the foppish and skinny Frenchman.⁵⁵ However, it was Britannia who was more regularly used to inspire the patriotism of the English consumer.⁵⁶ Children were taught the significance of the iconography of Britannia early, with female allegorical figures being associated with the mother.⁵⁷ From the mid-century, the Anti-Gallican Association had claimed Britannia as a key part of its anti-French iconography, and prominently included her in the society's coat of arms.⁵⁸ During the 1780s, such symbols – widely recognised and understood by an educated middling consumer – became increasingly used on marketing ephemera; particularly that associated with international trade.⁵⁹

This pro-British iconography was used to promote British manufactures, and trade, and had the ability to evoke powerful patriotic emotions.⁶⁰ Trade cards and bill heads for retailers made clear links between the goods they sold, and the international trade networks and domestic manufacturing industries from which they sprung,

⁵⁵ Rauser, *Caricature Unmasked*, p. 118.

⁵⁶ Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire, and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 94.

⁵⁷ Müller, *Framing Childhood*, p. 167.

⁵⁸ Peter Lindfield, 'National Identity Through Design: The Anglicisation of the Rococo in Mid-Eighteenth-Century England', in *Rule Britannia?: England and Englishness 1707-1901*, ed. Peter Lindfield and Christie Margrave (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), pp. 3–42.

⁵⁹ Emalee Beddoes, 'The National Drink: Advertising, the United Kingdom Tea Company and Nationalism', in *Rule Britannia?: England and Englishness 1707-1901*, ed. Peter Lindfield and Christie Margrave (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), pp. 101–20.

⁶⁰ Roy T. Matthews, 'Britannia and John Bull: From Birth to Maturity', *The Historian* 62, no. 4 (2000): pp. 799–820.

transforming consumption into a positive, patriotic act.⁶¹ Nicholls, a London linen draper, used the Britannia both on his trade card, and as his shop sign (Figure 7.11).



Figure 7.11. Trade card for Nicholls Linen Draper, 1786, British Museum, D,2.2782.

Similarly, consumer goods themselves often depicted Britannia, primarily in the form of toys such as snuff boxes or patch boxes but also as lockets and jewellery to be worn as dress accessories. One example in the Victoria and Albert Museum, dating to the last quarter of the eighteenth century, depicts one such scene (Figure 7.12). This watercolour on ivory image depicts Britannia with her Union flag shield and lion at her feet looking out over the waves, keeping watch over British ships, whether at war or trade. In these years, the fates of France and England had diverged. While England was enjoying the first fruits of industrial enterprise, manufacture and trade, France had fallen to revolution.⁶² Consumers who had once looked primarily to

⁶¹ Stobart, *Sugar and Spice*, p. 171.

⁶² Sharp and Weisdorf, 'French Revolution or Industrial Revolution?', pp. 79-88.

France to lead the way in fashionable dress were now inspired by a growing patriotic feeling. In other words, the consumer had been appropriated as a vehicle for economic patriotism.



Figure 7.12. Locket depicting Britannia, 1775-1800, 4.6 cm x 2.9 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 943-1888.

7.3 The Patriotic Consumer, 1789-1815

The patriotic symbolism which began to make its way into commercial and retail advertisements in the 1780s was prolific by the turn of the century. Traders dealing in tea, ceramics, and silverware, as well as textiles utilised the symbol of Britannia. The popularity of these designs is attested to by blank designs, with generic images of Britannia and the ephemera of trade. Significantly, an example in the British Museum of one such black trade card also depicts the iconography of Ireland, seen in the harp and classically-dressed figure of Hibernia (Figure 7.13). Undoubtedly, this trade card celebrates the Act of Union of 1801, which unified Britain and Ireland. Using

evocative, patriotic iconography explicitly drew connections which would appeal to an increasingly internationally aware consumer.



Figure 7.13. Blank trade card design, 1801-1810, British Museum, Heal, 132.169.

Imagery of a prosperous United Kingdom was used on trade cards in practice, such as that used by Hathaway, a Bath linen draper (Figure 7.14). This iconography of the union, seen in this image, was particularly resonant in the linen trade. Irish linen had been seen as an economic threat for many years, and the economic prosperity it could potentially produce for Ireland was discussed as part of the campaign against the union. One such campaigner, Henry Grattan, stated in a speech to the Irish House of Commons in 1800 that ‘Irish linen sells itself’.⁶³ In the iconography of the trade

⁶³ Henry Grattan, *The Speech (at Length) of the Honourable Henry Grattan, in the Irish House of Commons, Against the Union with Great Britain* (London: J. S. Jordan, 1800), p. 35.

card, Hibernia both symbolically and literally passes rolls of Irish linen over to the regally seated Britannia.

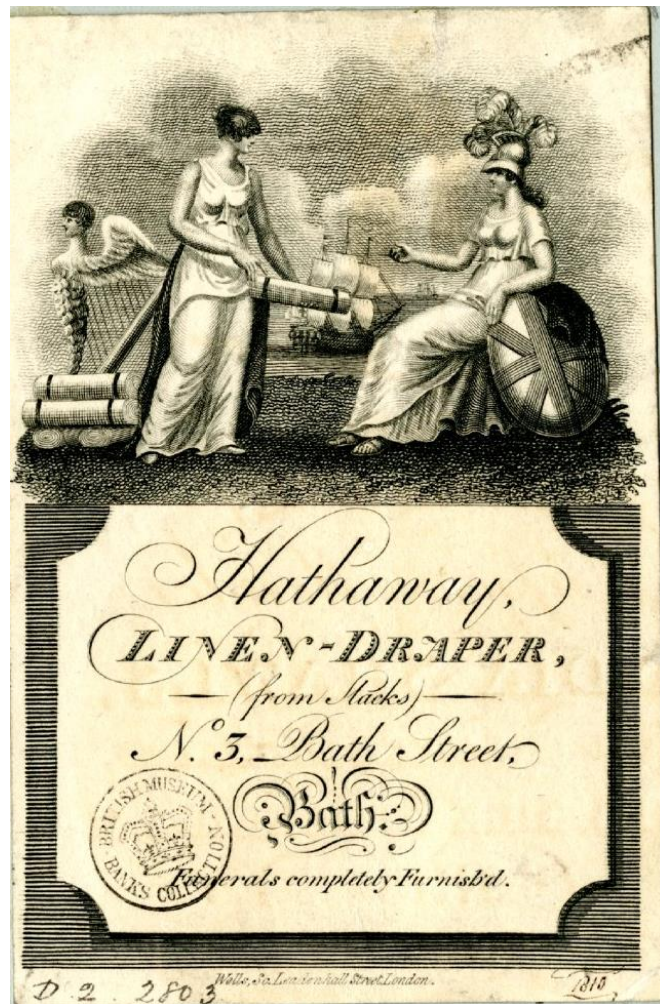


Figure 7.14. Trade card for Hathaway, Linen Draper, 1810, British Museum, D,2.2803.

Trade cards were important tools for retailers to present themselves to the customer, and were often used to mediate the retail process as receipts, or to record transactions and monies owed.⁶⁴ Including such politicised symbolism on such items cannot be taken lightly. Not only did such images directly champion a political issue, they also bring the consumer into the political equation. Just as Britain played an important part in making the ‘market for culture’ through its prints, so too did such prints encourage a market of patriotism.⁶⁵ In doing so, it simultaneously played off a consumer desires for a widely acknowledged quality product, and an increasing sense of consumer patriotism.

Such patriotism was not only felt at home. In the light of this increased patriotic consumer feeling, how had the relationship with France and French fashion fared? Visiting France in 1802, Joseph Farington wrote that ‘the more I see of the French people, the more I feel how strong a national distinction, a want of propriety in dress makes between them and the people of England’.⁶⁶ *La famille anglaise à Paris*, a graphic satire contemporary to Farington’s remark, articulates what this distinction was perceived to sartorially look like (Figure 7.15). Published in Paris as part of the *Le Suprême Bon Ton* series, a satirical series of prints aimed at the new Parisian fashionable elite, the image caricatured the clothing of both nations.⁶⁷ While the French figures are depicted as balletically graceful, their English counterparts are stiff and straight to the point of absurdity. The poke bonnets of the little girls entirely hide

⁶⁴ Mitchell, *Tradition and Innovation*, p 57; see also Berg and Clifford, ‘Selling Consumption in the Eighteenth Century’; Hubbard, ‘The Art of Advertising’.

⁶⁵ Berg and Clifford, ‘Selling Consumption in the Eighteenth Century’, p. 165.

⁶⁶ Joseph Farington, *The Farington Diary*, ed. J. Greig, vol. 2 (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1802), p. 20.

⁶⁷ For literature on *Le Suprême Bon Ton* and European graphic satire, see Adelheid Rasche and Gundula Wolter, *Ridiküll!: Mode in Der Karikatur, 1600 Bis 1900* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2003); Alain Lescart, *Splendeurs et Misères de La Grisette: Évolution D’une Figure Emblématique* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008).

their faces, while the saggy, poorly cut breeches of the gentleman contrast sharply with the skin-tight breeches of his French counterpart.⁶⁸ As consumers, the implication here is that the English consumption of clothes had diverged further from French fashion than it had at any point in the preceding century. The patriotic consumption of colonial imports and domestically manufactured goods was only one part of the story. British consumers had also developed their own sartorial style.



Figure 7.15. *La Famille Anglaise a Paris*, 1800-1805 British Museum, 1856,0712.605.

In spite of this increased sartorial independence, it would be misleading to paint this as a simple narrative of cultural divergence. Even after the revolution, French

⁶⁸ Donald, *Followers of Fashion*, p. 74.

fashion still held an unassailable desirability and brought with it intrinsic connotations of style. The French fashion periodical, *Journal des Dames et des Modes* was a joint venture with British publishers, and, although written in French, usually compelled its readers to purchase English styles.⁶⁹ However, the draw of French goods, such as ribbons and laces, was still strong – even if they had to be acquired illicitly. Writing to her haberdasher, Francis Faulding, in London in the 1790s, Sabine Winn regularly requested that her retailer obtained French goods for her. The correspondence from Faulding displays a fear of importing goods illicitly – whether real or a ploy to increase desirability – even though he does comply with his client’s wishes. However this fear lay not with British customs, but over then channel in France. Writing in January 1798 regarding a box of French chintzes he was expecting, Faulding declared that he was ‘apprehensive they will be confiscated by the French government if proved English property’.⁷⁰

By the turn of the century, the French monopoly on fashion and taste had been significantly diluted. What remained was still coloured by the countries’ political relationships, but can be more accurately articulated as a dialogue of style. Both French and British female consumers of dress were happy to be misidentified as belonging to the other culture based on their clothing.⁷¹ French *émigrés* fleeing from the French Revolution retained a close connection with the consumption of fashion. Those who could afford it remained active consumers of clothing.⁷² Others were

⁶⁹ Mirella Billi, ‘Ladies’ Fashion Magazines: Social Life and Consumerism in Eighteenth-Century England’, in *News Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Nicholas Brownlees (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), pp. 127–48.

⁷⁰ WYAS, WYL 1352/C4/1/18: ‘Letters from Francis Faulding to Sabine Winn’; Gottmann, *Global Trade, Smuggling, and the Making of Economic Liberalism: Asian Textiles in France 1680-1760*.

⁷¹ Kirsty Carpenter, *Refugees of French Revolution: French Emigres in London, 1789-1802* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), p. 1.

⁷² Chrisman-Campbell, *Fashion Victims*, p. 293.

frequently employed in the dressmaking and millinery trades, although as the war dragged on and sympathy wavered, suspicion was increasingly felt by those fearing they may be spies.⁷³ The *Morning Post* of 22nd January 1799 complained that ‘Some Ladies of fashion now Employ *French Emigrants* in making their dresses, without considering that they thereby throw their own country women out of employment’.⁷⁴

The continued tension did not prevent many *émigrés* finding employment in straw hat making or embroidering muslins for gowns.⁷⁵ The *Repository of Arts* even included samples of the *émigrés*’ work, informing the reader that one particular fabric, a Persian kerseymere, was ‘worked in tambour by a society of *unfortunate, but industrious French emigrants*, residing in the west of England’.⁷⁶ The italicised emphasis of the plight and origin of the manufacturers of this fabric encouraged readers to consume goods which were simultaneously fashionable, and which supported the national economy. The work of these French emigrants would still maintain the cache of French fashionability, whilst supporting the national economy of their new home in England. A generation earlier, the Anti-Gallican Association had sought to ‘discourage the introduction of French modes and oppose the importance of French commodities’ partly in order to promote and preserve the prosperity of the British economy.⁷⁷ However, now that desirable French fashions were available to a British market as a domestically produced product, they no longer necessarily threatened, but instead supported the national economy.

⁷³ Rosena Davison, ‘Friend or Foe?: French Émigrés Discover Britain’, in *British-French Exchanges in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Kathleen Hardesty Doig and Dorothy Medlin (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp. 131–48.

⁷⁴ *Morning Post*, 22 January 1799.

⁷⁵ Carpenter, *Refugees of French Revolution*, p. 69.

⁷⁶ Rudolph Ackermann, *The Repository of Arts*, (London: Rudolph Ackermann, 1811), 6, p. 362.

⁷⁷ Berg, ‘New Commodities, Luxuries, and Their Consumers’, p. 77.

Rudolph Ackermann's *Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions, and Politics* epitomises the new position of the female consumer of dress in the early years of the nineteenth century as an economically and nationally important figure. The *Repository* not only foregrounds the female consumer as a core component of the magazine's readership, but also identifies and plays off the marriage between the consumer and the British patriot. Rudolph Ackermann, the publisher and editor of the *Repository*, was an Anglo-German book-seller, inventor, and businessman. Aside from his printing business, which he set up on the Strand from the 1790s, he also patented a method for rendering cloth waterproof in 1801. His entrepreneurship shines through in the *Repository*, which he launched in 1809, and through which he successfully tapped into many of the preoccupations and characteristics of polite London culture. The title, typically long and descriptive, foregrounds commerce, manufactures, and fashions, along with the more traditional arts and literature, as the key features of this publication. Unlike her predecessors, this magazine was intended not only for personal improvement and entertainment, but also acted as a proponent of the country's national economic growth through trade and industry.⁷⁸

From the first issue of the *Repository of Arts* in 1809, Ackermann included a woodcut surrounding 'patterns of British manufacture' (Figure 7.16). These 'patterns' were samples of fabrics and ribbons, accompanied by descriptions of the items, and directions regarding where they might be acquired. In itself, this was a comparatively innovative inclusion, at least amongst British periodical publications. Through making the materiality of fabrics the core focus of these pages, Ackermann recognised how

⁷⁸ Batchelor, 'Fashion and Frugality'.

important being able to haptically and visually examine fabrics was to the female consumer.⁷⁹ Their material literacy, increasingly developed through childhood, was acknowledged and utilised as a means of marketing, alongside advocating the novelty and fashionability of the fabrics offered.

It was broadly accepted that commerce ‘was the engine which drove a state’s power and wealth’, and that manufacture and trade became inextricably linked with national identity in early-nineteenth-century Britain.⁸⁰ The *Repository* proudly stated that the patterns included were always of British manufacture. Furthermore, the allegorical woodcuts which surrounded the patterns drove home this link between patriotism and the consumer, instilling a connection between the good of the country, and the material goods it produced, in the minds of the periodical’s readership. The woodcuts that appeared came in two forms, which were used interchangeably. The first (Figure 7.16) again uses the patriotic figure of Britannia at its forefront, where she sits with Neptune, father of Albion, and mythological God of the seas which surrounded and protected the nation, representing Britain’s thalassocracy and naval dominance. The symbols of Britannia proudly and unambiguously surround the fabric samples, drawing unmistakable associations between consumer goods, and patriotic support of the nation.

⁷⁹ Smith, ‘Sensing Design and Workmanship’, p. 4.

⁸⁰ Colley, *Britons*, pp. 64-72.



Figure 7.16. Patterns of British Manufacture. Published in *Repository of Arts*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1809.

In the second allegorical woodcut (Figure 7.17), these patriotic messages were extended through the use of iconography linked even more closely with trade and empire. Dominating the image, royal patronage was displayed in the regal crown and Prince of Wales plumes at the top and bottom of the image. These symbols are flanked by the masts of a trading ship: a clear reference to trade and empire. Reigning over the woodcut, at the centre of the image, is a bust of Britannia surrounded by classical accoutrements and references to the wider arts. To the right, a girl works industriously at her loom in an idealised image of manufacture, undoubtedly a reference to Penelope, wife of Odysseus, who was often represented as a weaver. To the left are displayed books and masks, referencing learning and the arts.

Ackermann's *Repository* was part of a longer narrative of print being used to disseminate ideas about fashion across the country with speed, dating back to at least the 1750s.⁸¹ The question of geographical scope and reach of fashionable objects and goods, articulated throughout the century in relation to the quasi-social networks of information and exchange provided in magazines, was a key issue in forming a recognisable, if not uniform, British consumer in a newly unified state.⁸² Ackermann prefaced his introduction of this innovative marketing method to his periodical publication as follows:

Patterns afford the manufacturer an opportunity of circulating a new article more extensively in one day, than can be done by sending a dozen riders with it through the country. It will likewise afford persons at a distance from the metropolis the means of examining and estimating the merit of the fabric, and

⁸¹ Batchelor, 'Fashion and Frugality', p. 4.

⁸² *The Lady's Magazine* (London: George Robinson, 1773), p. 199.

of being made acquainted with the tradesman from whom it may be purchased.⁸³



Figure 7.17. Patterns of British Manufacture. Published in *Repository of Arts*, vol. 9, no. 51, 1813.

⁸³ Rudolph Ackermann, *The Repository of Arts*, (London: Rudolph Ackermann, 1809), vol. 1, p. 58.

This London-centric approach to fashion consumption – dominated by an urban elite of retailers and merchants – further enabled the creation of analogous national consumer. Ackermann's focus was 'on the social and cultural institutions of London, the theatres, the shops, and the markets; the things that made the city an exciting and interesting place'.⁸⁴ In essence, it was a microcosmic representation of the values and preoccupations of the city, and its cultured and polite inhabitants, and in turn the nation as viewed and shaped by the state. In the publication's own words, it intended to be 'useful and polite', and to appeal to the affluent middling sort.⁸⁵ The consumption of fashion was one element of this broader urban lifestyle, which also included discussion of politics, medical and naval reports, and information about fashionable furniture. This rounded, polite, urban populace was the epitome of the idealised British public, and was the crucible for the patriotic consumer.

7.4 Conclusion

The latter half of the eighteenth century saw the place of the British consumer on the international and national stage metamorphose from that of a poor imitator of French elegance, to a politically significant patriotic consumer. This dilution and renegotiation of the Anglo-French commercial and sartorial dynamic contributed to the generation of a reinvigorated patriotism brought on by foreign policy, revolution, and war. The rhetoric of difference, which was so consistently used throughout the century, bred a new, nationally confident breed of consumer, amongst whom

⁸⁴ Ann Bermingham, *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art* (London: Paul Mellon, 2000), p. 135.

⁸⁵ Ackermann, *The Repository of Arts*, 1809, 1, p. 1.

publications like Ackermann's *Repository* found its readership. Rallied by the economic strength of its mercantile urban elite, in contrast to the failing court culture of France, and an increasingly successful manufacturing economy, the patriotic, conscientious consumer that would dominate the nineteenth century had taken shape.

CONCLUSION

This thesis began on the premise that the consumer was not an organic product of commoditisation, but was in fact cultivated and trained in order to formulate an individual and national consumer character. This cultivation, although by no means unique to the period, was amplified by the changing material culture of the eighteenth century.¹ Yet the extensive literature on consumption and commoditisation, which has emerged over recent decades, has not generally considered the figure of the consumer independently from the act of consumption.² Indeed, some historians have argued that the figure of the consumer did not emerge until the consumer movements of the nineteenth century.³ This thesis has asserted an alternative narrative, in which the consumer emerges undiluted from dominant narratives surrounding luxury, gender and retail. This emergent consumer character was deeply embedded in the contemporary political economy, in popular culture, and in the making of a national identity. Furthermore, explicit emphasis was placed upon moulding and shaping this figure into a 'productive' consumer figure; not only through childhood education, but throughout a person's lifecycle.

My thesis has focused on the middling rank female consumer of dress as a way to tackle the figure of the consumer. First and foremost, it was the trope of the frivolous female consumer of luxury dress which dominated negative portrayals of the consumer, both in contemporary literature, and in scholarly work.⁴ This thesis has dismantled this obscuring stereotype, and consequently unveiled an evolving public

¹ Stobart and Blondé, *Selling Textiles*, p. 1.

² This literature was discussed in depth in the introduction and in chapter one.

³ Trentmann, *The Making of the Consumer*, pp. 4-9.

⁴ Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*, p. 2.

image of the consumer, characterised by an increased understanding of consumer skill and practice. Furthermore, the relatively unique producer-consumer dynamic, integral to the making and consumption of dress, has allowed us to disentangle the consumer from the constricting bounds of retail history. In broadening our outlook in this way, this thesis has demonstrated the importance of production skill, craft, and making to the consumer of dress, as was demonstrated through chapters three, four, and six.

This thesis has utilised the female consumer of dress as a vehicle through which to explore how the consumer figure developed, and what key skills, knowledge, and training were necessary in order to fashion a positive consumer character. Overall, there have been three key areas of knowledge to which this thesis has made a contribution: the culture of the consumer; the cultivation and training of the figure of the consumer throughout the lifecycle; and production and the material life of the consumer.

The consumer as represented in contemporary culture – from political economy to graphic satire – was shown to have undergone a clear evolution in the first section of this thesis. In chapter one, I demonstrated that the ideological shift from mercantilism to free trade aligned with an increasing recognition of the importance of the consumer as a key economic player.⁵ That luxury goods could enrich, rather than corrupt, their consumers was also demonstrated to have been key in enabling the emergence of the consumer as a positive economic and social force.⁶ The agency and financial control possessed by this emergent consumer character was also considered in relation to the system of credit, highlighting the importance of economic literacy as a key trait of the ‘productive’ consumer.

⁵ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 5; Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*, p. 1.

⁶ Berry, *The Idea of Luxury*, p. 138.

Towards the close of the century, the productive female consumer became also intertwined with the emerging idea of the patriotic consumer. Set in opposition to her French counterpart, the British female patriotic consumer utilised the economic and social power, which was increasingly recognised to be held by the consumer, for the nation's gain. As considered in chapters one and seven, this was achieved both through the cultivation of a national aesthetic in dress, which was represented in stark contrast to the traditionally fashionable French wares, and through the links between these new English styles with the domestic textile industry. Buying domestically produced goods became a virtue espoused in the periodical press, as was shown through Ackermann's *Repository*, and reiterated both at court and in parliament.

The evolution of the consumer figure in contemporary literary and visual culture was traced in chapter two, in which the focus on the female consumer of dress was sharpened. This chapter broke down and critically engaged with the stereotypical, negative consumer type which dominated contemporary literature. Paired with literature on luxury, which termed female consumption of luxury goods as the 'female vice', the evolution of the trope of the over- or under-consumption of the female consumer of dress revealed a nuanced evolution of the figure as the century progressed.⁷ The figure of the frivolous female who passed from shop to shop and purchased nothing evolved into skilled consumer character with a defined browsing process, which was enacted in order to resist the charms of greedy or deceitful retailers, and in order to obtain the most suitable goods at the best price.

The cultivation of this emerging consumer figure was demonstrated to have been key to the creation and articulation of new values and practices adopted by the

⁷ Berg and Eger, *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 163.

female consumer of dress. This process of learning how to be a consumer throughout the lifecycle has been a core theme in this thesis. The economic literacy of girls gained recognition as an important part of childhood education from the mid-century, coinciding with the rise of the pocket book, as was discussed in chapter three. The economic responsibility espoused in pocket books and conduct literature enjoyed mixed success, however the importance and contents of these accounts certainly shifted as these girls turned to women. The shifting priorities of the female consumer of dress were highlighted in chapters four and five in which the lifecycle was used as an exploratory framework. The evolving priorities of the consumer of dress as she shifted from unmarried lady, to wife and mother, and finally to old age and widowhood reveal a complex picture of the consumer, unavailable in histories of retail. Similarly, the detailed examination of Barbara Johnson's consumption in chapter five, drawing together her Album with the pedagogical materials which shaped her as a child, and her letters as an adult, painted a similarly nuanced lifecycle for the unmarried spinster.

The significance of material culture in considering the figure of the consumer has also been demonstrated in this thesis. The materiality of the goods purchased allow us to examine the fluid relationship between the consumer and the producer. This has been achieved both through Barbara Johnson's Album, and through highlighting the importance of material literacy, and production skills and knowledge, to the figure of the consumer. The integration of garments, from the dolls clothing made in childhood in chapter three, through to the reading of alterations and recycling of garments in chapter four, and the examination of embroidery patterns in chapter six, have painted a picture of the rich material life of the consumer, which would be impossible to articulate using archival sources alone.

A key result of a material culture approach has been the disentanglement of the consumer from the act of purchasing. Through demonstrating the hybrid nature of the producer-consumer in relation to the making of bespoke and homemade clothing, this thesis has rejected divisions between these two roles. Instead, it has highlighted the importance of honing the material literacy of the consumer – both in order to haptically and visually assess fabrics, ribbons, and laces, and in order to judge workmanship, and perform production themselves. Consumers not only purchased items in shops, they also engaged in producing fashionable dress for their own consumption at home. Moreover, middling women often engaged with altering, remaking, and recycling their existing garments. To be a consumer was not only about the economic act of purchasing, but also about the material making and use of goods.

Overall, this thesis represents the first study to focus on the evolution of the figure of the middling-rank female consumer in eighteenth-century England. It tells the story of a consumer character who rose from a satirised trope to a key economic and social player, both at home and on the international stage. The importance of this consumer character was recognised and cultivated from childhood, and this training was maintained and evolved throughout a woman's lifecycle. Focussing on the dual consumer traits of economic and material literacy, the consumer was trained to be both financially capable, and knowledgeable about production and making. These women, who were economically capable, fashionably informed, and skilled producers, were undoubtedly trained to consume.

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