3. FASHION’S FAVOURITE
The Social Politics of Cotton and the Democratization of Style, c.1600-1820

Cotton is uniquely enmeshed in the development of popular fashions. Indian cottons arrived in Europe after 1500 at a time of commercial expansion and social volatilities. Hierarchies of dress were being undermined through the spread of new luxuries; social strata were becoming more complicated and more porous as those with newly won wealth challenged placeholders with inherited positions, a contest which took material as well as political forms. Cotton was a fibre untrammelled by associations with tradition, unfettered with allusions to court dress – with little history of use in most of Europe, cotton represented both opportunity and threat. This is a tremendously mutable fibre that can be spun, woven and finished to produce a myriad of weights, textures and prices, suitable for buyers from any rank and attractive to virtually all communities. It was this very flexibility that antagonized critics of popular fashion, as cotton upended the sumptuary hierarchy. Cotton disrupted the established order of textiles and complicated the visual vocabulary of dress, by introducing new options in the marketplace. It undercut sumptuary regulation, formal and informal, and in so doing it advanced the spread of fashion in the Western world. Later, as the first industrialized commodity, cottons of every sort were among the most ubiquitous ready-made clothes, defining and redefining the meanings of democratic dress. My focus in this chapter is largely on England. To fully assess the impact of cottons, I will look first at the early legal regulations shaping consumption, followed by an assessment of the social politics of wearing wool and the status of the iconic wool trade. Fashion politics evolved within this milieu and cotton had a unique role in its development. This fibre reconfigured fashionable dress in the Western world.
REGULATION AND REACTION

Individual choice in dress is a modern concept. Indeed, for centuries men, women and children, living and dead, were legally constrained in what they could wear and how they wore their clothes. Sir Francis Bacon wrote on many issues pertaining to the proper functioning of early modern England, including means for the Repressing of Waste and Excess by Sumptuary Laws. In that era it was widely accepted that legislation was needed on issues of moral and practical concern such as the purchase of food, apparel and domestic furnishings, commodities representing the greatest outlay for most families. Equally these goods signalled rank and status. Rules for approved expenditures on foods, fabrics or other goods, were widespread throughout Europe, as well as in urbanized Asian societies. In Europe, governments aimed to contain two evils: first, the excessive purchase of foreign imports; second, the blurring of social boundaries and inversion of hierarchy. The budgeting habits of citizens concerned governments, like that of England, which disliked the prospect of gold flowing out of the kingdom to pay for superfluous luxuries like combs and velvet hats from France or neckerchiefs and silk gloves imported through the Low Countries. Indeed, in 1563 official import statistics were assembled on the order of Lord Burghley, Secretary of State and later Treasurer to Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603). The aim was to uncover the full range of imports and to categorize the useful and the inessential, and in the long term encourage English substitutions for these ‘superfluous’ foreign items. In the meantime, legislative restraints would curb spendthrifts. Consumption was policed through summptuary statutes, proclamations and moral injunctions, a combination of pressures deployed from the fourteenth century onwards. In some cases these rules persisted into the nineteenth century. In most urbanized commercial societies, whether in early modern China, Japan, the Ottoman Empire or Europe, governments tried to contain the use of key commodities. Invariably, more people wanted to own these goods than were approved.

Men were the focus of a 1510 Tudor enactment that forbade the wearing of blue or crimson velvet by men below the rank of knights of the garter. English legislation intensified in the reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1608). In the year following her succession, Elizabeth added another proclamation charging magistrates with enforcing summptuary restrictions. This was followed by instructions from the Privy Council to London authorities, commanding them to establish parish surveillance teams to watch for dress infractions among passers-by. Teams were to patrol the streets of the capital keeping a sharp lookout for audacious outfits on plebeian bodies. In 1560, the mayor of London also prodded his aldermen to ‘give a diligent eye’ to the dress of residents in their wards. Eventually, several prominent defaulters were brought before the Star Chamber for punishment. At the same time, provincial authorities were urged to implement regulations.

For the government, deviant patterns of dress were a social danger. The introduction of ‘watchers’ to spot infractions on the streets of London illustrates the determination of authorities to bring offenders to book. Given the freewheeling consumer cultures in many regions of the world today, it may seem extraordinary that so much effort was expended to enforce public conduct. It is useful to recall the many instances in the twentieth century when central governments dictated personal expenditures and prescribed forms of dress. However, the early modern period had one overriding characteristic that distinguishes it from our time—scarcity. This was an era of relative scarcity for all common goods. This was what Thomas Lucy, the extraordinary owner of the Holkham estates in Norfolk, observed: “Apples and pears, melons, peaches and apricots are all to be seen in great plenty. The chambers of the homes of the rich and free are filled with fresh fruits and flowers. The gardens are full of them.”

Negley Hay is an English historian born to the people of the rural north of England. He was a prominent figure in the early modern period, known for his contributions to the study of political theory and the history of dress. His works have been influential in shaping modern understanding of the relationship between dress and politics. Hay's emphasis on the role of dress in shaping society and identity has contributed to a broader understanding of how fashion and dress can be used as a tool for political expression and social control. His research has also shed light on the ways in which dress codes have been used to reflect and reinforce social hierarchies and to enforce the norms of the gentlemanly establishment. Hay's insights into the relationship between dress and power have been widely cited in the study of early modern English history, and his work continues to be a valuable resource for scholars exploring the intersection of fashion and politics in this period.
for all common folk. Thus both political and social hierarchies were manifested through material difference and unsanctioned indulgence signalled a potentially subversive disorder. As Susan Vincent observes: ‘Apparel was important business’. Joan Thirsk further illustrates this point, outlining the extraordinary measures taken to check a passion for Italian-style hose showcasing the nether regions of men’s bodies. Hose could be constructed either in two separate pieces attached together, or seamed at the crotch combining leg-covering and upper hose in one garment – trunk hose and melon hose were among the fashionable Renaissance designs. The upper segment, precursor to breeches, was voluminously padded and covered the lower torso, ending mid-thigh. How better to show off one’s legs than in striped, cocked or patterned silk hose in the Italian style, emerging from a voluminous pair of trunk hose? Thirsk recounts that: ‘A remarkable system of surveillance was called into being in 1566, involving the stationing of four “sad and discreet” persons at the gates of the City of London from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. daily, watching for people who might be wearing prohibited styles of hose.’ The dimensions of these leg coverings, as well as the fabric and its colour, were the points at issue. Tailors and hosiers were enjoined to make hose ‘to lye just into their legges, as in ancient tyme was accurstomes’ – with no additional stuffing of any sort about the hips. Authorities claimed this fashion was driving some ‘to destruction’. A servant, Richard Walwyn, was arrested about this time for disordering himself through London’s streets in ‘a very monstrous and outrageous greete payre of hose’ and was detained until he could dress himself in ‘a decent and lawful fayon’. A merchant tailor wearing the proscribed garment suffered a more painful humiliation, being led through the streets to his home, where the stuffing in the hose was publicly removed and the outer fabric left to flap against his thighs. Elsewhere, Oxford and Cambridge students remained defiant in their choice of attire and disregarded all attempts at their reform.

Negley Harte asserts that sumptuary law was the ‘identifying characteristic’ of the age. Those born to the purple, members of the nobility, should dress the part and no others should presume: plebeians should not wear silk or cloth of gold, they should not wear hose that showed off their legs or framed genitalia in immoral ways. They should dress in a modest manner or face the consequences. Silks of virtually all types were the focus of intense bouts of legislation. Silk was the first luxurious Asian import and as a result sparked the greatest official reaction. However, in time, bans on the general wearing of silk were rescinded in one jurisdiction after another as regional silk industries developed in Europe. This change was slow to arrive in England. The 1530s English enactment, for example, permitted those of middle rank to wear silk ribbons, although other restrictions remained in place. Dress remained a flashpoint. In 1585, a Lancashire magistrate issued a presentment against the jurymen who arrived for court duties, charging all of them with infractions of sumptuary laws. Their crime was to wear silk facings in their hats, an indulgence forbidden their social class. Nonetheless, all formal sumptuary legislation was repealed in England in 1604. That startling turn was unique in Europe, but reflected tensions between Parliament and the monarch on matters of privilege, rather than a renunciation of the sumptuary ethos. Repeated efforts were made to revive such legislation, with no results. However, neither English moral nor political theorists subscribed to unfettered consumer choice and sumptuary laws remained close to the hearts of many legislators, if not on the books.
Support for dress hierarchies remained a foundational belief in many quarters. Edward Chamberlayne, writer, member of the gentry and occasional diplomat, reflected this perspective in his 1667 publication, insisting that ‘According to the wisdom of our Ancestors, and the custom of the most civilized Nations, some sumptuary Laws may be made, whereby the great Excess, especially in the inferior sort of English, may be restrained, and most Degrees and Orders may be discerned by their Habit or Port, as now in the Universities and amongst the Clergy is partly done.’ Profound philosophical and political positions were at issue. Should men and women be able to dress as they pleased, as they were able, without interference from the state? Or, should luxuries be available only to those of inherited position? Sumptuary legislation continued to be debated even as the social reformation of fashion took place on city streets. Jeremy Collier made ‘A Moral Essay Concerning Cloaths’ the subject of a late seventeenth-century dialogue. One of the disputation insisted on the essential merit of rank, noting that: ‘A Gentleman’s Mien and Behaviour is sufficient to discover him, without any great dependence upon Shopes and Tailors.’ The author reassured readers that even without legal injunctions the good taste intrinsic to the elites would maintain a barrier against encroaching social classes: ‘[Fine] Cloaths don’t suppose a Man considerable, so neither can they make him so.’ The politics of clothing distilled profound moral and political debates.

Merchants and professionals were the most troublesome, as in many instances their material ambitions exceeded their birth; likewise they might be far wealthier than many nobles. City dwellers were another problematic group, living within a more ambiguous social setting. People from different backgrounds rubbed together and the complex materials milieu polished ambitions as people jostled for position. This produced what contemporaries called ‘the confusion of degrees of all estates’. Inconstancy, ambition, innovation and aspiration were derided and despised by champions of custom and hierarchy. Defenders of the status quo skirmished to contain those pushing against restraints. However, they failed to quash the effects of disruptive fashion among the commonality.

Indian cottons entered a complex textile ecology in northern Europe. Systems of knowledge, of production, of sale and use were long established and dominated by the two major fibres in Europe: flax and wool. Silk imports had disrupted these twin elements over the previous centuries, as imports of Asian silks were followed by the genesis of silk industries in Italy, France and elsewhere in Europe. This fibre trilogy was then confronted by a fourth, further disturbing patterns of manufacture. The industrial ramifications are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. In the main, cottons were a largely alien import into northern Europe. As quantities of imports grew, cotton unsettled the wool trade, which was at the foundation of England’s manufacturing, and international trade. The bolts and bales of heavy, warm English cloth comprised the single most important export in the late 1500s. By 1600 this staple was under pressure as a result of a variety of forces outside its control. From the 1570s, the port of Antwerp – once ‘the warehouse of all Christendome’ – was embroiled in war between Spain and the defiant Netherlands Republic. Antwerp had previously sold almost all the cloth England made. Now Dutch privateers at the mouth of the river Scheldt were strangle Antwerp and confounding the English merchants. At the same time, the wider preference in Europe was shifting to lighter fabrics – thinner worsted or mixed-fibre goods known as the New Draperies. England benefited from the chaos wrought by the religious wars in northern Europe, as this trade flourished with the wool industry, capitalizing on the opportunity to export wool to regions where silk was the dominant fibre. Cotton was a latecomer in the anti-fashion in the United States, which spread its influence through the customs duties and trade restrictions of the eighteenth century.
Europe, as this led to the settlement of refugees in England able to produce New Draperies, and this trade flourished. But the changing commercial forces unsettled established certainties for the wool industry. Cotton imports added to this disruptive/creative process. Thus, there is no better way to understand the realpolitik of early modern textile and fashion politics than by juxtaposing cotton with wool. In this long transitional period, wool epitomized hierarchy, tradition and even anti-fashion in unique ways, even as it struggled to find its fashion footing. Cotton is best assessed through the cultural relations and periodic intense political antagonisms with wool.

CULTURAL AUTHORITY, THE WEARING OF WOOL AND THE ADVENT OF THE COTTON ERA

The fleece was a commanding symbol of cultural authority, with unequalled ties to convention, hierarchy and skill. Emblematic of European dynasties and countless artisanal guilds, the fleece also represented wealth, industry and commerce to generations of Europeans from all social ranks. Wool epitomized order and its fabrics were employed in the habit and symbolism of European life.\(^{29}\) Competition among wool-producing regions boiled up periodically – the turmoil surrounding the seventeenth-century New Draperies is a case in point.\(^{30}\) But whether woollens or worsteds, wool was a foundational industry. Generations of men and women laboured in the production of these cloths and, like the landowner dependent on the wool clip for wealth, or the merchants who amassed wealth through trade, they celebrated and defended their connections to the wool staple. This fibre carried extraordinarily rich associations of custom and social allegiance.

Tradition was a powerful factor in the marketing of wool. During the late Elizabethan debates on sumptuary issues, the English moral critic Phillip Stubbes honoured the honest men of his generation who cleaved to wool in the face of tempting alternatives. In his view, wool had everything to recommend it.\(^{31}\) However, the established connection between wool and tradition now fell within more anarchic circumstances. Fashion’s mounting influence among the elites, the urban middle classes, and even young artisans or servants, resulted in fads for new commodities, for goods capable of a more individual style. This phenomenon embodied what Gilles Lipovetsky calls the ‘instability of appearance’,\(^{32}\) reflecting individualism, group or social markers articulated through dress. Despite periodic crises in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, a growing part of the population could now afford to purchase a wider array of goods. Moreover, articles now came in a growing variety of qualities and prices.\(^{33}\) Joan Thirsk comments on the ‘speed with which the new-style consumer goods penetrated the length and breadth of the kingdom’.\(^{34}\) England was among the vanguard of social change sweeping north-west Europe. However, these innovations antagonized those favouring sumptuary restraint. The power of tradition and fashion collided.

Despite the repeal of sumptuary law in 1604, wools of various sorts continued to be prescribed for much of the population. Wool dominated sartorial discourse.\(^{35}\) Englishness was still epitomized by woollen fabrics, the product of English sheep and domestic industry, solemnized and celebrated by the Woolpack in the House of Lords (Figure 3.1). Wool was autarchic, a fibre rising from local soil and entwined in its culture and economy. Lipovetsky contrasts the temporality of fashion
with concepts underlying customary dress as a ‘repetition of models inherited from the past, a seamless conservatism in modes of being and appearing’. Thus, the common ‘honest kersie’ was perceived as the antithesis of foreign cloth. Phillip Stubbes reflected on earlier times when men ‘wore clothed in black or white Friese coats’ and he concluded that men were now being ‘transnatur’d through the wearing of new garb. Stubbes insisted that: ‘Men were stronger, healthfuller, fairer complexioned, longer lived and finally, ten times harder than we be now’ when wearing English wool. The fibre itself infused their bodies with strength and their outer habit was the source of this potency. In contrast, those men swathed in laced shirts and velvet cloaks were a ‘nice and womanish kind of people’. The valorous claims of wool resounded.

The culture of dress was imbued with powerful social and cultural significance. Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass argue for ‘the animatedness of clothes, their ability to “pick up” subjects, to mould and shape them both physically and socially, to constitute subjects through their power as material mediations’. Renaissance elites of this period. On the other celebrative investiture, the body or religious ceremony was identifiable, as were those in office. Wool robed the sessions court and coloured wool Hospital in London  
Perspectives through the ages.

Tiers of cloth and public spectacle in London’s East End garmented and all kinds of children from nobility followed by servants in red wool tabards such as these. Wool. Daily cloth choice for all who had lives things to be an everyday life. The calm this few was chosen by the cloth of coats ‘faced with so clean a style’.

Wool was national utilitarian cloth. Is the Floue the claim so clear national? Periods were external, occasions the London aldermen in England, the teetotum plan was a fact of a national vulnerability
as material memories’. 30 Specific vestments instilled wearers with a distinctive authority in the Renaissance era. In this respect, it is important to recognize the intersecting clothing practices of this period. One garb might reify position, place and custom reinforcing traditions of hierarchy and the other celebrate innovation and self-fashioning in ways antithetical to tradition. Ceremonies of investiture, with distinct casts of players, filled the seasonal calendar, whether civic, trade, military or religious events. Robes embodied position. It was widely accepted that office holders should be identifiable, as should those in the professions or in service to monarch, prince or nobleman. For those in office, when attending meetings, the day and event dictated the colour and form of the wool robes worn: for instance, codified regulations dictated that on the first day of the quarter sessions court in midsummer, the Lord Mayor and sheriffs of the City of London wore violet-coloured wool cloth robes and scarlet cloaks; while at the election of the governors of Christ’s Hospital in London, both the Lord Mayor and aldermen wore black robes only. These regulations persisted through the 1700s.

Tiers of coloured wool coats, hoods and sashes, worn by men and women, marked routine public spectacles. In 1661, the Dutch visitor William Schellinks described the Lord Mayor of London’s Easter procession and illustrated how easily he could measure social standing through wool garments. ‘First’, records Schellinks, ‘came all the apprentices . . . shoemakers, weavers, tailors and all kinds of crafts dressed in blue with grey hoods, each with their master, walking in pairs’. Children from Christ’s Hospital were ‘all dressed in blue coats and yellow undergowns’, to be followed by surgeons wearing green with white sashes. The Lord Mayor came last, decked out in a red wool tabard, surrounded by aldermen and sheriffs similarly dressed in red wool. 40 Processions such as these punctuated public life, where the practice of sumptuary distinction was manifested in wool. Daily observances as well as grander rituals required this cloth. 41 Edward Chamberlayne was one of many members of the elite who affirmed this belief. Chamberlayne was a confirmed Royalist who had lived outside the country during the mid-century Interregnum. Popular enthusiasm were things to be avoided, in the view of men like Chamberlayne, who feared that the arrangements of everyday life were becoming too variable and too subject to whims. Wool was the prescription to calm this fever. Livery was a case in point. Blue cloth was long associated with servants’ dress, and was chosen by the squire Nicholas Blundell in 1706 as part of his male servants’ livery: grey cloth coats ‘faced with blue serge [and] blue serge waistcoats’. 42

Wool was allied with orthodox values, with an investment in proper training and habits, its national utility uniting the moral allegiance of maker and wearer. ‘Wool’, declared another writer, ‘is the Flower and Strength, the Revenue and Blood of England’. 43 What other commodity could claim so clear an affiliation not just with commerce, but also with the bodily essence of the English nation? Periodic alarms arose when the wool trade was endangered. In some instances these were external threats, such as the wars in northern Europe that rolled into the 1600s. On other occasions the disruptions had internal causes, such as the Cockayne Plan. An immensely wealthy London alderman, Sir William Cockayne, proposed the scheme in 1615 to increase employment in England, dyeing and finishing English wool cloth locally rather than in the Low Countries. The plan was a failure and the resulting crisis shook the foundations of the English economy. 44 England’s vulnerability through its dependence on the wool trade was wholly apparent. Competitive industries
in Italy, France and Spain, whose textiles flowed into England, further dismayed legislators. This was the context in which the East India Company launched its first voyage to the East Indies in 1601, at a time of ardent debates about nationalism and dress, social status and fashion.

THE EARLY CALICO TRADE IN ENGLAND AND NORTH-WEST EUROPE: INTRODUCTION AND INNOVATION

Cotton has a unique role in the development of popular fashions. Cotton textiles were not embarrassed by pre-existing expectations about use and wear – for this cloth was not a component of traditional dress practice. Neither was it constrained by long-standing sumptuary associations with luxury, as with silk. It was an afterthought in the impetus to Eurasian trade. Yet, almost immediately, cottons began to change local dress habits in parts of Europe, an impact that rippled from region to region. Cotton was used in ways comparable to some linens and similar to varieties of silks, fustians and light woollen. It was chameleon-like in its capacity to take on roles previously served by other textiles. Moreover, the varieties and prices of Indian fabrics enabled innovations in style and innovations among consumers.

The early calico trade was characterized by a measured process of interaction and accommodation. Tastes in Europe changed further as familiarity with this product grew. I have called this the domestication of an exotic, whereby a once rare commodity gradually became an accepted part of the material world. Naturally, this history varied by region. Lisbon led the field, as discussed in Chapter 2, with numerous shops specializing in Indian textiles by the mid-1500s. In northern Europe, the diffusion of Indian textiles took a slower pace. Indian quilts were among the early fashionable goods, the history of which is explored in Chapter 5. The focus in this chapter is on clothing. Examples of calico appear among the extensive wardrobe of Henry VIII, in particular a calico shirt embroidered with silk. A generation later, his daughter Queen Elizabeth acquire a kirtle of whit Callacowe bounde with riben’ in 1594. In the interim, calicões arrived in small quantities in Southampton and other communities in proximity to ports. Though still relatively scarce in the mid-1500s, these foreign imports arrived more routinely as the century ended. Both like and unlike familiar linen fabrics, calicões hovered between existing categories of cloth. Through its intrinsic qualities and the associations it garnered, these Indian fabrics inevitably became embroiled in the social politics of fashion. This would be its liability and its strength.

The sale of cheap Indian cottons to ordinary folk is more difficult to discern than the fads for calicoes among courtiers and their ladies. However, we know that ‘callacow’ was being peddled on London streets in the 1590s. Windfall cargoes of Indian goods also made a splash in English markets as when a great Portuguese ship, cumbered with Indian merchandise, was seized in 1592 – the unification of the Portuguese and Spanish crowns in 1580 made Portuguese vessels fair game for Protestant privateers. Pepper flooded the market as the cargo was sold off, but there were also plenty of textiles in the hold of this craft, as by this period the value of Portuguese textile imports from India far exceeded that of any other commodity. For example, in 1593, textiles comprised over 80 per cent of the value of cargoes in the two carracks that arrived safely in Lisbon, Portugal continued to the...
continued to be one of the major importers of Indian fabrics well into the 1600s, despite the arrival in Asia of competing English and Dutch traders. Early in the 1600s, even as the first voyage of the East India Company was under way, English privateers seized another Portuguese craft. This ship contained a dizzying wealth of products from green ginger, cloves and cinnamon to cotton quilts, cushions, leather ‘carpets’, calicoes and painted ‘pintadoes’. Auctions were arranged in London and we can imagine the buzz of activity surrounding the sale of this booty. Sir Fulke Greville, a prominent royal administrator, ‘was Thr’r for the sales’. These extended from the autumn of 1602 to the following January and Greville wrote to the Countess of Shrewsbury to see if she wanted anything at all, listing calicoes among several tempting items. The countess’s mother, Bess of Hardwick, had already evinced a liking for such items, so perhaps her eldest daughter shared this taste.33

Many of the Indian cottons arriving in England were plain white or dyed in the piece, similar in look to linens (with the exception that the Indian dyes were colour fast and improved with washing). Other items included checked and striped cottons in a range of colours and qualities, tie-dyed handkerchiefs (produced in lengths ready to cut and hem), large painted hangings or palampores, and silks of various sorts. Another distinctive part of the cargoes was embroidered, painted or printed cottons. These in particular carried exotic connotations in the motifs, in keeping with elite fascination with foreign rarities of all sorts. Thus it is not surprising that one of the masques arranged for the entertainment of Queen Anne in 1613 featured a figure bedecked in ‘a skin-coate [under which was a] … Green Calico set thicke with leaves and boughs’.34 The ‘leaves and boughs’ of his painted calico suit exemplified the vastant exoticism of this commodity. Calicoes were imported routinely by this date, enabling merchants to supply customers and allowing more shoppers to learn about these goods. Thomas Dekker included an observation on current fashions in his 1615 play The Honest Whore, when a linen draper served new male clients: ‘I can fit you Gentlemen with fine calicoes too for doubles, the only sweet fashion now, most delicate and courtly, a meek gentle calico’.35 Fashionable metropolitan men and women embraced this fabric, which became part of their wardrobes. English merchants were also sending supplies to overseas colonial markets, following the lead of Iberian colonizers who had shipped these goods to Caribbean and South American buyers for nearly a century. Thus, during the opening decades of the 1600s there was a steady expansion of cotton consumption. The English East India Company felt confident they could sell 12,500 pieces of Indian cloth in 1614 and ordered the same. By 1620, 100,000 pieces of cotton were shipped from trading factories in Gujarat, western India, to the Company’s London warehouses. Five years later, the total shipments of cotton cloth to England reached nearly a quarter of a million pieces – each piece comprising a dozen to several dozen yards in length.36

English buyers were very willing to adopt these new products. Nicholas Leate was an experienced overseas merchant and also an investor in the East India Company, and he was sure about potential sales in England, writing in 1619 that: ‘they are likely to be of great use here in the land, instead of linen’.37 Each new report brought further confirmation of the potential of this commodity in the English market. Another merchant testified to Company officials in 1622 about the £10-worth of calico he sent to be sold in smaller towns and rural districts in England. His provincial dealers requested £200-worth of cottons in the next consignment. When King James I enquired about the growing rate of Indian imports in 1623 he was advised that these were ‘very useful and vended
in England whereby the price of [foreign] Lawns, Cambricks and other linen cloths are brought down. During these decades, Indian cottons generally cost less than competing European linens, encouraging substitution and a widening consumption. By the 1620s, London's linen drapers and merchants wanted regular consignments and were ready to contract for large quantities. Both rich and poor could afford calicoes, as they came in many qualities and prices. We can get a measure of the material transformation under way in a guide for colonial settlers printed in 1634. The author listed 'Callicco stuffes' and 'blew Callicoe' among essential stock for would-be New England 'planters'. Thus, the East India Company felt justifiably confident about the future of cotton imports, with sales encompassing large parts of England, its new colonies, and extending also to Ireland.

The advance of the cotton trade during the early decades of the seventeenth century was disrupted in India and England. Famine in Gujarat during the 1630s scattered artisanal families and the Company was forced to open trading factories on the eastern Coromandel Coast to secure needed textiles, with resulting higher prices and decreased sales. In England, the 1640s and 1650s brought periods of civil war, a republican government and a new governmental interest in colonial trade. The shifting political terrain was a challenge for the East India Company. Amidst all these events, the competing Dutch East India Company remained a power to be reckoned with. But the account book of an anonymous English textile dealer illustrates the persistence of calico as a trade good throughout the years 1639 and 1640. Indian textiles are not the most numerous in this ledger, but 'callicoes' appear intermittently in considerable quantities, such as the 157 pieces bought in November 1640 for over £84, complementing the fifteen pieces previously noted for July of that year. Between 1649 and 1651 the new Commonwealth government was lobbied vigorously by a collection of merchants determined to get a share of the trade with Asia. The English Company lost its monopoly for a time in the 1650s and independent adventurers rushed to fill the void, with good results. The quantities of Indian textiles landed in England and re-exported to foreign markets was so vast that later commentators marvelled. William Petty, writing in the 1680s, believed that 'Our Merchants sold the Indian Commodities so low, that they furnished more parts of Europe than since we have done ... and ... this very much sunk the Actions of the Dutch East-India Company.' Indian cottons streamed into English and northern European markets in mid-century, even with interruptions, whether supplied legally by English merchants, or as a result of smuggling by English interlopers in India or illicit shipments from the Netherlands. An example survives of the sort of common printed cotton circulating at this time, used on this occasion by an English artisan to cover the bottom of an embroidered box. This cloth was coarsely woven and crudely printed, likely selling for pennies. The box, dated 1656, is housed in the Nordiska Museet, Stockholm and exemplifies the quality of goods available to ordinary shoppers (Plate 7). The same sorts of basic fabric could be used for many other clothing purposes. Indian cottons were noted in Chester in 1654 as part of a legal contest between two local guilds competing for the right to sell textiles in the Chester market, including calico. The English market was broad, not dependent on the tastes of earls and countesses, but enlivened by the purchases of industrious rural folk, urban labourers and middle-ranked families, who wanted to spend their extra money on new clothing and accessories. Cotton flourished in this setting.
...are brought from European linens, and Spanish draperies and onions. Both rich and poor get a measure of comfort. By the 1650s, the New England and Caribbean export of cotton would spread to England also to benefit a new market for images.

The early 17th century was one of great personal and national wealth. Instead of a small, land-based society, a vastly different market was created to supply the growing gentry and merchants. The market for imported textiles was now one of the most important commodities in England. The demand for these textiles was driven by the need for comfort in the warm climate, and the desire for luxury and status among the upper classes.

This summary of the early English trade in Indian cottons brings us to a turning point: 1660. This date marks the re-establishment of monarchical rule in England and the return of the Stuart monarch Charles II to the throne. It also marks an intensification of efforts by the East India Company to capitalize on their most profitable merchandise, Indian textiles. The Stuart king reinstated the Company monopoly (following an exchange of gifts). Indian cottons were now set to become a more prominent part of the material landscape. No longer a relative rarity, they were now the stuff of routine commerce and everyday wear.

**CALICO AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE FASHION MARKET IN ENGLAND**

The spring of 1660 witnessed the debarkation of Charles II to English soil. Samuel Pepys described an ‘infinite crowd of people and horsemen, citizens, and noblemen of all sorts’ at the landing in Dover and in Canterbury he recorded that: ‘The shouting and joy expressed by all is past imagination.’ 66 Pepys was one of the newly risen men of this age, an able and acquisitive naval administrator, with a deep interest in all sorts of fashions, particularly those that could improve his standing. In 1663 Pepys made a frank comment on the state of his wardrobe. Now a senior member of the naval administration, he resolved ‘to go a little handsomer than I have hitherto’, expending considerable sums on a velvet cloak, suits, periwigs (a newly introduced male fashion) and clothes for his wife. Although Pepys worried at the expense, he was convinced of his decision and compared his present modish self to the time ‘when, for want of [fashionable] clothes, I was forced to sneake like a beggar’. 67 Pepys rubbed shoulders with nobles and wealthy merchants as a matter of course – and on occasion with courtiers and members of the royal household. Thus his priorities were shaped by a powerful compulsion to present a good figure. Pepys’s preoccupations were common among generations of middle-ranked men whose numbers swelled the cities of Europe. Their tastes, material objectives and creative fashions signalled the wider societal transformations under way.

Some, like Neil McKendrick, have claimed that emulation was the driving force of fashion and McKendrick assigned this generative period to the eighteenth century. 68 Proximity certainly played a part in shifting material patterns of life. But hierarchical emulation is too blunt a force to explain this complex phenomenon. What Jan de Vries describes as ‘New Luxuries’ carried with them aspirational qualities that were far removed from those associated with the ‘Old Luxuries’ of aristocratic life. These new luxuries (or niceties) arose in greater abundance, in growing quantities, to be embraced and interpreted in a variety of settings; they were not singular rarities acquired to reinforce assigned hierarchical positions. 69 These new luxuries complicated and confounded social structures, as we have seen with the spread of Italian-style hose in late sixteenth-century London. Likewise the sentiments, ambitions and social norms of these new consuming groups differed (sometimes dramatically) from those of traditional elite consumers. Emulation alone does not account for the collective and individual patterns of material behaviour that arose in this era. 70 Indeed, Lorna Weatherill notes that the ‘consumption hierarchy was not the same as the social hierarchy’ in this period; although they were not entirely dissimilar, the distinctions were
significant. The material priorities emerging within the swelling middle classes, and even amidst the labouring classes, presaged social and political disruptions as old norms crumbled. Thus, while monarchs set styles for their acolytes, the participants in fashion included more non-elites than elites. Courtiers naturally devised their sartorial priorities, as they had an interest to be in fashion, but they were not the spring from which this new flood poured. Herbert Blumer described fashion as 'a continuing process of collective selection from among competing models . . . a reaching out for newer models which will answer to as yet indistinct and inarticulate newer tastes'. Blumer further remarked that 'the fashion mechanism is woven deeply into the texture of modern life'. Blumer's observations were based on mid-twentieth-century analysis. But, his remarks apply equally to the early modern period when the emergence of popular fashion reshaped the economy and society.

Samuel Pepys exemplifies these features. He was born in a Fleet Street home in London in 1633, the fifth child of a modestly prosperous tailor and a butcher's daughter. Through family connections Pepys secured a good education, completing his schooling at St Paul's, London, going next to Cambridge where he earned his degree. This gave him exceptional training and connections for future endeavours. But it did not provide him with an income. Pepys began his working life as secretary to Edward Montagu, Councillor of State to the regicide and Lord Protector of England, Oliver Cromwell. Shortly afterwards, Pepys married the young impoverished daughter of a French émigré, a skilled carver. As the Interregnum ended, Pepys had a foothold in government administration and made a safe transition with the restoration of the monarchy, accompanying Montagu to the Netherlands to escort the king back to England. By dint of these connections and his growing administrative skills, Pepys rose. He achieved relative security in naval administration by the 1660s, studying the intricacy of weights and measures, learning the skills of accounting and contract negotiation. These were quintessential accomplishments of the 'new man', the philosophy of which shaped some male fashions, as I show below. Pepys was determined to rise higher still – his ambitions were replicated in countless commercial and professional settings. Clothing was part of Pepys's strategy. In this he was not alone. The urge to present an appropriately modish figure inspired spending at many social levels, which collectively animated the marketplace. Sober additions or more frivolous acquisitions were bought to construct a decent or stylish look. Second-hand markets or more intensive labour represented two routes to increased consumption among plebeian folk. Pepys himself borrowed a silk banyan or dressing gown for his portrait, wanting to be commemorated in what he could not yet afford. He wrote of the future that: 'I shall with more comfort labour to get more [clothes].' Investors in the East India Company hoped that more painted, printed, striped and plain Indian cottons would figure among this mix.

MEN REFASHIONED

Men wore particular types of cotton clothing, the most notable of which were informal robes. Elite Western European men abandoned floor-length robes for everyday wear over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, adopting various forms of hose, short jackets and breeches that showcased their legs. Robes remained in use for ceremonial occasions such as with the sitting of Parliament (Figure 3.1), or in judicial, clerical or academic forums. Judges' robes and scholastic gowns are reminders of formerly typical elite clothing that retained symbolic importance only in selected settings. But by men, as noted with Asian sailors worn only on the voyage home. The prototype in the 1630s. Company received, hot garment. The pattern rather, its recurrence in middle class settings is interesting as sources for plain to be attached to encompass new cultural eldidi... 

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settings. But the geopolitics of early modern Eurasian trade reformulated the wearing of gowns by men, as nobles and merchants, gentlemen and genteel aspirants embraced a garment infused with Asian symbolism. This item had no connections to the venerable, formal garments of old, now worn only on official occasions. Rather, this new-style robe was emblematic of a new era, redolent of sea voyages, scientific enquiry and the commercial desires so often tied to these endeavours.

The prototype for this robe came from Japan, where the Dutch had exclusive trading rights from the 1630s. Once a year the Japanese shogun presented a single kimono to the Dutch East India Company representative, the garment folded beautifully and presented on a lacquered tray. The recipient, honoured among European merchants, attracted immediate notice when he donned this garment. The cachet attached to this robe spread to Europe in the wake of East India galleons. The patterned silk gown had honorific connotations. But this article was not born of entitlement; rather, its receipt marked initiative, endurance and commercial perspicacity, ethics of the mercantile middle classes. Investiture in this garb alluded to individual achievements that complicated the existing social system. So many European men yearned for these marks of distinction that new sources for robes were found in India, where they were made in a variety of fabrics, including painted and printed cotton. Blumer’s observations on fashion are particularly apposite here. He wrote that: ‘It is not the prestige of the elite which makes the design fashionable but, instead, it is the suitability or potential fashionableness of the design which allows the prestige of the elite to be attached to it.’ This innovation in male vestment spread from the commercial classes to encompass middle-ranked and aristocratic men in its folds.

This garment was designated a ‘banyan’ in the English-speaking world, an intriguing cross-cultural eliding of terms. Duarte Barbosa employed the word in his 1518 account of his voyage to the Indian subcontinent, describing a ‘caste of Heathen merchants whom they call ... Bananes ... and trade in goods of every kind from many lands.’ Thus, the term employed for the merchants of western India became the English name for a garment in vogue among those who likewise toiled for riches. In France, this article was given an Armenian provenance, Armenian traders being long established Eurasian intermediaries. The Dutch whose commercial zealously gave birth to this fashion employed two names: ‘Japonesche rocken’ (Japanese robe) and ‘Cambay’, the second term reflecting the commercial power of the Indian port of that name. Each term harkened to the wealth of Asia, a lure to mercantile and philosophical adventures. Regardless of the label, this garment became ubiquitous throughout the Atlantic world. The robes themselves signalled the rational mercantile skills so celebrated in this era, as well as wider cosmopolitan pursuits (Plate 8).

R. W. Connell defines what he calls conventional ‘gentry masculinity’ as an elite male ethos that ‘did not emphasize rational calculation ... being tied to lineage and kin networks’. Gentry masculinity was, in turn, connected to forms of ‘Old Luxuries’, their acquisition and display. The great social and economic movements of the early modern period, of which the new global trade networks were key, inaugurated a process of change in dominant male cultural forms. This era, as Connell notes, ‘saw the displacement of gentry masculinity by more calculative, rational and regulated masculinities’. This new-style masculinity was typified in the expressed aims of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) when the governing council wrote that ‘no great attention should be paid to the question of reputation and honour, which is often taken too seriously; in our
opinion (for we are merchants) he has the honour who without doing injustice or violence has the profit.

The banyan became the material idiom of this rational ideal, defining urban, successful and erudite masculinity. Aspiring men embraced this new mode, signalling their affiliations through the use and wear of banyans at home, in their libraries, at their desk, with their cabinets of curiosities or at their case with friends. Margo Finn finds that middle-ranked English male diarists from the long eighteenth century were keenly active in consumer activities, including in the purchase of clothing that would construct a socially appropriate appearance, while also offering utility. Without a banyan these men's wardrobes were incomplete.

The term 'virtuoso culture' has been coined to define the ethos of the men enamoured with the natural or manufactured curiosities brought to Europe as part of colonial and imperial projects. Science and commerce conjoined in these interests. An affinity for such intellectual preoccupations marked the incumbent as virtuosi; an association confirmed for some by membership in a scientific or philosophical society, by the adoption of the new coffee drink, or through the deployment of a banyan for private interactions. There was a powerful imperative to signal standing through the wearing of this Indian robe, like the printed calico banyan worn by the bourgeois gentilhomme, Jourdain, in Molière's 1670 play of the same name. Jourdain affected this dress and was derided for his pains by courtiers who resented the threat to their status represented by commercial wealth and knowledge. But whether or not this vogue was approved for bourgeois men at Louis XIV's court, it was a potent cultural form that persisted through several centuries.

Brandon Brame Fortune explores the symbolic importance of the garments worn by eighteenth-century American scholars and scientists in their portraits. Fortune observes that among members of the American Philosophical Society, 'a banyan in eighteenth-century portraiture seems to indicate a body at ease, giving free rein to the mind's work'. However as we have seen this fashion pre-dated the 1700s and can be found in many hundreds of portraits from about 1650 onwards, throughout the Atlantic world. A scan of online portrait collections turns up examples like Louis XIV's chief architect, along with a prominent Dutch sculptor at the Sun King's court and a citizen of Utrecht dressed in the latest style – all of which survive in the Louvre. The Italian, Antonio Verrio, was a contemporary of Samuel Pepys, working as a fresco and portrait painter for the restored Stuart royal household after 1660. For his 1700 self-portrait, Verrio chose a sumptuous flowered banyan, a mode of dress that transcended borders. The political aesthetics established for the Indian banyan after 1650 continued for generations and with this the market for Indian fabrics grew. This robe was a sign of fashionably reformed elite masculinity. Sir Josiah Child, English East India Company director; John Locke, philosopher, member of the Royal Society and appointee to the Board of Trade; Isaac Newton, scientist, inventor and governor of the Royal Mint; British and colonial American painters, William Hogarth and John Singleton Copley; Benjamin Franklin, writer, inventor and revolutionary; Voltaire, Enlightenment essayist, novelist and philosopher – each of these men was memorialized wearing a banyan. They articulated their self-image through the patterns and practice of their dress, as surely as through other endeavours. And although painters typically dressed their sitters in visually more reflective silk robes, the daily use of cotton banyans is beyond question. For example, Brook Taylor, mathematician, was painted wearing a blue and white striped robe; the notorius architect, builder of the banyan of o s as a habitual wearer of the pe be a robe whose links between which they were made.

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white striped (cotton?) banyan in the 1720 portrait, Plate 9. So entrenched was this style that the notorious London thief-taker, Jonathan Wild, was described as wearing his ‘Callicoe Gown’ when receiving a genteel client seeking his services in the early decades of the 1700s. Publishers, architects, botanists, chemists, clergies, diplomats, engravers, geographers, merchants, philosophers, politicians, artists, poets, actors, composers, mathematicians and writers – all were painted wearing banyans of one sort or other. These men, and many less august males of the age, wore this garment as a habitual practice and were painted swathed in this garb. The encyclopaedist Denis Diderot wrote a panegyric to his ‘old dressing gown’, which ‘made me look picturesque as well as handsome’, a robe whose hem served as a pen wipe during his hours of writing. The men so attired recognized the links between this hybrid garb and the wider intellectual, physical and commercial worlds with which they were engaged.

East India merchants and local retailers provided ready-made banyans to Europe’s retailers, or made-up morning gowns for their clients from the millions of bolts of calico cloth landed at European ports. In central London, Edward Gunn’s shop specialized in men’s Indian gowns, offering dozens of styles in 1672, which included items such as ‘coloured Indian satin’, ‘flowered’ and more generic ‘affordable’ ‘ordinary gowns for men’. The breadth of sales exemplifies Blumé’s concept of ‘collective selection’ in the creation of fashions. In the Netherlands, the Amsterdam Courant announced the arrival of hundreds of ready-made robes on ships of the Dutch East India Company, as well as ready-to-sew; 317 such items were advertised in 1686, for example. Specialist shops selling these garments persisted well into the eighteenth century; such as the Magazin des Robes De Chambre that opened in 1732 in London’s Temple Exchange, the French name of the shop suggesting the transnational reach of this garment. At the end of the century, in 1792, the style persisted with sales of ‘Gentleman’s Banyans … all Sizes’ from a ready-made linen warehouse on London’s New Bond Street and advertisements for similar garments appeared at the end of the century. A caricature from about 1800, of a painter immortalizing a sailor in miniature, shows the artist in his printed banyan, a hallmark of his trade (Figure 3.2). The banyan developed as an ever-present feature of dress for men from elite to middle ranks, worn within the confines of their homes, offices or social circles. It ascribed a specific set of social and intellectual mores to the male wearers, very different to those attributed to women in calico.

All imported goods carried political baggage. Imports could elicit a backlash because of the country of origin, the impact on local manufactures or its effect on traditional norms. Indian cottons were vulnerable on all counts. The late 1600s witnessed explosive anti-calico politics and vituperative screeds against female consumers, even as gentlemen lounged in their favourite calico banyans. The gender fault lines permeating society came dramatically to life in the anti-calico campaign. Women held a unique place in the political economy as the domestic managers of textiles and clothing, as well as being the most sexually charged public face of fashion. The nation was called upon to negotiate the tensions wrought by the advent of global trade and the new expressions of consumerism. Caught within contending social forces, plebeian women became the focus of riots, beatings and acid attacks, in a campaign to restore a national sartorial hierarchy. Cotton was the catalyst in this contest; women bore the brunt of the resistance to change.
A SAILOR sitting for his MINIATURE.

3.2 A Sailor Sitting for his Miniature, c. 1800. The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

WOMEN, FASHION AND CALICO POLITICS

A flood of Indian textiles poured into England after 1660, including all manner of cottons from high to low prices. K. N. Chaudhuri has calculated that over one quarter of a million pieces arrived at the Company's London warehouses in 1664, more yardage than in the very best years of early trade. These textiles represented 73 per cent of the Company's commerce. Yet this rate of importation paled in comparison with the years to follow. Import levels peaked in 1684, when more than a million and a half pieces arrived at London docks. The East India Company represented a new source of wealth for its investors and it offered a new source of profits for retailers and wholesalers distributing the imports. In less than thirty years, the flow of Indian textiles altered the commercial atmosphere in England and shook to its foundations the wool and worsted trades. Calicoes were among the provisions supplied in 1662 by a poor law authority in Kent and they appear in a Birmingham shopkeeper's bill in 1668. Notice of a missing wagon in 1683, heaped with cargo and destined for the north-western city of Chester, further illustrates the circulation of these wares. The missing wagon carried:
five Chequer'd East-India Taffatees, 120 yards plain East India Taffatee, two striped Muslins or Callico Lawnes, 17 Pieces of large brancht painted Callicoes ... three black and white mixt India Silk, half a yard broad, and twenty two yards long, 10 Striped Bengalls, one yard broad and ten yards long, 60 Pieces of white Callicoes, about a yard broad, some 16, some 18 yards long, 20 Pieces of Dyed Callicoes, and 12 Pieces of Romals or Sea Handkerchiefs.\(101\)

The 'Sea Handkerchiefs' or 'Romals' listed were among the most popular, affordable accessories, brightly printed in many patterns; 'Bengals' referred to cottons from that region of India; muslins were among the finest of cottons; 'Taffatees' were a plain-weave glossy silk; and the 'large brancht painted Callicoes' were likely palampores, a painted hanging popular in the decoration of bedrooms. This cartload of goods exemplifies the diversity of products landing in Britain, while the planned destination of this shipment confirms the geographic breadth of demand. Indian calicoes amounted to one quarter of all imported textiles by 1700.\(102\) This position in the national market drew as much political fire as it did consumer acclaim. A series of duties followed, steadily raising the price of cottons in the hopes of damping enthusiasm for what seemed, to some, an unaccountable phenomenon.

A flourishing East India trade was one of several shocks for the British wool industry in the 1600s, including as well the success of fustians (linen/cotton fabrics) and lighter New Draperies.\(103\) The response by wool's defenders was to re-emphasize customary values and legislate what could not be gained by persuasion. In both 1660 and 1678 enactments required all English subjects be 'buried in wool'; 'sheep's wool only' would shroud English corpses in their earthly repose.\(104\) One fictional goodwife insisted: "The thoughts of a [wool] Flannel-shift are so odious to me, that I'll never Dye at all rather, if I can help it."\(105\) Symbolism and practicality combined in this legislation, with all things English returned to the same soil.\(106\) The mercantilist sentiment that inspired these policies aimed to limit imports and encourage local manufacture.\(107\) The murmuring against the East India trade grew louder year by year. Sir Josiah Child, a major stockholder and later director of the East India Company, was moved to publish a treatise in 1681 insisting that 'the East-India Trade is the most National of all Foreign Trades'. Child offered a comparable mercantilist argument in its defence: 'Englant may be said to be Rich or Strong, as our Strength or Riches bears a proportion with our Neighbour Nations, French, Dutch, &c. and consequently whatever weakens or depopulates them, enriccheth and strengtheneth England.'\(108\) However, the rage for Indian cottons precipitated political crises throughout Europe, as governments struggled to defend local manufactures and local interests.

Debates swirled around coffee houses and merchant haunts and increasingly became the subject of political controversy among Members of Parliament. France banned the domestic printing of cotton and followed the next year, in 1687, with the first of many enactments barring all Indian and Chinese textiles, in defence of the French silk industry. Olivier Raveux uncovered the dynamic spread of calicoes in late seventeenth-century Marseilles, illustrating the wider vogue in France. Probate inventories indicate a substantial growth in the use of calico garments, rising from 10 per cent in 1667–8, to 27 per cent in 1680–81 and 43 per cent in 1692.\(109\) In the 1680s, however, France sought to impose a sweeping proscription, although in a few enclaves like Marseilles these
injunctions did not apply. Nonetheless, the French ban resonated with European legislatures. But French consumers were disinclined to accede to this law. In 1695, a Parisian merchant ruminated on more direct ways of enforcing the ban on calicoes, offering 500 livres to men willing 'to strip ... in the street, any woman wearing Indian fabrics'. As a further suggestion he recommended prostitutes be paid to be stripped of their calico gowns in a public spectacle blending punishment and ridicule, as an object lesson for female consumers. This French proposition was not the only expression of mercantile misogyny. In England, by the close of the 1600s, women were likewise singled out as the source of unnatural, unpatriotic, corrupting fashions inimical to the health of the nation.

Women were the principal buyers, managers and manipulators of textiles and clothing as housewives, domestic servants, needlewomen or retailers. They bought, made, repaired, pawned and reclaimed garments, negotiating family budgets to optimize wants and needs through the purchase of new and second-hand goods. By 1700, more women also worked for wages in the increasingly industrious society and they made their choices apparent in the marketplace. Daniel Roche observes for Paris that by the end of the eighteenth century, 'it was women who were chiefly responsible for circulating the new objects and the new values of commercial fashion'. The chronology for these changes was possibly earlier in southern England, certainly in London. And from the later 1600s through the next century, urban women from many social milieus engaged in creative self-fashioning, investing their time and money in ways that upset moralists, mercantilists and special interests. Women's choices were displayed in gowns, petticoats, jackets, handkerchiefs, headwear and stockings as they walked to markets and shops, to visit family or friends, or travelled to and from work. Plate 10 shows a printed calico petticoat from the early 1700s with a painted design that is its most prominent feature. Calico bedding, cushions and curtains, like men's banyans, were privately enjoyed. Women's dress choices were publicly displayed and more routinely discussed and dissected, a fact true for genteel as well as plebeian women. Their material behaviour now elicited a vituperative rhetoric, emphasizing ancient tropes of female corruptibility. Female dishonour was a recurring theme in this society and it was argued that women could most easily assure honour and respectability through a cloistered obedience. In contrast, the marketplace bespoke potential indulgence, material seduction and possible social transgression. Laura Gowing observes that for early modern Englishwomen, 'the possibilities of dishonour seem almost to erase those of honour'. The play of fashionable Indian cottons offended critics at every social level. The 1699 verse, *Prince Butler's Tale*, exemplifies these complaints, crafted in a form that may have been put to music for strolling ballad singers.

Our Ladies all were set a gadding,
After these Toys they ran a madding,
And nothing then would please theirancies,
Nor Dolls, nor Joans, nor wanton Nancies,
Unless it was of Indians making;
And if 'twas so, 'twas wonder'ous taking,
This Antick humour so prevail'd,
Tho' many 'gainst it greatly rail'd,
If not ruminated or desired, telling 'to strip and recommended for punishment was not the only arena were likewise to the health of clothing as aired, pawned and assessed through the wages in the place.' Daniel were chiefly fashion'. The London. And were engaged in kerchiefs, handkerchiefs, or travelled with a painted wares, like men's more routinely material behaviour irritability. Female would most easily the marketplace Laura Gowing almost to erase the social level. The may have been

'Mongst all degrees of Female kind, That nothing else could please their mind. Tell 'em the following of such fashion, Would beggar and undo the Nation, And ruin all our Labouring Poor, That must, or starve, or beg at door. They'd not at all regard your story, But in their painted Garments glory; And such as were not Indian proof, They sorrid, despis'd, as paltry stuff: ... What mischiefs to our Trade becal; How both our Men and Bullion went To work in India, and be spent In needless Toys, and gawdy Dresses, For Ladies, Madams, Trulls, and Misses."

In the late 1690s, weavers rioted outside the House of Lords as a bill was considered to ban Indian textiles. The 'great tumults of the multitude' involved London weavers and their wives and supporters, who feared that the influence of the East India Company would derail this legislation. These interests achieved a partial victory in 1700 when Parliament banned printed and painted Indian textiles; henceforth only plain Indian fabrics would be allowed into the country. But this legislation had little effect, as by this time England, French and Dutch artisans were fully able to print counterfeits of Indian wares almost as pleasing as the originals. The Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations expressed frustration that: "The calicoes now painted in England are so very cheap and so much in fashion that persons of all qualities and degrees clothe themselves and furnish their houses in great measure with them." With the failure of the 1700 Act, the abuse against English women shoppers intensified, a process encouraged by scurrilous texts of every sort. A 1703 verse characterized the women who bought and used calicoes as 'Jilts', 'Satyrs' and 'Patched, painted powder'd Drury Whores'. The author proposed to 'tear your Gawdy Cloaths, and pay your Backs'. The inventive was poisonous, an incendiary diatribe against the most visible actors in the marketplace. It employed the hackneyed terms of sexual misconduct, immorality and vice and claimed any women who bought or wore foreign-produced textiles deserved the lash, the penalty of a convicted wanton.

More Patched Misses, with their Muff and Fans Came posting there, like Ladies in Sedans, To buy a hoard up for their wanton Pride, Leave all their Money and a Pawn beside, A Card-Match Woman, with a Brimston's funk Did much disturb a Common Garden punch, Faugh, nasty Beast, away, I'll kick your Britch You kiss my Arse, you Common-Garden Bitch, You Town-bred Miss, that paint your outward skin And seems so fair, yet pokey soul within; Pray hold your-Brazen Tongue, what's here to do
I'm come to buy up Goods as well as you:
I have a Taylor that will work all Sunday;
And you may see me wear my Gown on Monday.
Next fat Arse Sarah, lives in Turnbull-street
Who pawn'd four Smocks, wrap'd in a Flaxen-Sheet,
To buy a Suite of Callicoe most rare,
And on her back had ne'er a Smock to wear.
Four Oyster Wench's went from Billingsgate,
To buy up Callicoe it went out of date
That each may have a right East-India Gown,
And look as great as Misses of the Town.
Some Country Wench's to London comes,
With scarcely Cloaths enough to hide their Bums,
Cook's, Scullens, Servant maids, when they have Places,
Will Flower their Buttocks, to set out their faces ...\[117\]

This verse was street fare, bawdy, the language of libertines, designed to get a laugh when rhymed on street corners, taverns or ante-rooms, but also to spark anger against women whose appetites were deemed so unruly. That same year, a comedy at the Theatre Royal included a similarly scathing portrayal of the 'strange Trollops in Callicoe Gowns ... Women of no Fortune, that have made a good figure in an old Sheet printed black and white'.\[118\]

Misogyny flowed through early modern society and was largely unremarked on, notable to our eyes in the anti-female aphorisms that circulated casually throughout the culture.\[119\] The sentiments evident in these and later tracts are directed specifically at women, at their independence in the market and at the fashionable judgements they employed. At the century's turn, about 1700, there was a high rate of unmarried women, higher than in previous generations. Single women needed to work and their involvement in many areas, including domestic service, was very apparent and especially in the great city of London, a magnet for labour. Women predominated in new consumer trades, from the stitching of cheap, ready-made clothes, to the making of buttons, pins and ribbons. Women worked in the growing numbers of shops, coffee houses and market stalls or hawked ballads, broadsheets, fruit or second-hand goods in the streets.\[120\] The earnings of single and married women brought about what Jan de Vries calls 'the industrious revolution', where the possibility of new material benefits encouraged more women to take up paid work and prompted others into longer hours of work as opportunities arose. The money these women earned opened a new world of options for their families, or for households of single or widowed women who pooled their resources.

Indeed, de Vries remarks that 'The industrious revolution has as its social pendant female earning power'.\[121\] However, wage-earning women, along with their wealthier sisters, materialized fashion choices in a manner that left them open to accusations of indulgence and even treason. The anxiety surrounding the influence of fashion was widespread. For example, Antwerp experienced a series of anti-fashion riots in 1701 and 1702 during which 'Indian cloth and cottons' was seized from shops and warehouses and burned in crowd actions.\[122\] An anti-fashion backlash was evident in many parts of Europe. In England, the author of Pride's Exchange accused women of robbing weavers of their 'Birth- another writer, Indian cottons only associated the linkages of Indian textiles global trade. Their wake and precision in the growth of determined to Madams', draw fabric.\[123\] In leg the East India for a second c moved from m

On a bright supporters as London alone, wool fabrics.\[124\] the weaving dis alleys, the they met, and shut. The turn calico) were m side, where killed of the disorde campaigns org calico entreat linen cloth, m with few result shall be thought verses were lo tear and burn.

Women's dr new commodi though some in east Londo under her red
of their ‘Birth-right’; Daniel Defoe termed the female calico buyer ‘An Enemy to her Country’; another writer deplored ‘the Folly of our Women’. Attacks on foreign imports did not begin with Indian cottons. Rose Hentschel notes that ‘Clothing and cloth from which it was made was not only associated with specific nations, but also helped to create sentiments of nationhood through the linkages of clothing with a particular country’. The great difference in this case was that Indian textiles were not part of the mercantile contest among European neighbours but arose from global trade. The wares channelled into Europe brought unique material characteristics in their wake and precipitated broad geopolitical repercussions. The ban on printed Indian goods resulted in the growth of local textile printing and the flow of calicoes continued unabated. Opponents were determined to stop the trade and stop female consumers. Ballads and verses excoriated ‘Calico Madams’, drawing an equation between sexual depravity, heartless treason and the wearing of this fabric. In legislative circles another bill was debated, aiming to ban virtually all Indian fabrics and the East India Company mounted a weak defence against these attacks. By 1719 the scene was set for a second crusade against Indian cottons. The onslaught of weavers against female consumers moved from metaphor to menace.

On a bright summer evening in June 1719, thousands of disgruntled weavers and their supporters assembled to protest against their slack trade, laying the blame on Indian imports. In London alone, an estimated 40,000 weavers were working on worsted wool and mixed silk and wool fabrics. The crowd on that June evening numbered about 4,000 strong and it ranged from the weaving district of Spitalfields through the old City of London. Pouring through the streets and alleyways, the men tore the English and Foreign Callicoes from off the Backs of all the Women they met, and proceeded to such Irregularities that the Lord Mayor caus’d the City Gates to be shut’. The tumults continued the next day and women attired in calico (or what appeared to be calico) were mobbed and beaten. The trouble spread as protesters crossed the Thames to the south side, where calico printers were based, aiming to smash the printing workshops. The Lord Mayor called for help and a troop of cavalry was sent to disperse the throng, after which the Riot Act was read, requiring the crowd to disperse within the hour. Several leaders were arrested and one man was killed on attempting to unseat a cavalryman. This was the beginning, not the end, of the disorders. Printing presses churned out pamphlets and broadsides by the dozen: petition campaigns organized by the Company of Weavers in London generated reams of pro-wool, anti-calico entreaties from across England. Trades dependent on printing the calico, weaving cotton/linen cloth, making calico quilts or selling cotton commodities likewise produced pamphlets, but with few results. Meanwhile, ballad singers fired up the crowds. One such song jeered that: ‘None shall be thought / A more scandalous Slut / Than a taudry Callico Madam’. This and other such verses were loudly recited, as one newspaper reported, ‘to encourage the Mob and the Weavers to tear and burn the Callicoes’.

Women’s dress was an incendiary topic, a gendered contest between old consumer wares and new commodities. Few personal attacks resulted in charges or left legal evidence of the events, though some records remain of generalized assaults. In July, a young woman looking for lodgings in east London was targeted when ‘some People sitting at their Doors’ noticed a printed gown under her red wool riding hood. The simple sightling of a printed pattern was enough to spark an
eruption. Despite the prominence of the red cloak, a traditional emblem of English womanhood, the local people took up the cry: 'Callicoe, Callicoe, Weavers, Weavers!' And within moments she was surrounded, pummelled, her clothes torn: 'Her Gown off all but the Sleeves, her Pocket, the head of her Riding Hood, and [she was] abus'd ... very much.'

Newspapers recount the most notorious episodes. This was not a passing storm. Rather it inaugurated a long-running, recurring campaign that spanned urban Britain, aimed at disciplining female consumers regardless of social rank. The tenor of the anti-calico pamphlets matched the anti-fashion misogyny. All women in public were vulnerable, like the alewife who ran the White Lion Alehouse in Whitechapel, in the East End of London. An anti-calico supporter came into the tavern and, seeing the landlady dressed in patterned cotton, 'he pulled out his Knife to cut it to pieces, but being prevented and turned out of Doors [by the company], he whetted his Knife upon his Shoe, and swore he would either cut the Callicoes, or stab her to the Heart'. Several weeks later in another incident, a man stumbled across a woman in a calico gown on her doorstep and attempted to slice it with his knife. When she ran indoors he swore 'he would cut her Soul from her Body'.

E. P. Thompson observed that 'It is possible to detect in almost every eighteenth-century crowd action some legitimising notion ... grounded upon a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties.' Thompson focused on food riots and the tensions surrounding the transformation of eighteenth-century English markets in provincial towns. The politics of wool and cotton, tradition and fashion, are equally symptomatic of a charged economic and cultural conflict that wracked English society. The genesis of fashionable consumption was predicated in key ways on a global commerce that undercut the privileged national position of an English staple. The evident hatred of Indian cottons and systematic attacks on fashion actors reflect the unprecedented and painful transitions under way. As the violence spread in the summer of 1719, the Company of Weavers scrambled to damp the fires they had stoked, cautioning journeymen weavers to 'live quietly and peaceably'. But the ensuing months were neither quiet nor peaceful. In Norwich, in the heart of the worsted industry, parades of weavers and their supporters strode through the streets, searching out offending women and ripping their calico gowns to shreds wherever they found them. One man, brought before a local magistrate, was allowed to escape to prevent an angry crowd from overturning the court. A greater throng mustered the next day in Norwich, marching along the streets 'in great Numbers, and cut and tore all the Callicoes they met with'. The alliance of wool, worsted and silk weavers deployed a host of well-known rituals of protest, sometimes hiring a bell-ringer to bring out supporters; raiders wrapped looted fabrics around their waists and waved the cloth in triumph, like banners seized in combat, as they raced down the streets; others nailed shreds of torn calico on a gibbet by a London thoroughfare as a simulacrum of the traitors' heads that bedecked the city's bridges for generations. Locals thought to be opponents were threatened, one with having his house pulled down around his ears – and another suffered that fate. One assembly of Norwich weavers was described as 'carrying in a triumphant Manner the Callicoes they get upon the Top of Poles and Sticks; and they are so very bold, that they go into People's Houses, and tear them off of their Backs, and even walk in that manner by the very Doors of the Magistrates'. Money was spent to enlist men willing to act. John Humphreys was later charged and convicted for this disorder. No mention was ever made
of the source of the substantial £20 he disbursed over the first days of the London riots. The wool industry had support far beyond those directly involved. Patriotism, in their view, demanded the severest sanctions against 'all those Women that were seen in Callicoe Gowns, or with Painted Callicoes for their outer Habit'. Another fictional householder described the fate he wished for all calicoes:

My Friends in Spitalfields I heartily apply to, and must let 'em know, I don't suffer any of my Family to wear Callicoe. I had made up four [calico] Dresses for a Dance, but in Justice to their Complaints, I have made a Burnt-Offering of 'em to the Silk and Woollen Manufactures ...

Despite the intermittent presence of troops in Norwich and London, attacks continued through the summer and autumn of 1719. In London, shops and warehouses selling Indian textiles were repeatedly looted and some destroyed, the weavers acting in small bands, to strike quickly and escape. In September 1719 the first reports of acid-throwing appeared in a London paper. Aqua fortis, or nitric acid, was hurled at women seen wearing callicoes 'in Houses or Coaches'. Acids were used in industrial processes and could evidently be obtained for other purposes. This liquid could be tossed from a distance and still be effective. The number and ferocity of assaults on women shocked some contemporaries and a few charges were laid where perpetrators were caught, though not all juries were prepared to convict. In some circles, there was such an abhorrence of women who wore calico that many were prepared to countenance the use of acid, or look the other way when women were accosted and their clothes ripped from their backs. Records reveal only a fraction of such encounters, summarized in general comments like: '[The weavers] dispersed themselves in small Parties thro' most of the Out-parts of the Town: They destroyed a considerable Quantity of Callicoes in the Shops, and tore all the Callicoes Clothes they met with abroad'.

Women in printed garments were at risk whenever they walked and wherever they wore these items. Why did they continue to wear such dangerous articles? Some doubtless wore what they owned and could not afford to replace a favourite gown. Others defied the weavers' attempted censorship. Pamphlets contain fleeting references to the ideal of 'Liberty' in dress, including 'Wearing what we please, and Thinking or Believing what we please'. It was a contentious claim. Over the course of weeks and months of attacks, husbands, friends or neighbours attempted to defend spouses, friends or relatives, resisting vigilantes wherever possible. But through the winter and into the spring of 1720, even as a new calico bill was debated in Parliament, the violence spread. The West Country port of Bristol experienced disturbances in the summer of 1720. One heated encounter led to a weaver's death and the trial of the assailant, Thomas Singer. Singer was an excise officer, living in Bristol, who in the company of his wife was strolling through town when she was assailed by a group of men who saw her printed gown. One glimpse incited attack. The incident ended with Singer being tried for the murder of this weaver, but the final verdict was less severe and he 'was found Guilty of Manslaughter only; because he did it in Defence of his Wife, [who] was Assaulted by a Gang of Weavers who tore her Callacoe Cloths off, and used her very Unmercifully'. In another instance, an observant husband spotted a man who had been in a crowd that 'strip[ped] his Wife of a Suit of Callacoe in the Month of March [1720], and set Fire...
to it before his Face, so that she was oblig'd to go home two Miles without it — the assailant was charged by a constable and taken into custody. In June 1720, Dorothy Orwell was caught 'by a Multitude of Weavers in Red-Lion-Fields in Hoxton [London], who tore, cut, and pull'd off her Gown and Petticoat by Violence, threatened her with vile Language, and left her naked in the Fields; that she was in such a Fright that she did not know them again'. But her friend identified the ringleader. John Web recounted that to protect his companion he 'took her in his Arms to save her from their Rage', being knifed in the ensuing melee. When it was over he covered Orwell with his coat before guiding her to shelter in a local tavern. A few attackers were convicted. But most apprehended in the summer of 1720 were released with a reprimand — evidence of sympathy from court and civic authorities.¹⁴³

The legal cases are singular in that they offer slightly more detailed narratives of outbreaks replicated many hundreds (possibly thousands) of times when women were mobbed, beaten, their clothes torn or skin burned with acid — incidents erupting on the streets of the capital and major provincial cities like Norwich and Bristol. It is likely that skirmishes played out in other locales, but were unrecorded in newspapers, or are still buried in local archives. The vilification of women for their looks, for their simple choice of clothes, represents a broad-based attempt to enforce a collective material discipline and impose a traditional moral economy over a large female population. These women were visible members of urban societies, prominent in numbers if not always in social position and uniquely reflective of new cultural sensibilities. Their collective fashion practice became exceptionally politicized — 'The Fashion is the Grievance', confirmed one anti-calico pamphleteer.¹⁴⁴ The denigration of this group encouraged extreme measures. In contrast, the voices protesting this gendered violence were rare and more muted than the champions of wool. However, the British linen industry denounced the systematic attacks on women, possibly because at least some of those attacked were printed linens or linen/cottons, locally made. 'These Violences will lay a Restraint upon the Wearing of Printed Calicoes and Linens. This [violence] is a Distemper in the Blood, and if not timely checked will end in a raging Calenture.'¹⁴⁵

Almost inevitably, all light, printed textiles became embroiled in this anti-calico campaign, even the hybrid linen/cotton or linen goods, British made and British printed. Printing on textiles was a uniquely Indian aesthetic form, applying decoration through inexpensive processes that could be easily varied in line with changing tastes. European techniques of textile decoration involved patterning in the loom or embroidery, which were more costly, labour-intensive and time-consuming than printing. Printing added colour and design to even inexpensive stuff and was an exceptional system of embellishment ideal for a burgeoning consumer society. Not surprisingly, European artisans worked to replicate the Indian style, with some success. Thus, printed textiles, regardless of their origins, symbolized the new fashion-driven economy abhorrent to those dependent on the making and sale of more traditional commodities. A printed petticoat, gown or jacket signalled the implacable rivalry between old and new political economies. Indian cotton imports disrupted existing hierarchies of trades, encouraging more varied and demotic fashions among a highly visible population. As Jan de Vries observes: 'The diffusion of fashionable dress followed a different dynamic from that of durable goods' — or old commodities.¹⁴⁶ Urban women ventured in this new sociopolitics. Women worked not only for basic subsistence but to be able
to buy more of the new niceties and small luxuries. They added crucially to family budgets and they also spent more on items of their choosing. The marketplace in which they bargained was made flexible through mediums like the second-hand trade, which enabled greater market participation by all social sectors and gave a broader choice to non-elites. Thus, middle-ranked and labouring women became important consumers, frequenting retail shops in many urban areas. Would the fashion impulse be extinguished in the campaign against cotton? There were certainly many who wished for that outcome, along with a return to ordered material behaviour: 'As the general Wearing of Calicoes is the Complaint, the general Leaving them off will be the Cure', opined one writer, could sumptuary standards be legislated and enforced? France found it difficult to enforce the repeated anti-calico decrees, adding increasingly draconian punishments, including servitude in the galleys for those caught dealing in Indian textiles. These policies were widely reported. Meanwhile, British legislators agreed to limit consumer choice in defence of a staple industry, as the country painfully adjusted to an increasingly consumer-driven economy.

The wool trade achieved its goal in the short term. An Act was passed in March 1721 banning most Indian textiles after the coming Christmas, in keeping with similar laws passed elsewhere in Europe. The Act championed old values and weavers celebrated in a traditional manner, with the 'Woollen Manufactures of Southwark' organizing a great bonfire. A broadsheet of the day depicts these events (Figure 3.3). The image commemorates the protection of wool and includes in its

3.3 'England's Great Joy and Gratitude', broadsheet printed c.1720.
borders every social emblem of the trade from the landlord through to the weaver, suggesting the organic relations underpinning this alliance. Thanks were extended to the king and Parliament while the weavers danced about the fire, alight with burning calico. On the actual occasion, an effigy of 'an old Woman drest in Calicoe' was carried round the neighbourhood, exciting jeers and catcalls. At the climax of this procession the figure was thrown on the flames, to great cheers and celebrations. At the moment the effigy was set ablaze, the customary moral balance seemed restored. The real and symbolic assaults on women consumers culminated in a great pyrrhic cleansing, with crowds rollicking around the burning form. A real-life immolation took place later in the summer, before the ban was in effect. One July evening, a woman dressed in calico walked through London's Haymarket, passing a group of linkboys waiting about in the square to light pedestrians home. Her defining feature was that she was wore a calico gown. The linkboys set her ablaze. This was neither the first nor the only death attributable to the anti-calico campaign and the linkboys' brutal certainty in their actions speaks to the social politics at work. But customary practices could not be so readily restored in the wider society, even with such tactics. Indian cottons and women consumers in combination were part of a powerful dynamic that challenged traditional material behaviour, inaugurating fashion-driven, popular consumerism that destabilized older industries and older hierarchies. The antagonisms that resulted and the persistence of these antipathies suggest the depth of the struggle under way.

LEGISLATION, REACTION, INVENTION – FASHION RENEWED

Daniel Defoe, novelist and polemicist, was a resolute supporter of the English wool and silk industries and wrote innumerable articles and pamphlets in their defence. He also registered distaste for new female shopping habits. Yet despite this position, Defoe introduced the fullest account of the plebeian woman shopper. Like her actual counterpart, this fictional female character would not be checked.

We are oppressed and insulted here in the open Streets, — we are abused, frighted, stript, our Clothes torn off our backs every day by Rabbles, — under the pretence of not wearing such Clothes as the Weavers please to have us wear.

We are oppressed, and have been told by our Grand-fathers, that English people enjoyed their lawful Libertys above all the Nations in the World; that it was their Honour to do so, and that our Ancestors fought for those Libertys.

What, did they fight for Liberty to abuse us, and that we should not have Liberty to go about Streets ... Never tell us of National Libertys, If our Sex has not a Share in the Libertys, how can they be National? We think we have Liberty little enough, as we are Wives, consequently Drudges. Shall we have less Liberty, as we are Women, than our Mothers had before us? This is Tyranny and Partiality, and we neither can, nor will bear it.

We cannot assume that this defiant posture reflected Defoe's attitudes; indeed, the female claim for gender equity in the market may have generated further rebuttals. That may have been its rhetorical intent. But it is equally possible that, as a father of six daughters, Defoe heard these sentiments expressed at his included character.
expressed at his own table or among his many female acquaintances. Defoe's fictional creations included characters such as the Londoner Moll Flanders (1722) and he was fully cognizant of the gendered machinations that animated her world. Thus it may not be surprising to see so pointed a claim for consumer independence in a female speaker of his creation. There is no record of an actual martial cry such as this from any woman of that era, or not in so many words. Women's actions, however, suggest a staunch resistance to sumptuary censorship and many continued to wear printed cottons (or look alike printed linens and fustians) at the height of the campaign and after the prohibition, whether for budgetary reasons or as statements of defiance. In response, groups and individuals continued to monitor women and those found in printed garments risked penalties. This style of patterned textile was not normalized for a generation.

In fact, during the lengthy calico debate, local British manufacturers of linen/cotton fabrics and local textile printers, who made imitations of Indian cottons, faced repeated demands that their trades be banned in the national interest. Linen weavers made facsimiles of Indian goods composed in whole or in part of linen; fustians made of linen and cotton yarns were also crafted to look like Indian fabrics. This business had grown in the past generation and the linen industry wished this to continue. One representative rebutted critics, stating that: 'Our Linen Manufacture is as much a Staple Manufacture of the Kingdom, as the Woollen, and hath as much right to be encouraged.' Mixed linen/cotton fustians were not banned by the 1721 Act and English weavers and printers continued with their trades, the one weaving new types of linen/cotton cloth and the other devising new patterns and printing methods. They aspired to serve the widest markets and they prospered with the forced departure of competitive Indian products. The fustian trade, centred about the north-west county of Lancashire, and the linen trade in south-west Scotland, took full advantage of the ban to advance their growing industry. But despite native credentials, they were ensnared in continuing political hostilities.

The marketplace was difficult to police. There were too few officials to monitor regulations and authorities relied on informers to enforce rulings. Such was the case with the 1721 enactment, which promised £5 to any informer who brought a calico-wearing miscreant before a magistrate, the sum to be paid by the person convicted. In the days following the Act, a flurry of cases were reported of women brought to justice for their fashion crimes. Some thought they were exempt if they only wore calico 'round the bottoms of their Petticoats' - a supposition held by 'ignorant People' according to the press. Not all could pay the fine and they were imprisoned for their pains. The elite, too, suffered betrayals; in one case a disgruntled ex-footman rushed to a magistrate, following his dismissal, to lay information against his former employer. This lady did not appear in court, but paid her fine and surrendered her calico gown in the privacy of her home. An enthusiastic early report stated that 'The Effects of the Act of Parliament for suppressing Callicoes are visible; none of the Female Sex having ventured to wear them since Christmas-Day.' But the issue was far from resolved, for although there was an initial decline, locally made printed linen and fustian grew in popularity. At the same time, a campaign of harassment and intimidation persisted against women in printed garments. Riots were at an end. But actions by small groups and individuals continued and men threw sulphuric or nitric acid and other corrosive Liquids wherever they saw 'Flower'd Linnen.'
Informers were key to the suppression of calico. So keen were these men in their hunt that they accosted women wearing printed apparel whatever the fabric. We can only guess at the numbers week in and week out: records survive only occasionally and usually deal with elite women. In the spring of 1723, several skirmishes were recorded in London neighbourhoods, in one instance the man ‘laying hold of, and insulting’ the lady involved.\textsuperscript{159} Discretion drove many women to substitute printed linen for Indian wares; yet despite or possibly because of this, London journey-
men complained in 1728 of their ‘Miseries and Hardships’, blaming ‘the wear of printed Linnens; as was formerly their Case when Calicoes were worn’.\textsuperscript{160} Several dynamics were in place. In the first instance, fashion worked to the advantage of lighter, cheaper fabrics; these were now produced in Britain from linen and cotton blends in growing quantities, varieties and prices (see Chapter 4). Lighter worsted wool and silk textiles also profited from this trend and the former produced printed worsted fabrics in recognition of the prevailing style. Cotton equivalents of all sorts remained a major factor in the market. Second, textile prices in general continued to fall. Beginning in the seventeenth century, the price of fabrics declined substantially and the trend continued through the eighteenth century, a phenomenon attributed to competition from cheaper European and Asian fabrics. This decline did not depend on new technologies, but on the lighter qualities of the new textiles themselves, bringing added pressure on wages among English cloth workers.\textsuperscript{161} Workers in the wool trade undoubtedly suffered, especially in the sectors making traditional cloth. National regulation offered a temporary panacea. But it could not stifle the broader market reorientation.

Nonetheless, protests persisted along with efforts to enforce the calico ban. Edinburgh was the next city to see an attempt and in 1730 ‘several Women were apprehended in the streets with Gowns of the same [calico]’.\textsuperscript{162} During the mid-1730s, prosecutions reached a fever pitch across Britain and were reported in even greater numbers than in the year immediately after the 1721 Act. In Norwich, the calico miscreants included a female tavern-keeper, the wife of an innkeeper and the owner of ‘Manchester Warehouse’ in the city. In London a vintner’s wife and a butcher’s wife were charged, along with several anonymous ‘Mrs’ and a few highly placed ladies, all ‘for wearing a Chints Callico’. Most paid their fines; all forfeited their clothing. Many of those charged were middle-ranked folk, the sort whose participation in the consumer market is well documented, and whose prosperity was often connected to the new commodities through trade or manufacture. Local magistrates heard complaints and at the same time acid-throwing revived as a tactic, a practice that spread to Dublin by at least the 1730s. In the fall of 1735 there were reports of renewed ‘Gang’ activity, ‘squirding Aqua-Forriss’ on unlucky women’s clothes. As in other British cities, weavers and their supporters launched public protests along with targeted punishments. One report suggests that acid was reserved for actions against ‘Ladies’, with more direct strokes taken against ‘the meaner Sort’. The 1735 report from Dublin continued: ‘We are inform’d, they not only cut … [labouring women’s] Cloaths, but have used them very scurvily, by abusing them otherwise’.\textsuperscript{163} In the mid-1730s the tempo of protests quickened, matched by a resurgence of petitions to Parliament from wool and worsted representatives. The aim was to ban all printed cloth entirely. As before, the uncertain state of the wool trade was blamed on competitive fustians and the skill of local printers. One pamphlet objected that ‘by the artful Contrivance of Printers and others, a sort of Stuff mixt with Cotton, has been since found to supply the Place of India Callicoes’.\textsuperscript{164} The allegations against
British manufacturers were accurate in one sense, as a 1736 testimony before a House of Commons committee confirmed, for the British cotton/linen trade had grown in the last decade, their goods replacing previously imported German linens, as well as Indian cottons. As one witnessed testified:

Great Quantities of the said Manufactures have, for several Years last past, been printed, and, when so printed, have been used in Apparel and Furniture; and that Eight Parts out of Nine of the Goods he manufactures are printed, and, according to the best of his Judgment, One-half or Two-thirds of the Cotton Wool brought into this Kingdom from the British Plantations is used in the Fustians that are printed; and that the greatest Part of them are sent up brown, from the several Countries in which they are made, and printed in or about London.\textsuperscript{105}

In the face of this success, provincial retailers received leaflets and read advertisements claiming that British-made printed fustians were banned along with Indian cottons. Retailers were threatened with prosecution if they sold the controversial fabrics.

The wool interests did not prevail in this instance. In April 1736, Parliament decided in favour of the British cotton/linen trade, specifying that British-made fustians of cotton/linen blend were exempt from the 1721 legislation. The cotton/linen industry had grown to such an extent and employed so many that, like the wool trade, it could demand the favour of legal protection. The nascent cotton trade and its printing industry received the security it sought. London’s textile printers celebrated. A group of a hundred travelled in a barge from the House of Commons at Westminster up the Thames to the suburb of Wandsworth, accompanied by a small band of musicians playing trumpets and drums. Wandsworth was one of the centres of the printing trade and the locals were jubilant. On shore the printers were greeted with a salute from several gunners and a larger company of men and women joined them to parade through the streets to Bowling Green House in neighbouring Putney. The celebrants waved flags made of printed fabric; women of the trade dressed in brightly printed gowns, jackets and petticoats and church bells rang as they marched along. The day ended with feasting, dancing and ‘other Demonstrations of Joy’.\textsuperscript{106}

Legal ambiguity was at an end; but this did not end policing by the wool trade and their sympathisers. Throughout the spring and summer of 1736, newspapers describe the relentless crusade against women in printed garments. In some instances the women were attired in the forbidden calico – smuggling provided continuing supplies for discerning customers. Mr Morris, a very active informer, accumulated a number of £5 fines extracted from women infringing the Act. His success encouraged others to patrol the streets with a sharp eye on women’s clothing. However, the court looked unfavourably on the harassment of gentlewomen, falsely charged. One such informer was convicted of perjury for ‘swearing falsely against a Gentlewoman’ when her gown was found to be printed linen and the would-be informer was jailed. In the winter of 1737, Mr Morris found himself in similar straits. The previously successful informant was committed to Newgate prison for swearing information against Miss Gough, sister of Sir Henry Gough, ‘whom he had dogged home to her Dwelling House’ after spotting her in St James’s Park, a popular resort for fashionable Londoners. This locale was evidently one of several where he hunted. The case itself became a brief cause célébre, widely reported, with legal council employed on both sides. Morris evidently had the backing of people with money to pay for his attorney. He was lucky.
Ultimately his fulsome apology was accepted and he buttressed this by acknowledging that ‘the most experienced Man might be deceit’d at a Distance, by Reason of the great Improvements made in our Linnen Manufactory’. The London jury acquitted him, accepting the excellence of British printed textiles as the basis of his error. Figure 3.4 shows an example of printed British cotton from mid-century in a simple wrapping gown for a child. It could have been cut down from a larger adult garment – this fabric would have suited a woman equally well.

CONCLUSION

Fashion’s force produced social and economic reverberations that at times generated heated polemics and violent confrontations. An ever wider range of men and women embraced fashion priorities, working and budgeting to engage in new forms of consumption and display. The landscape of fashion now involved a diverse collection of individuals and groups carving out new styles and representative looks, asserting their position through symbolic and material variations in dress.
The collective choices made by these new consuming classes inaugurated economic opportunities for some, leaving others fired with resentment and the desire to punish. Calico-wearing women epitomized new, more demotic styles, embraced by a visible heterogeneous assortment of women. The figure of a strawberry seller from about 1780 shows a young woman wearing a printed gown, likely of British-made cotton (Figure 3.5). However idealized this image may be, there is no doubt of the numbers of women from this rank who made similar choices in dress over the century. She epitomizes the generations before her who worked, budgeted and bought clothes to their taste.

For Gilles Lipovetsky, fashion 'helped unsettle the immobility of tradition'. Writing about the nineteenth century, Lipovetsky notes that: 'Fashion was able to become the permanent theatre of ephemeral metamorphoses because the individualization of appearance had won a new status of social legitimacy.’ Change of this sort did not come easily or without controversy. Indeed, the systematic violence against calico-wearing women reflects how ruthlessly traditional materials and material precepts were defended, particularly when innovations were associated with female practices.

Indian cottons were the catalyst that sparked a broad social process. Their entry into the European marketplace encouraged the expansion of a heterogeneous fashion-driven consumerism, a process
already under way. This phenomenon engaged a growing cohort of shoppers, users and wearers. In turn, societies and economies adapted to the broader dictates of this system. Choice was a crucial factor enabled by the new commodities; choice allowed the crafting of new public personae, materially complicating the social strata inherited from previous centuries. Women from various social ranks asserted their right to create fashionable styles of many sorts and they employed cottons in this exercise. They persisted despite the extraordinary public penalties enforced by vigilantes. The calico crisis reflects profound societal adjustments as politically charged popular fashions were negotiated in British society.

The impulse to renew sumptuary laws persisted throughout this era, advocated as the solution to disorienting practices that undermined the old certainties. Virtually every European territory, except the Netherlands, legislated against Indian calicoes in a paroxysm of anti-fashion, anti-consumerist activism. The Netherlands profited by printing plain Indian cottons and linens – it also served as a staging post for smugglers moving cargoes of Indian textiles to various European landing sites. In Britain, paradoxically, the nascent British linen/cotton industry benefited from the fashion catalyst. The unintended consequence of the 1721 Act was a market virtually free from competitors, where local innovation and invention was encouraged in an effort to match the quality, look and cost of the Indian exemplar. By 1736, when Parliament legislated in their favour, the term ‘calico’ came increasingly to refer to British-made fabrics, created by British men and women in communities from London to Lancashire to Scotland. The anti-calico frenzy abated by mid-century. At the same time, the fashion phenomenon was increasingly accepted as a facet of British society that could profit local manufacturers. Several witnesses before a Parliamentary Committee in 1751 remarked on the success of some Lancashire textiles on account of ‘fashion’. Witnesses seemed rather surprised by this development. However, cotton manufacturing was inextricably linked to fashion markets in ways that would evolve in the generations to follow. A printed English cotton gown, made up in the 1780s, reveals the later achievements of the British cotton industry (Plate 11). Manufacturers learned the value of pervasive, demotic fashion cravings, serving a range of needs, a process already well under way during the middle decades of the eighteenth century. A reference to local calicoes in 1736 charts these shifting attitudes. The young woman celebrated in this song was not vilified, but described in admiring terms as ‘never loud nor craving’, for Pretty Polly chose ‘callicoe, or lowly chints, to be more saving’. The female character’s modest expenditures are applauded and her ambitions approved. This idealized pattern of consumer behaviour, multiplied many times over, formed the foundation of a new fashion era and a new industrial era that came to full flower in the 1800s. The women who navigated these rough waters defined the new parameters of a fashion-driven consumer economy.