

## **FAST FASHION – Food for Thought...**

### **God's Gone out of Fashion**

This journey starts on the High Street, at the opening of Primark's flagship store in London's Oxford Street. Footage exists on YouTube: it was chaos and carnage!

In this poem, my term 'unsatisfactories' is a synonym for sweatshops. I also coined the phrase 'copy catwalks' - referring to how fast fashion brands take their inspiration from designer labels.

<https://metro.co.uk/2007/04/05/riot-at-new-london-primark-store-255453/>

### **A Stitch in Time**

Just over 6 years later, on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2013 around 1134 people (85% of whom were female textile workers) were killed and over 2500 injured when the Rana Plaza building collapsed, in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Workers were told that if they refused to enter the building (cracks had appeared in the walls, causing the workers considerable concern) they'd lose their jobs.

These women earned approximately \$50 per month. Reshma Begum (mentioned in the poem) was miraculously pulled out of the rubble after 17 days. At that time, the factory was producing clothing for several well-known fast fashion high street labels, including Benetton, Bonmarché, The Children's Place, Joe Fresh, Mango, Matalan and Primark.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/24/bangladesh-building-collapse-shops-west>

### **Edit-Filter-Hashtag-Share**

The boom in online fashion retailers – and the trend of buying single-use/disposable 'copy-catwalk' fashion is the subject of the final piece in this trilogy. Shakespeare's introduction is salient here – and I'm sure that if he were alive today, The Bard would agree that his use of the male gender pronoun was a case of poetic license!

Whilst I love second-hand/pre-loved/hand-me-down clothing, I'm also partial to a brand. My aim is not to tell anyone what to think, what to wear or where to shop. I simply hope these pieces help to provoke thought on how - as consumers - we can make wiser choices.

As well as looking after our planet and championing sustainability, we owe respect to the people we never see: the skilled, low-paid workers who make our clothes. We must hold to account the factories which employ them, so they receive levels of pay and working conditions which enable them to enjoy life.

## God's Gone out of Fashion (and the Devil is in retail)

Primeval pandemonium: there's chaos in the aisles  
In the dash to splash the cash on the latest looks and styles:  
It's a frenzy fuelled by fashion; a passion that propels  
The lust that feeds the flames within a hundred hungry Hells  
They bundle, kick and punch; they grab and grope and swipe and  
snatch:  
"Get size sixteen in bottle green and yellow shoes to match!"?  
"Don't you look at *me* like that: I bloody saw it first!"  
Oxford Street is Hades; Oxford Street is cursed...  
Shall I get the red and white one?"; "Does this make my arse look fat?"  
"Do you think I look like mutton?" Do I *have* to answer that?

There's a stampede in the store-room; a brawl at point-of-sale;  
Stresses caused by dresses as the shop assistants wail:  
"You can't get *in* the changin' rooms - we 'aven't got the space";  
(They wish they'd got some riot shields, plus pepper spray and mace)  
Instead, they get worn down, worn out and cry from fear and loathing:  
"FCUK this!" It's death by discount clothing  
On this crazy copy-cat walk, the claws are sharp and long  
And they'll scratch your bleedin' eyes out for a linen-mix sarong  
'Cause Kim's been spotted wearin' it - and so has Croydon Kate:  
It's the gotta have for the savvy chav on a hot McDate.

Dehumanised resources make two thousand tops per hour  
In double time and motion: making money, making power;  
Unsatis-bloody-factory! It boils down to reduction:  
To cut the cost of cutting cloth the forces of production  
Must maximise efficiency  
Must minimise the wage  
Must increase productivity at every single stage  
Standardise the quality  
Stitching in each label;  
Shift ship-loads of quantity:  
Don't care who you disable:  
'Cause Satan's on the shop floor - and he's there in every detail:  
God's gone out of fashion - and the Devil's in retail.

Bloodstains on the hemlines from the thrills and spills of chase;  
False fingernails forsaken where they cloyed upon the lace;  
As the doors lock out the rabble when it comes to close of play,  
The hanging hum of bedlam is threatening to stay  
In this air-conditioned moshpit at the ending of round one  
There's no civilisation, now Armageddon's come,  
But it's "back to work tomorrow", cause the wicked never rest:  
Who needs style *and* substance when the cheapest is the best?  
The cobalt-blue elastic belt with nickel heart-shaped clasp  
Is yours, for just two-fifty - and it's right within your grasp...

It's going without saying that the irony's not lost:  
If that's the price we're paying, what does it *really* cost?  
    'Cause Satan's on the shop floor and he's there in ev'ry detail:  
    God's gone out of fashion - and the Devil's in retail.

## A stitch in time

Remnants of  
Half-made hoodies,  
Loose labels,  
Buttons,  
Mangled metal,  
Rags, rats, rust  
And Some Body's bloody shirt  
Are here, in the dust.

In this mound of Godforsaken ground  
Dogtooth check is snagged and snarled on jagged jaws of brick;  
Thread and cloth form clotted knots and frayed embraces -  
Sticks and stones and broken bones -  
This rubble wreck's a grave reminder  
Where orphaned children,  
Childless parents,  
Brotherless sisters,  
Sisterless brothers  
And those left limbless,  
Mourn more,  
Much more  
Than unfinished business.

R.I.P  
The silence rips:  
Ticks off the clocks whose shattered faces  
Can't unwind a small hand back to nine  
A big hand back to eight  
(And then clock off;)  
Pricks at the needles that cannot  
Unpick fate...

Now  
If you stop  
You can't hear them -  
Or a pin drop.

Here,  
Fashion victims are  
Kids of fifteen who laboured in sweatshops,  
Sewed labels in sweatshirts  
For cool boys and girls  
Who tweet outside sweet shops  
Fidget with widgets  
And chill out on high streets  
Lacing up high tops with luminous loom bands;  
Keeping it fresh  
In hot brand new brands  
Made in Bangladesh  
(by Reshma's hands).

Here  
In the backstreets  
These are the facts:  
As each day elapses,  
Lapses cause cracks;  
When no-one reacts  
Cracks cause collapses:  
Accidents happen  
In Unsatis-factories.

Perhaps  
All it would've taken to avoid this mess,  
Undo this distress,  
Unsee this Hellish wilderness  
Was to stop,  
Take stock,  
And make one less dress  
Or one less  
top.

Stop...  
What does it mean  
When dead-cheap killer-style  
Keeps kids at machines  
Sewing labels on jeans  
And mothers hear screams  
Nightly, in dreams  
Of crushed baby daughters beneath broken beams...  
When blood on the seams gives us something to cry for,  
Is that new outfit still something to die for?

Here  
In the backstreets  
These are the facts:  
As each day elapses  
Lapses cause cracks,  
When no-one reacts:  
Cracks cause collapses  
Accidents happen  
In unsatis-factories:  
Apathy happens  
And causes catastrophes.

This is the real-life bottom line:  
A stitch in time would've saved 1139.

## Edit Filter # Share

*Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,  
But not expressed in fancy – rich, not gaudy,  
For the apparel oft proclaims the man...*  
(Hamlet 1, 3, 70-73)

Check me out on Instagram!

Edit, filter, hashtag, share  
Be The Queen, The Don, The Boss.  
Substance? Lol - who cares -  
Style is King - who gives a toss?  
Appearances are everything  
How you look and what you wear:  
If like and love depends on this  
Edit, filter, hashtag, share...  
Enter the abyss.

Search, click, add to bag  
Polyester bodysuit;  
Bang on trend and oozing swag:  
A fine designer substitute;  
'As Seen On Screen', the glamour's cheap  
Glad rags await their curtain call  
*Boohoo*: Punters, do not weep -  
At this price, you can have it all!  
'Look a million dollars for a £10 tag' -  
Surely there must be a snag?  
Search, click - add to bag.

As fast as fashion turns to fad  
The Web is woven; threads are spun  
And coats are cut to fit our cloth:  
That's how the Devil's work is done  
We see the emperors parade  
Dressed to impress their empresses  
They sell their souls and masquerade:  
Lotharios and temptresses  
In vain pursuit, the followers  
Are victims led into a snare  
*Pretty Little Thing* in your  
Bling-bling-bling:  
You make us stop and stare.

Wear, share, disrobe, dispose:  
Taboo to wear an outfit twice!  
Pouty teens in shouty clothes  
Post selfies posed in paradise.  
Copy-catwalks purr with pride  
Dot com's screwing Dotty P:  
Another store's about to close;  
Consigned to high-street history -  
And re-designed in binary.

Search, click - add to bag  
Edit, filter, hashtag, share.

Search, click - add to bag  
Edit, filter, hashtag, share.

Check me out on Instagram  
Apparel oft proclaims the man.