Thom Browne’s recreation of the suit was successful enough to propel his brand to delve further into menswear, womenswear, and other facets that a lifestyle brand carries. Thom Browne’s business deals with Brooks Brothers and Harry Winston exhibit that his creativity and business tactics alike are both strong and successful. People do not take Browne’s designs to be successful, often implying that his suit is a joke. GQ Magazine wrote about his style, stating that he looks like Pee-wee Herman’s boss.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Contrary to these criticisms, the designer was before his time. Like many designers or artists who cannot be appreciated until the times catch up with them, Browne created a controversial look that despite receiving harsh criticisms, actually influenced the fashion industry and allowed for him to further develop his brand by exercising his eccentric creativity and tailoring that merits shocking reactions to this day.

Browne’s shrunken suit was a nod to the future of men’s suits. He created a look that was so new to the consumer of its time that it received harsh criticisms. Alex Pappademas, wrote about the early criticisms of Browne’s suit in an article for GQ magazine, “In the beginning, the suit struck some people as ridiculous, and sometimes it still does. That’s part its power. *Made you look*.”[[2]](#footnote-2) In 2001, when Browne began selling his new suit, this was the general opinion. The opinion that the suits were ridiculous because of their cut-for-a-boy quality, however, was genius. This idea caught on for many reasons. As Pappademas said, the suits can still be laughed at and seen as an unrealistic garment, but they are actually revered for many reasons.

I think Browne’s suits can be considered beautiful for the same reason many hated it. The slim cuts and shortened hems were ridiculed, but they were introduced at a perfect time in history. Jack Gallagher, blogger of *A Continuous Lean* explains why the Browne suit had the opportunity to flourish in its time.He wrote, “[W]hen Browne debuted his now unmistakable aesthetic, the suit was in a sorry state. Men were struggling to pull themselves out of the tacky nineties, with its beefy shoulder padded suits and puddling trousers.”[[3]](#footnote-3) The suit, contrasted those that came before it, slimming down the excess fabric of suits that preceded it. Simon Doonan, Creative Ambassador-at-Large of Barneys and author of *The Asylum* contests this fact, where he wrote about finally finding a suit that his small frame could fit into amongst the masses of suits made with excess fabric in the 90’s. The contrast of the suit to its predecessors forged its path to become highly influential even if people did think as Doonan put it that Browne was “totally fucking crazy.” [[4]](#footnote-4)

In reality, the suit is not a joke; it even created a revolution. His suit was a genius piece in its time because it led the garment out of its rut and into a new and desirable shape. Browne’s ability to identify the problem with the suit in order to remake it underlies the garment’s extreme beauty and his genius alike. “In the beginning, the suit struck some people as ridiculous, and sometimes it still does. That’s part of its power. *Made you look.* Also, though, it spoke to guys fed up with the distressed-jeans arms race, with designer seed-feed caps. Guys who’d *done* the dirtbag-chic thing and were boomeranging toward reactionary squareness.”[[5]](#footnote-5) This movement of trends and styles gaining momentum off of one another worked for Browne. His suit and his style worked in their context even though it took awhile for some to engage in this change. The criticisms did not halt even though his suit was influencing various designers around him. Pappademas wrote for GQ Magazine, “He’s one of the few designers whose creativity starts arguments—like a Mathew Barney movie or the latest transmission from Radiohead. Almost single-handedly, he’s made other designers question the proportion of a suit.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

These arguments and criticisms over Browne’s work are the backbone for his influences. If he did not break barriers, he might not have gained the attention that he deserved. His other creations, besides the suit, have received criticism from editorials like Vogue. In a review of his church-inspired and obviously eccentric Fall 2014 womenswear line, Vogue wrote in a review, “Every choice projected opulence, but the sort of opulence best veiled, best hidden away in secret cloisters concealed from those who can’t understand it.”[[7]](#footnote-7) When a designer is honored with such high criticisms and arguments about his work, it is obvious that he is breaking barriers in the design world. Browne’s suit amongst his other collections received these harsh criticisms and dubious looks, but the criticisms only showed how truly influential he was in the fashion industry.

Brown influenced other clothing brands, which subtly incorporated his trends such as the slim-cut and shortened pant-leg suit. The consumers criticizing Browne’s work were most likely engaging in his trend by wearing clothing produced by other companies with his influence. Browne’s influences include menswear from the late fifties and early sixties. He was inspired by uniformity, lack of choice, and American style. His looks take consumers back to a time of a strong sense of American suiting, but with an even more dramatic cut.[[8]](#footnote-8) In a time when the suit was lacking, he brought out its beauty. He influenced top companies known for their suiting. “[H]e’s managed to do something traditional menswear manufacturers were starting to give up on: He made the suit cool again. Even the behemoth Brooks Brothers is starting to show narrower cuts.”[[9]](#footnote-9) While some gawked at his looks, they were shopping for the same slim-cut suit that Brooks Brothers adapted from Browne’s influence.

Browne’s strong sense of influence summed him up to be the next big thing. His influential status showed that “He is a game changer…a designer whose aesthetic, like those of Coco Chanel or Alexander McQueen, is skewed so singularly that it takes some time for the viewer’s eye to adjust.”[[10]](#footnote-10) He took the fashion world on a ride through his controversially revamped suit so much so that it took time for people to accept his unconventional design aesthetic. At first glance, one may view a Thom Browne design and see it as too extreme to be considered real fashion. The original fashion insider reacted the same way at first, and even though it takes some time to “adjust” to Browne’s designs, they are surely becoming accepted like other designers that broke barriers of their time. “Sure enough, what once looked weird now seems oddly proportionate and correct…few men’s wear designers appear to have eluded Mr. Browne’s influence.”[[11]](#footnote-11) If consumers thought the suit was shocking and unwearable in the time of its creation, they should immediately reconsider their opinions because many designers are following Browne’s suit to slim down the figure. Although most consumers may not be as drastic as to show their hairy ankles between their socks and high hemmed pants, the slim cut is definitely an apparent style today.

I have personally observed Browne’s style influences in streetwear, supporting the fact that Browne’s suit was not a joke, but rather a powerhouse trend starter. On the subway, I recently noticed two men wearing high hemmed pants with socks. Keep in mind; this was on one of the coldest days of the winter with a wind-chill in the negatives. This alone attests that Browne had a hand influencing today’s fashions. Although one may view Browne’s garments on the runway and think of them as a shocking joke, he or she is the same person wearing a slim-cut suit or shorter hemmed pants and unknowingly engaging in a trend passed down by Browne himself. While Browne claims to disregard following or creating trends, he certainly has made a difference by not conforming to criticisms or the norm. He redefined the suit and liberated its beauty through the uniformity that he found so interesting. He continues to redefine fashion after the success of his suit, through styling it whimsically and highlighting it by creating other drastic garments. The suit remains the unchanged as it is a foundation for his business. Regardless of the criticisms Browne received, he is a great and influential designer immersed in the menswear industry, and his garments most likely exist in the typical consumer’s closet in the form of a trend passed down through the industry even if that consumer has thought of his suit as a joke.

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6. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
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8. "Details.com: Rules of Style from Thom Browne." [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Pappademas, "Designer of the Year.” [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Trebay, "Being Thom Browne.” [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)