Refashioning dress and body in late-eighteenth century England

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REFASHIONING DRESS AND THE BODY IN LATE-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND

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The ‘revolutionary’ influence of Anglophilia and new English modes of dressing influenced much of Western Europe at the time of the French Revolution. In England many of the tensions around attitudes toward dress and appearances coalesced around the figure of the ‘macaroni’, a type of fop who was prominent in a range of written, visual and theatrical traditions, 1760-1780. England had a tradition of varied clothing types that might indicate party-political, sociable or patriotic affiliations. Whig politician Charles James Fox (1749-1806) provides a case of a particularly significant late-eighteenth century clothing evolution from foppery to deliberate shabbiness. Following the French Revolution, a Burkean reaction restated many older Anglo-French dualities, in which dress and appearances were considered to be expressions of national-character difference.

Keywords : English dress, French dress, court dress, Charles James Fox, macaroni men, party-political clothing.

This paper considers the ‘revolutionary’ influence of the new English modes of dressing and diachronic changes in wardrobes in which came to influence much of Western Europe at the time of the French Revolution. Its core is the well-known English ‘macaroni’, a time-specific fashion-oriented fop, 1760-1780, with its focus being the changing clothing choices of ‘The Original Macaroni’, the Whig politician Charles James Fox (1749-1806)[1]. We tend to think of clothing cultures such as macaroni dress through concepts with which we are familiar, such as the ‘subcultural’, which

(1) Fox was generally known as Charles Fox in his lifetime: he became better known as Charles James following his death, within an hagiographical gesture.

privileges counter-cultural or youth dressing. The essay also connects Britons' interest in the sartorial emblems of Revolutionary patriotism with aspects of their own highly coded fashion landscape, as England had a tradition of clothing types that might indicate party-political, sociable or patriotic affiliations. Following the French Revolution, a Burkean reaction restated many of the older perceived Anglo-French dualities, in which national-character difference was expressed via consideration of clothes, social manners and their role within rituals of public life.

Macaronis Men

The English 'beau monde', access and observation of fashion

As Hannah Greig notes in her detailed study of the English 'beau monde', England had a 'decentralised' court life in which both monarch and the heir led significant households. The English aristocracy was often visible to the wider public: St James's and Kensington Palaces and the Queen's House were adjacent to public parklands. Many of the provincial gentry and prominent business people such as Josiah Wedgwood attended court at some time[2]. The King's dress preferences expressed many of the tensions of the time. Although George III wore rich dress for his men-only morning Levees as was customary, he had a personal dislike of extravagant dress and promoted instead his 'Windsor uniform', a blue suit with red collar and trimming, often worn with red waistcoat by his followers. He was abstemious, rarely drank alcohol, and sometimes dressed incognito, walking outside without servants such that many of his subjects failed to recognise him[3]. The expected court dress or *grand habit* for women consisted of a heavy open robe with a train, its hoop petticoat (*panier*) up to 6 feet wide extending the body outwards, whilst a whalebone bodice (*corps de robe*) pulled the shoulders back and emphasized the breasts and waist. Mrs Mary Delany (1700-1788), aristocratic woman famous for her cut-paper botanical illustrations, writing to Mrs Port in March 1775 noted: 'Nothing is talked of now so much as the ladies' enormous dresses, more suited to the stage or a masquerade than for any civil or sober societies... It would be some consolation if their manners did not too much correspond

(2) Hannah GREIG, *The Beau Monde: Fashionable Society in Georgian London*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 106-107.

(3) Andrew ROBERTS, *George III: The Life and Reign of Britain's Most Misunderstood Monarch*, Allen Lane, 2021, p. 86.

with the lightness of their dress'[4]. While court dress retained its archaic hoops and a train until these elements were abolished in England in the reign of George IV (the hoops had been merged with the tubular lines of early-nineteenth century or Regency dress, making a juxtaposition which probably began to offend on aesthetic grounds), it was continually modified in its details in accordance with contemporary fashion change.

English custom suggested that new clothes be worn for attendance at the monarch's birthday celebrations to register both allegiance and support. Various coded messages could be sent via these clothing choices: were the clothes really new, what were they made of and where had they come from? As Roze Hentschell remarks, the adoption of foreign dress and textiles might suggest anything from treachery and vice, to disease and profligacy: 'The donning of clothing from several countries both disassembles the English body and dismantles a unified nation'[5]. In 1749 an Act of Parliament banned 'the importation and wear of foreign embroidery and brocade, and of gold and silver thread, lace, or other work made of gold or silver wire manufactured in foreign parts'[6]. Whigs often deliberately wore imported textiles which were technically illegal: in 1792 a group of them ordered their 'Birthday clothes' from France, but they were seized and destroyed at Customs[7].

In contrast to The King, The Prince of Wales was a profligate sybarite and lover of French culture who revelled in fine clothing. George III was seriously ill on the first occasion between 1788 and 1789 and courtiers and politicians jockeyed for position in their unsuccessful support of the Prince of Wales to become Regent, and hopefully commission a new government. Those in the faction of the Prince of Wales often wore the colours of George Washington and the American Revolutionary army, buff and blue. In the years before the Revolution, very high hair for women, the use of ostrich feathers and light, gauzy muslin trimmings were popular fashions and often mocked as somehow redolent of luxurious Imperialism (feathers came mainly from Africa and muslin from India). Horace Walpole wrote to Sir William Hamilton in 1776: 'I advise Miss Hamilton to beg, buy or

(4) George PASTON [pseudonym, Miss E. M. Symonds], *Social Caricature in the Eighteenth Century*, London, Methuen and Co., 1905, p. 22

(5) Roze HENTSCHELL, 'Treasonous Textiles: Foreign Cloth and the Construction of Englishness', *Journal of Modern and Early Modern Studies*, vol. 32, No. 3, Fall 2002, p. 549, 552.

(6) Natalie ROTHSTEIN, 'Nine English Silks', *Bulletin of the Needle and Bobbin Club*, vol. 48, Nos. 1-2, 1964, p. 21.

(7) Hannah GREIG, *op. cit.*, p. 126-128.

steal all the plumes from the Theatres on her road: She will need them for a single fashionable headdress, nay, and gourds and melons into the bargain'[8]. The wearing of Prince of Wales feathers and other accessories by women was another indication of allegiance to the Prince's faction. A Wilkesite critic of the establishment by George III of a major elite artistic organisation, the Royal Academy (1768), wrote that at its exhibitions, 'the plumes of privilege might wave over the cap of Liberty'[9].

Macaroni Men and Ancien Régime *Manners*

From the mid 1760s the name 'macaroni' was given to ultra-fashionable men whose dress was read as an affront to national virtue and values. The style politics of the macaroni ranged from Whig sympathies to youthful fashion play. The name developed from sources including travel and theatre to connote the food and diversions of Grand Tour Italy. It also suggested the non-sense of much older carnival types and "macaronic poetry", satirical verse used since the Renaissance to satirise true Latin; empty-headed numbskulls or the fashionable 'blockheads' who were displayed in a popular paid entertainment by George Stevens *A Lecture on Heads* (from 1760). The macaroni appeared at the same time as the production of English satirical prints greatly expanded: as Timothy Campbell argues, such printed satires referred in turn to the proliferation of printed information about fashion found in English lady's pocketbooks or almanacs from the 1750s, as well as the 'print cultural form' of the new dedicated French and English fashion periodical from the 1770s[10]. Shaftesbury's sensational psychology, and the observations of Locke and Rousseau, argued that men were essentially different creatures to women. Horace Walpole noted in typically acerbic and misogynist terms in 1788 that 'Lord Bath used to say of Women, who are apt to say that they will follow their own judgment, that They could not follow a worse Guide'[11]. Why, then, were men wearing expensive dyes and rainbow colours, cut velvet suits, enormous nosegays (corsages), high *toupée* wigs and heels in deliberate emulation of the dress worn at the French court? References to

(8) Horace Walpole from Arlington Street, 10 Feb 1776 to Sir William Hamilton, Lewis Walpole Library 7914414/MsSS group 1, file 3. This letter is not included in the published, collected works of Walpole.

(9) Andrew ROBERTS, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

(10) Timothy CAMPBELL, *Historical Style: Fashion and the New mode of History, 1740-1830,* Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press. 2016, p. 106.

(11) Lars E. TROIDE (ed.), *Horace Walpole's Miscellany, 1786-1795*, New Haven and London. Yale University Press, 1978, p. 69.

gambling were commonly associated with macaroni who were famous for large losses at the gaming tables, and they underscored the instability and potential wastefulness of these fashionable diversions and appearances. As Daniel O'Quinn notes in his work on the theatre:

> 'macaroni style is often associated with an aberrant form of heterosexual masculinity that involves insatiable desires that need not require the consummation of any particular liaison... in this economy everything is about appearance and not actual production, about image and not actual value'[12].

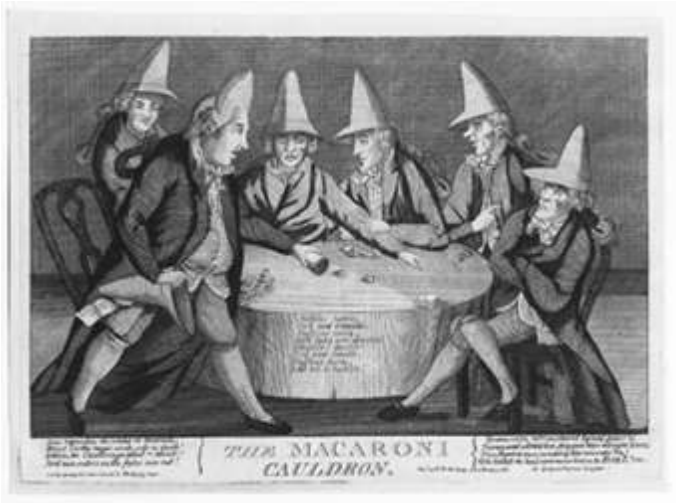

Figure 1. M. Darly, *The macaroni cauldron, To be had with many other Macaronies pubd. by MDarly (39) Strand*. [London] 9 March 1772. Eight lines of verse from *Epilogue to the Grecian Daughter* in two columns on sides of title: 'Some muffled, like the witches in Macbeth, brood o'er the magic circle, pale as death!' Eight lines of quote from the *Epilogue to The Grecian Daughter* etched on the table cover in the image: 'Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble, Passions burn, And bets are double!' Courtesy Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

(12) Daniel O'Quinn, *Staging Governance. Theatrical Imperialism in London, 1770-1800*, Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 2005, p. 67.

England had a tradition of all-male clubs and political dinners at which attendees wore similar clothing[13]. It was claimed that the macaroni attended a club where they ate non-English pasta dishes encountered on the Grand Tour. Such a club was probably Almack's (the premises and name later taken over by Brooks's from 1778), a Whiggish club where The Duke of Portland, Sheridan, Fox and the Prince of Wales were members. The macaroni sometimes wore a practical gaming uniform of loose banyan to protect their suits as well as high, straw vizor-caps to protect their eyes from the table candles that burned all night, possibly also to minimise cheating. In a caricature which depicts such a group, the iconography of the men positioned around a candle-lit table is akin to seventeenth-century images of Martin Luther and his followers[14] [fig. 1]. But the macaroni were better known in the public mind for their adoption of formal French dress known as the habit à la française of which the finer version was called the *habit habillé* ('court dress' in English). This was the three piece suit in silk or silk velvet, often embroidered, or super-fine broadcloth woollens (there is also evidence of printed cotton suits), accompanied by princely accessories such as dress or hanger sword, high-heeled pump shoes with rosettes, canes and snuff boxes [fig. 2][15].

(13) Alexander MAXWELL, *Patriots Against Fashion: Clothing and Nationalism in Europe's Age of Revolutions*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2014, p. 73.

(14) Peter MCNEIL, *Pretty Gentlemen: Macaroni Men and the Eighteenth Century Fashion World*, Yale University Press, 2018.

(15) In southern France the famous manufacturer Wetter was depicted in a wall-mural by Joseph Gabriel Rossetti entitled *The studio of the brush-painter women (pinceauteuses) in the factory of the Wetter Brothers of Orange* (1764, Orange, musée municipal) pointedly wearing his own printed cotton production in the place of what would might be a silk-brocade three-piece suit. *Gallerie des Modes* illustrated a summer informal suit of a vermicelli pattern with bands of printed *indienne* or cotton ('frac d'été de toile vermicelée à petites bandes de toile peinte qui tiennent lieu de galon'), *13e suite d'Habillemens à la mode en 1779*. I am yet to discover an example of the wearing of decorative, printed-cotton suits in eighteenth-century England, whereas the cloth was extensively used for women's dress. There was resistance to the use of cotton for male garments larger than a handkercheief or neck scarf in England, linen shirts being greatly preferred over those made of cotton in the eighteenth century. On shirts see Giorgio RIELLO, *Cotton. The Fabric that Made the Modern Wo*rld, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 8.

Figure 2. M. Darly, *The St. James Macaroni*, 12 August 1772. Courtesy Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

Court dress and the role played by a restricted but influential number of international travellers allowed the spreading of trans-national fashion. By the mid-eighteenth century, tailoring was dominated by French taste and the *habit à la française* was considered to be modern. Gustav III's courtiers experienced embarrasment from their imposed national dress with its large slashed and puffed sleeve when attending foreign courts in the 1780s; as Gustav's favourite male courtier Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt wrote: whenever possible they hurried to 'change into European attire', meaning by this a French-style suit[16]. English contemporaries interpreted the fine cut of this impractical French clothing when worn in spaces ther than the court as provocative. Lord Bolingbroke cited the latter as a desirable quality when he ordered a Paris suit that he might wear to an exclusive membership club:

> 'A small pattern seems to be the reigning taste amongst the Macaronis at Almack's, and is, therefore, what Lord B. chooses... As to the smallness of the sleeves, and length of the waist, Lord B. desires them to be outré, that he may exceed any Macaronis now about town, and become the object of their envy[17].'

(16) Lena RANGSTRÖM, 'A Dress Reform in the Spirit of its Age' in Magnus OLAUSSON (ed), *Catherine the Great & Gustav III*, Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, 1998.

(17) John Heneage JESSE, *George Selwyn and His Contemporaries; with Memoirs and Notes*, 2 vols, London, Richard Bentley, 1843, vol. II, p. 113.

Whig club-land was notorious for its extravagance; having straw laid in the street to dull the sound of carriages, for instance. This taste for homosocial men's clubs was later copied in Paris: the Club de Valois was organised by the Duc d'Orleans; Brissot's Société des Amis des Noirs, was akin to British anti-slavery groups. All of these practices relate to dress and the body and encouraged the development of new forms of material culture and social interaction. Even the taking of tobacco was directed by custom: Catholic countries preferred snuff; England, the Dutch Republic and Germany preferred the pipe. Taking snuff was better for fine clothing as no smoke affected the clothing. Women sometimes used a porcelain spoon to take snuff directly to the nose: the foreign-born Queen Charlotte's popular nickname was 'Old Snuffy'[18]. Hence there was a strong cultural connection in England between snuff taking, foppery and continental affectation.

Macaroni focus on elaborate dressing disrupted a diachronic change towards men's clothing made of woollens and also highlighted claims that luxury, expenditure, credit and consumption were remaking the character of the English. Macaronis, like the French *petits-maîtres* to whom they were often compared, also raised questions in contemporaries' minds about the relationship between dress and gender. Suggesting the French world of libertinage and eroticism, the earlier English term 'fribbler' (often synonymous with fop or macaroni) was explained in French as 'un homme qui s'amuse avec les dames'[19]. Expectations of middle and upper class English social life are indicated by an eighteenth-century letter writer: he explains that terms such as 'le savoir vivre', 'la bienséance', 'le comme il faut' are here designated by the one term such as 'to be genteel' and 'gentlemanlike'[20]. The English phlegmatic character was noted: reserve of the women, 'sang-froid' of the men, of serious character: 'the familiarity of a fop will not be suffered'[21]. Effeminacy suggested a softening of manners and morals in a society in which commercial transactions and

(18) Deborah GAGE, 'A Vestige of a Quintessential Art: A Sèvres Tobacco Jar and Cover in the Victoria and Albert Museum', *The French Porcelain Society Journal*, vol. II, 2005, p. 33-37. For 'snuffy' see Andrew ROBERTS, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

(19) Mr. A. BOYER, *The Royal Dictionary Abridged in Two Parts*, London 1767.

(20) 'Fifteen Letters Describing Life in England' (in French, possibly by a German), Letter 13, 27 December 1790, Lewis Walpole Library MSS Vol. 115.

(21) 'Fifteen Letters', Letter 14, 'Suite – Mes moeurs', 29 December 1790. Lewis Walpole Library MSS Vol. 115.

the consumption of new luxuries overtook older models of the sword[22]. Writers such as Hume were concerned that 'modern politeness... runs often into affectation and foppery'[23].

The social politics of the macaroni expressed through their clothing choices were complex and not univocal. Many of the macaroni in the mid 1760s and 1770s were young aristocratic Whigs like Charles Fox and Sir Joseph Banks, the latter being perhaps the richest youth in England. Whig adherents emphasized a version of ultra-fashionable court-dress in order to assert their pre-eminent wealth and privilege in the face of Tories and the more modest English Hanoverian court of George III. There was a double pretension in the wearing of rich and novel clothes, as they were expected to be worn at the annual King's Birthday celebrations and were widely reported upon. The most famous macaroni of all, Fox, came from a Francophile and Jacobite background, later becoming a radical Whig. Others, such as the painter Richard Cosway (who was patronised by the Prince of Wales, later George IV) and the court preacher Reverend Dodd were modestly born and became court-followers, sycophantic but also creative in their dress and their social motives which brought them patronage and press attention[24]. The macaroni were particularly prominent as the enormous rise in printed political and social caricatures coincided with a new cult of celebrity and notoriety for public figures[25]. As Hannah Greig writes, outrageous individuals and scandal literature 'were forerunners to radical attacks on the political infrastructure that emerged in a climate of the European revolution and English political reform from the 1780s and 1790s'[26].

G. F. Stephens, in the catalogue of the British Museum satirical print collection, interpreted in 1883 the prominent rise of the macaroni cluster as indicative of the inevitability of Revolutionary change across Western Europe:

> The Macaronies were scorned less on account of their affectations, unmanly refinements, and luxury than because they were the very froth

(22) Philip CARTER, 'Men about town: representations of foppery and masculinity in early 18th-century urban society' in Hannah BARKER and Elaine CHALUS (eds), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, Harlow 1997, p. 31-57.

(23) Philip CARTER, 'An "effeminate" or "efficient" nation? Masculinity and eighteenth-century social documentary', *Textual Practice*, vol. 11, No. 3, 1997, p. 438.

(24) Peter MCNEIL, *op. cit*.

(25) Shearer WEST, 'The Darly Macaroni Prints and the Politics of "Private Man", *Eighteenth-Century Life*, vol. 25, No. 2, 2001, p. 170-182. See also Antoine LILTI, *Figures publiques. L'invention de la célébrité. 1750-1850*, Paris, Fayard, 2014, who notes the significance of the theatre in the generation of awareness of a large number of public figures.

(26) Hannah GREIG, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

> of the ever-shifting crown of those social waves under which the deeply-stirred, ocean-like nation heaved, until it fell upon them. These satires on the Macaronies were, indeed, the heralds of a storm which culminated in the Conciergerie and the Temple at Paris, and poured waves of blood on the pavements of that city[27].

His comment finds resonance in the revisionist account of English men's dress by historian David Kuchta, who argues that post-1688 English aristocrats pre-empted the middle-class and puritanical challenge that their rule was tainted by luxury by promoting a more moderate appearance than their continental and Catholic counterparts[28].

Fashion, London life and English Comfort

How typical were the Macaronis and were they at odds with general trends? Between 1700-1820 the population of London nearly doubled from 674 000 to 1, 274 000. A teeming Rochean-like world was very often evoked by observers for this city. London, like Paris, was exceptional for its size and not typical of a European city. The great 'conveniences' of London were listed in a 1786 guide as 'hiring carriages, buying books, finding card players, discussing improving topics, hearing parliamentary and other debates, attending musical concerts, and taking hot, cold, and freshwater baths'[29]. London, it was asserted, was a city of communication and commerce in which ideas freely circulated from city to region via speedier and improved stage-coach travel, a mercantile place whence the English asserted their superior comforts and inventions.

A shift towards the premium for studied informality and comfortable cuts and fabrics, which pervaded street life and even courtly assemblies in England in the decade before the Revolution, defined a new modern and progressive fashion. This development of more practical, generally less expensive clothing for the European élites was closely connected to a number of English practices and attributes that extended beyond clothing. The English affinity with the countryside, the tradition of sporting dress, wider travel and a focus on domestic comfort met the wider pan-European

(27) Frederic George STEPHENS and Edward HAWKINS, *Catalogue of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum. Division I. Political and Personal Satires*, vol. IV, A.D. 1761-c. A.D. 1770, London, Trustees of the British Museum, 1883, p. xliv.

(28) David KUCHTA, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity: England, 1550-1850*, Berkeley and London, University of California Press, 2002.

(29) John TRUSLER, *The London Adviser and Guide*, London 1786, cited by John E. CROWLEY, 'The Sensibility of Comfort', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 104, No. 3, June 1999, p. 762.

pastoral fantasy of rural life to develop new modes of dressing and appearing. English culture had developed a type of freshness or 'stylish naturalness' that pervaded dress, textile and landscape designs and interior decoration[30]. A 'Letter Writer', travelling in England (possibly from Germany), delighted in the charms of well-furnished English houses and gardens with luxuriant flowers and foliage: **'***Les riches, dans tout [sic] les pays, se piquent de passer une partie de l'Eté à la campagne, mais chez les Anglais, c'est une passion... ils sont extrement sensibles aux beautés de la nature'*[31].

The Anglophile love of the countryside is exemplified in a comment by Catherine Talbot (1721-1770), English writer and member of the proto-feminist Blue Stockings Society, to the Marchioness Grey about to set off for the city: 'How can you find it in your heart... to go to so Antipastoral a place?'[32]. The taste for the countryside was as much about a certain freedom from metropolitan etiquette as a love of fresh air: the British minister to Russia, Alleyne Fitzherbert, 'confided to his sister that the time he spent with the Empress Catherine II at a country house as part of her private society, not as the British representative, was 'so much more agreeable [...] We were not troubled with the smallest degree of ceremony and etiquette'[33]. English textile production such as Spitalfields silks based on botanical prints designed by Anna Maria Garthwaite were acclaimed at the time as more 'natural', the English ones being marked by 'the beautiful disposal of colours' and 'the judicious disposition of light and shade, superior to 'the gaudy patterns of the French'[34]. In a Camporesian manner, it was remarked that French silks were made to look well in candlelight and the English ones in daylight[35]. The focus on court dress in eighteenth-century dress studies has tended to obscure the many practical modifications that people including the elites made to their dress in order to pursue new models of comfort: Thomas Jefferson wrote to London for a new pair of backless leather slippers for walking in his garden[36]. Thus clothing, along with

(30) Matthew CRASKE, *Art in Europe 1700-1830*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 161.

(31) 'Letter Writer', 27 December 1790, LWL. MSS Vol. 115.

(32) Anne BUCK, *Dress in Eighteenth- Century England*, New York, Holmes and Meier, 1979, p. 203.

(33) Linda FREY & Marsha FREY, ' "More Savage than White Bears": The Diplomatic Etiquette of Revolutionary France', *The Court Historian*, vol. 22, n^{oo}1, 2017, online version, unpaginated.

(34) Anna PUETZ, 'Design Instruction for Artisans in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Journal of Design History,* vol. 12, No. 3, 1999, p. 232.

(35) Piero CAMPORESI, *Exotic Brew: The Art of Living in the Age of Enlightenment*, Polity Press, 1994.

(36) Andrea WULF, *Founding Gardeners, The Revolutionary Generation, Nature, and the Shaping of the American Nation*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2011, p. 37.

other material possessions including ceramics, curtains, mirrors and new furniture types permitted the spread of the new taste for privacy, comfort and the new appreciation of gardening and nature[37].

Anglophilia

Macaronis could also be mocked because their dress did not look modern by the 1780s. Anglophilia played a major role in changing the appearance of European élites and the middle classes. Theatre historian George Taylor has remarked of this uptake of the 'style anglais' across Western Europe:

> 'It was a style of thought, behaviour, and art that seemed rational yet relaxed, innovatory yet respectful of tradition, materially successfully but inspired by sentiments of generosity, and all apparently underpinned by principles of toleration and equality before the law'[38].

Europeans imitated English landscaping. They also began to adopt lightly or unmounted mahogany furniture that spurned the elaborate intarsia inlay typical of mid-century: in 1784 Marie Antoinette ordered a new suite of mahogany furniture by the great German born cabinet-maker Riesener for new ground floor apartments at Versailles; her lead was followed by a number of courtiers and the key taste-maker, Thierry de Ville d'Avray (new head of the Garde Meuble) who also ordered new, simply mounted mahogany furniture for his offices[39].

The new types of spatial organisation and interior decoration found their corollary in dress. The taste for these fashions, which revealed more of the body's natural outline, and the shift in both academic art and architectural circles and popular taste towards the neo-classical, resulted in new definitions of beauty. A broad-shouldered and slim-waisted type became favoured as the male ideal, with a tall, graceful, small-breasted and high-waisted model for women. Women began to wear the 'round gown' which was pulled on over the head, 'part of a wave of aesthetic gestures fuelled by a growing distrust of artifice' driven by Rousseauan thought

(37) See John E. CROWLEY, *op. cit.* For the French concept see Daniel ROCHE, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, Cambridge, 1994 [first pub. in French, 1989].

(38) George TAYLOR, *The French Revolution and the London Stage, 1789-1805,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 16.

(39) Helen JACOBSEN, Rufus BIRD and Mia JACKSON (eds.), *Jean-Henri Riesener, Cabinetmaker to Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette. Furniture in the Wallace Collection, The Royal Collection and Waddesdon Manor*, Philip Wilson Publishers/The Wallace Collection, 2020, p. 185.

and wider West European, neo-classical taste[40]. Women's hair focussed on width rather than height, its artful, unpowdered tendrils suggesting a natural disarray. In the 1790s Greece rather than Rome generated the model: 'These *Gallo-Grecques* were most frequently represented as *Athéniennes*; Sparta was too closely associated with the politics and destruction of war'[41]. The focus on whiteness extended to the face: 'Rouge is no longer used; pallor is more interesting' recorded a commentator in 1804[42]. Male court dress moved its silhouette and cut from a focus on the horizontal, with stiffened wide skirts, to a closer fitting slim coat with short waistcoats and the side pleats eliminated. High born and wealthy children, who had been swaddled at birth and dressed in boned bodices in the first half of the century, were permitted flowing sashed dresses and one-piece suits for boys. For full court, continental children were often dressed, wigged and made-up in dress identical to that of adults, whereas the English had not insisted on such exact copies of adults. The new juvenile garments were drawn from the clothes of working men and sailors: 'the converging development of the dress... of the poor, military and naval personnel and of children with the fashionable was revolutionary, literally so in France'[43]. *The Lady's Magazine* declared swaddling a 'barbarous custom' in England in 1785[44]. Adolf Fredrik Wertmüller's painting of Queen Marie-Antoinette of France and two of her children walking in the park near the Trianon (1785), painted for Gustav III of Sweden, is notable for its depiction of the Queen's contemporary open *robe à la Turque* and very modern Anglophile cut-steel rings, buttons and one side of the chatelaine at her waist (the steel is often missed in commentaries; the other side of the chatelaine is pearls with steel) as well as for the buttoned skeleton suit selected for her son Louis Joseph.

Fashion and the sporting premium

In the last third of the 18th century in western Europe, the types of practical clothes worn by men in the country came more and more to

(40) Amelia Rauser, *The Age of Undress: Art, Fashion and the Classical ideal in the 1790s*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2020, p. 10.

(41) E. Claire Cage, 'The Sartorial Self: Neoclassical Fashion and Gender Identity in France, 1797-1804', *Eighteenth-century studies*, 2009, vol. 42, nº 2, p. 193-215.

(42) Amelia Rauser, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

(43) John Greene and Elizabeth McCrum, '"Small Clothes': the evolution of men's nether garments as evidences in *The Belfast Newsletter* Index 1737-1800', in Alan Harrison and Ian Campbell Ross (eds.), *Eighteenth Century Ireland*, vol. 5, 1990, Dublin, p. 169.

(44) Anne Buck, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

influence fashion. Henry Meister, in his *Letters written during a residence in England* (1799), noted: 'In England gentlemen employ all the time they can spare from public affairs, or private business, in the exercise of riding or walking, in the diversions of hunting or shooting, at the theatres, or in tavern clubs or societies'. The adoption of boots, chamois knee-breeches, soft, round riding hats and riding crops promoted new informal modes of fashion that surprised the older generation. Men began to wear elements drawn from jockey dress and caps (also known as 'Newmarket dress'), and jaunty printed waistcoats in which tassels were playfully printed on cotton [fig. 3], some with multiple capes in different colours, drawn from jockey livery. Newmarket horse racing was associated in the mind of George III with licentious gambling and Whig influence on the Prince of Wales.

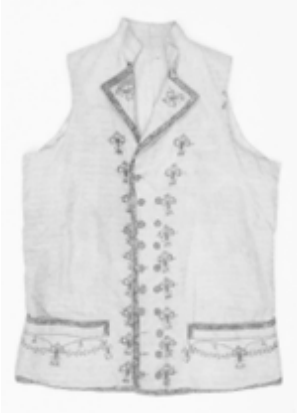

Figure 3. Man's vest, English, 1790–1800. Cotton plain weave with supplementary-weft patterning, centre-back length 61 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of Jack Cole, 63.24.6.

In a more positive light, such clothing placed a premium on youth, a good figure and new ideals of manly deportment, that can be connected back in time to older ideals of the equine-ready body. The ideas move forward in time towards the cult of sport and youth that dominates masculine fashion today and therefore relate to wider questions of mobility – both real and metaphoric – over time. As Anne Buck noted, by wearing rural dress, English men also signalled that they preferred dress that was practical and

profitable, rather than urban-leisure focussed[45]. The frock coat (*fraque* or *frac anglais),* with easier fit and small collar, and the long, straight, caped riding coat (*redingote*) became the height of fashion in France from 1774 [fig. 4]. Sometimes crossing in the front they were then called *à la Lévite*; the name also accorded to a loose informal garment for women. A coat without external pockets was the type of dress described in the 1770s as 'undress', that is, informal clothing. Aileen Ribeiro has noted that to achieve this new narrow line, the outside flapped coat pocket was replaced with an inside pocket from 1777[46]. A shorter waist-coat (*veston*) or *gilet* (sleeveless), often double-breasted in the 1780s, replaced the older skirted forms. The *redingote*, some of which had two or even three fallen collars, indicated a type of hyperbolic dressing for men that would continue to escalate until the Revolution, later becoming subsumed into the dress of the astonishing *Incroyables*. Philippe, duc d'Orleans was the main promoter of such Anglomania in France, including horse-racing and gaming, as leader of the anti-court faction[47]. This new, informal dress based on riding modes began to appear in once formal spaces such as the English House of Lords by the 1780s.

(45) Anne BUCK, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

(46) Aileen RIBEIRO, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, Yale, Yale University Press, 1984, p. 142.

(47) Aileen RIBEIRO, *Fashion in the French Revolution*, London, B. T. Batsford, 1988, p. 39.

Figure 4. Pierre-Thomas LeClerc (designer), Etienne Claude Voysard (engraver), 'Rédingotte à trois colets et Croisée par devant, dite Rédingotte en Lévite', *Gallerie des Modes et Costumes Français, 35e, Cahier de Costumes Français, 27e Suite d'Habillemens à la mode en 1781*, II.203(bis), Paris, 1781. Hand-coloured engraving, 387 x 248 mm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The Elizabeth Day McCormick Collection 44.1489.

Charles Fox's clothing evolution

Charles James Fox provides a case of a particularly significant late-eighteenth century clothing evolution. Wearing the new modern clothes drawn from sporting dress did not make their owner fit or scrupulous. The life of Charles James Fox, the 'Original Macaroni' as he was called in a caricature, indicates how the condition, arrangement and cleanliness of clothes could generate very different signals at different times. Fox's mother's family, the Lennoxes, were more French than English, as Charles James' maternal great-grandfather, the first Duke of Richmond, Charles Lennox (born in 1672), was the illegitimate son of Charles II and Louise de Kéroualle. The family maintained French links throughout the eighteenth century and this certainly informed Charles James' macaronic identity as an English *petit-maître*[48]. These factors lend support to Matthew Darly's appellation of Fox as the 'Original Macaroni', because like macaroni features in general, Fox might literally be seen as a French 'import' [fig. 5]. Whigs of two types dominated politics between 1760-1790. Fox, along

(48) 'Lord Holland, not at all vexed, noted that the travel was producing the "petit maître achevè" [sic]'. Lord Holland to Sir G. Macartney, 30 June 1766, in Leslie George MITCHELL, *Charles James Fox*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 9.

with Rockingham, Portland and Grey stood for ancient liberties and against the government Whigs who stood for executive authority and stability (North, Pitt[49] and Liverpool). Fox's claim to be an aristocrat was always in contention as his father was a commoner who scandalously married an aristocrat. He has therefore been called 'a grand commoner who could oppose the ruling oligarchy from within'[50].

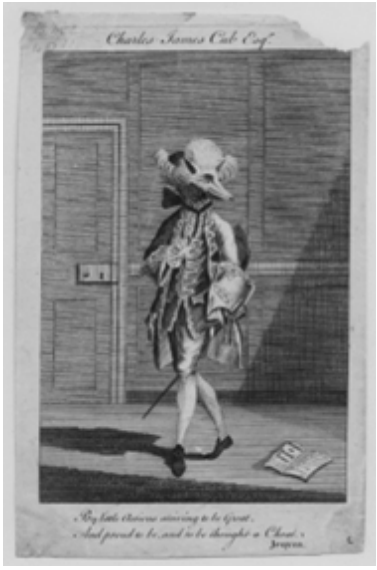

Figure 5. "Charles-James Cub Esqr", in *The London Museum of politics, miscellanies, and literature* (London: printed for J. Miller, v.3, 1771), p. 309 [quotation beneath from *The modern fine gentleman* by Soame Jenyns]. Courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

Fox was a young man of 21 in 1770 when he and the Earl of Carlisle were described parading in the Mall 'in a suit of Paris-cut velvet, most fancifully embroidered, and bedecked with a large bouquet; a head-dress cemented into every variety of shape; a little silk hat, curiously

(49) Pitt is considered to be an independent Whig.

(50) Penelope J. CORFIELD, Edmund M. GREEN and Charles HARVEY, 'Westminster Man: Charles James Fox and his Electorate, 1780-1806', *Parliamentary History*, vol. 20, 2001-2, p. 161.

ornamented; and a pair of French shoes, with red-heels'[51]. The English Tory Parliamentarian and memorialist Sir Nathaniel Wraxall recalled, 'At five and twenty I have seen him apparelled [*sic*] *en petit Maitre* [*sic*] with a Hat and Feather, even in the House of Commons'[52]. 'The majority of male nobility appeared at court *à la mode de Paris*, and chiefly Mr. Fox, to the great indignation of an antigallican mob' remarked a Regency writer[53]. An Edwardian biographer of another self-styled macaroni and friend of Fox, Walter Stanhope, made the antipathy explicit when he noted: 'Charles James Fox and young Lord Carlisle, were viewed with displeasure by the King and Queen who endeavoured to maintain a simplicity in manners and attire'[54]. The King actively disliked Fox, blamed him for the corruption of the Prince of Wales, and worked to exclude him from government[55]. Fox's notorious gambling debts, and his association with another high-stakes gamer, the Duchess of Devonshire, saw him 'portrayed as an essentially disordered individual: the aristocratic gamester relinquished reason, choice and will through his indulgence in games of chance'[56].

Charles James Fox gained weight in early middle age and became unkempt and unshaven, growing a partial beard which was uncommon at the time. Following his ultra-fashionable youth, in which lavish dress asserted a cosmopolitan outlook and Whig confidence, Fox, leader of the Whigs and long-term opposition leader, appeared deliberately dishevelled and neglectful of dress, his cropped hair without powder, and wearing a frock coat and waist-coat, "neither of which seemed in general new, and sometimes appeared to be thread-bare[57]". His speaking style was lively and spontaneous, and might be compared to the commentary around David Garrick's new theatrical persona, another figure keenly interested in foppery as a social form. Fox's disorder found a counter-balance later in the controlled dandyism and fastidious suiting of Beau Brummell:

(51) *The Life of the Right Honorable Charles James Fox, Late Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs...*, London, Albion Press, 1807, p. 18.

(52) Sir N.W. WRAXALL, *Historical Memoirs of his Own Time*, new ed., London, Richard Bentley, 1836, vol. II, p. 229.

(53) *The Life of the Right Honorable Charles James Fox, op. cit.,* p. 41.

(54) A.M.W. STIRLING, *Annals of a Yorkshire House from the Papers of a Macaroni & his Kindred*, London, John Lane, 1911, vol. I, p. 323.

(55) Phyllis DEUTSCH, 'Moral Trespass in Georgian London: Gaming, Gender, and Electoral Politics in the Age of George III', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 39, No.º 3, September 1996, p. 637-656.

(56) *Ibidem,* p. 638. The Duke of Devonshire also played at Almack's (Brook's), where Fox was elected a member at the age of 17 and he later ran a faro bank.

(57) Sir N.W. WRAXALL, *op. cit.,* p. 229.

> 'Diderot, Jefferson, Joseph Priestley had pioneered the unadorned simplicity of the dark suit, and on their bodies its republican connotations were unambiguous. In contrast, Brummell's sartorial invention was adopted by the moderate Royalist Whigs as a reaction to the shabby republican dress of radical Whigs like Fox'[58].

The French had standardised dress and manners in part as a hegemonic gesture in which the appearance of the aristocracy and the court emphasised status and uniform appearances. The French historian Georges Vigarello has conceptualised the effects of court fashion, cosmetics and hairdressing as to elide nature, erecting a type of 'scrim' or screen between body and viewer[59]. This had the desired effect of universalising rather than particularising the face and body; the solidarity of the group rather than the individuality of its members was emhasised. Re-imported into England such rich clothing also worked to reinforce status but also took on new meanings. The English often claimed that their 'civil liberties' permitted more freedom due to mixed government and the 'ductility' of the laws as opposed to French autocracy and granted privileges, as Goldsmith noted in *Citizen of the World*[60]. Fox embraced Paris and her society but hated the Bourbon autocracy[61]. Fox applauded the beginning of the French Revolution and compared it to 1688[62]. Foxites also split over the Revolution: 'Foxite Whigs saw themselves as embracing the urban and trading sections of society as against the purely landed interest'[63]. In 1795 when Fox opposed Pitt's Sedition and Treason Bills as threats to English liberty, he appeared at a public meeting of many thousand people. Wordsworth wrote to Coleridge:

> 'A little after 12 the Hustings being prepared, the Duke of Bradford [the peer and Whig politician the 1st Earl of Bradford, of the second creation (1762-1825), later 2nd Baron Bradford] &c. came upon it. Much hallooing & clapping on their appearance. The Duke was dressed in a Blue Coat &

(58) Jules LUBBOCK, 'Adolf Loos and the English Dandy', *Architectural Review*, CLXIX, No. 1038, August 1983, p. 44.

(59) Georges VIGARELLO, *Concepts of Cleanliness. Changing attitudes in France since the Middle Ages*, trans, Jean Birrell, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988 [*Le Propre et le sale*, Éditions du Seuil, 1985], p. 83.

(60) Marcia Langley BRYANT, *Magnificence and Foppery: France According to Eighteenth-Century Writers*, unpublished PhD, University of Iowa, 1977, p. 93.

(61) John W. DERRY, *Charles James Fox*, London, B.T. Batsford, 1972, p. 295

(62) *Ibidem*, p. 295

(63) Penelope J. CORFIELD, Edmund M. GREEN and Charles HARVEY, art. cit., p. 167.

a Buff waistcoat with a round Hat. His hair cropped and without powder. His hair grisly grey'...[64]

Fox in part wore his new dress to appeal to demotic feeling: he wrote that Foxites had 'the popularity, and I suspect we shall have it universally among the lower classes'[65]. By 1780 he was described as 'squalid, dirty and fat'[66]. Brewer argues that Fox and his circle, by this change, 'were more responsible than any other group for the demise of elaborate, courtly dressing'[67]. Shabbiness and dressing down were strategies also employed by some North American colonists such as Benjamin Franklin. In 1778 Franklin met the French King in unlaced black velvet with neither hat nor sword: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun compared his appearance to 'a big farmer'[68]. The English court had also changed, and at the very top. King George III was reported as having worn to a Drawing Room at court in 1794 'a brown cloth coat and breeches, with plain steel buttons, and white silk waist-coat'[69]. Eventually the sons of George III wore country boots in his presence. Women, too, dressed more simply in the countryside and frequently wore short riding habits and masculine stocks at the neck to travel to and from the city. Such masculine clothes often shocked people on the Continent, and such women might be addressed as 'Sir'[70] [fig. 6]. Using her literary training and later focus in art, Ann Hollander argued in *Sex and Suits* (1994) that wool, leather and linen create a sense of harmony with the natural world, rather than the sense of opposition created by glossy and smooth textiles such as satin and silk[71].

(64) Leslie George MITCHELL, *op. cit.*, p. 140.
(65) *Ibidem*.
(66) Stanley AYLING, *Fox. The Life of Charles James Fox*, London, John Murray, 1991, p. 50.
(67) John BREWER, *The Common People and Politics, 1750-1790s, The English Satirical Print 1600-1832*, Cambridge, Chadwyck-Healey, 1986, p. 31.
(68) Whitney A. JONES, 'George Washington: Dominion, Democracy and Dress', unpublished Masters of Arts Thesis, S.U.N.Y. Fashion Institute of Technology, 2009, p. 20.
(69) 'His Majesty's Birthday', *Bon Ton*, June 1794, p. 154.
(70) Brian DOLAN, *Ladies of the Grand Tour*, London, Harper Collins, 2001, p. 179.
(71) Anne HOLLANDER, *Sex and Suits*, New York: Knopf, 1994, p. 81.

Figure 6. After H.D. Hamilton, Valentine Green, printmaker, "Lady Spencer" (pencil inscription), 1 May 1771, mezzotint, "Portraits of Ladies in Mezzotint After the paintings of Famous Masters from Anthony Van Dyck to Sir Joshua Reynolds", Bliss Collection, Folio 75 P839 800, Vol IV. no. 19. Courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

The cult of Fox, which developed from the 1790s into the nineteenth century, avoided his macaroni phase as indicative of youthful folly, best discarded. Representations of Fox turned to Roman republican imagery, featuring him in short, cropped hair, often in a toga-like garment to disguise his portly figure[72]. Flaxman's model for the pediment of the 'Temple of Liberty' at Woburn Abbey in 1803, for the Foxite Whig politician Francis Russell, Fifth Duke of Bedford, included Liberty crowning a slave with the pileus (cap of liberty)[73].

Reading the clothing landscape

English viewers were alert to details of clothes not simply because they learned how to read a landscape thick with snobbery and social privilege, but because clothes carried a range of politically charged meanings, particularly in dense, urban contexts. As Katrina Navickas writes: 'clothing was an optimum means of public communication'[74]. She argues that the vestimentary upheaval across the Channel made people

(72) T.E. ORME, 'Toasting Fox: The Fox Dinners in Edinburgh and Glasgow, 1801–1825', *History*, vol. 99, No. 337, 2014, p. 588-606.

(73) N.B. PENNY, 'The Whig cult of Fox in early nineteenth-century sculpture', *Past and Present*, No. 70, 1976, p. 94-105.

(74) Katrina NAVICKAS, '"That sash will hang you": Political Clothing and Adornment in England, 1780-1840', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 49, No. 3, 2010, p. 540-565.

'acutely aware' of political clothing practices that had been in longer circulation in England. These included the Cap of Liberty and the wearing of the rough textile fustian, worn by Chartist leaders into the nineteenth century to identify with plebeian concerns. English electioneering had long been marked by a proliferation of badges, sashes, ribbons and colours that indicated party affiliation. The colour purple tended to indicate a non-plebian faction and all-white was often worn by women at political rallies well into the twentieth century. The colour green was connected with political dissent, Jacobitism and was only fully associated with Irish Catholic immigrants in the 1840s: Navickas notes that in the Revolutionary period it was often allied with the laurel as a symbol of leadership and victory[75]. Whig supporters often wore the colour orange in honour of the Glorious Revolution and William of Orange; Tories often wore 'true' blue. But buff (a yellow-brown) and garter-blue[76] meant something different again in the 1780s: previously associated with the Parliamentarian 'Roundheads' and the Glorious Revolution (1688), these were the colours of Washington's Continental army and were widely worn by prominent women such as the Duchess of Devonshire who electioneered on behalf of Fox. Rejecting the rainbow palette of his youth, Fox wore a blue coat and buff waistcoat in Parliament after 1782 (George Washington was often depicted also wearing matching buff-coloured chamois knee breeches, riding dress that suggested dynamism). At the political dinners of the 1780s and 90s, male attendees often wore uniform garments:

> 'Fourteen hundred supporters of Lord Hood, the Pittite candidate in 1788, met for dinner at Willis's Rooms, King Street, complete with their own distinctive clothing blue coat with orange silk collar, white kerseymere waistcoat and breeches'[77].

Anti-radical, pro-high Anglican Church clubs designed their own uniform with buttons engraved with a church. Easily available and cheap cockades and ribbons in appropriate colours were worn and waved by people unable to change their whole outfit; some of the ribbons were printed with text so that they were semiotically unambiguous. Parties spent large amounts of money on this ephemera which was in turn banned by the Seditious Meetings Act of October 1819 and a further Act in 1827

(75) *Ibidem*, p. 552-553.
(76) The blue of the ribbon of the Order of the Garter.
(77) Marc BAER, 'Political dinners in Whig, Radical and Tory Westminster, 1780-1880', *Parliamentary History*, No. 24, 2005, p. 188.

in order to minimise disturbances[78]. Approaches to army uniforms were also very different to that of France: Whig anxiety about a standing army saw volunteer regiments often dressed by subscription, with no central standard of colour or garment type. Wealthy women supporters wore hats dressed with regimental colours. Uniforms for military officials became more widespread following the Napoleonic Wars. Philip Mansel has persuasively argued that such dress met with great resistance from upper-class English and French men. Unlike the splendid and very expensive *habit habillé* of the old regime, rank might be legible but not always status. To many elite men, uniform was indistinguishable from the servitude of livery (assigned clothing). By the 1850s all British government officials had to wear civil uniforms, distinguished in rank by the amount of embroidery[79].

The management of men's hair and the use of wigs is significant here. Wigs were worn almost universally in England throughout much of the eighteenth century and even small villages had barbers who attended to wigs[80]. Wigs did not necessarily connote any aristocratic pretension but were connected with respectability. Towards the end of the century younger men began to wear their own hair, as they did across Europe from France to Denmark. Radical leaders and supporters such as the English Jacobin John Thelwall began to wear wigless, cropped, un-powdered hair in the Roman manner to indicate egalitarian values[81]. Hair powder was taxed, but 46 000 Englishmen still paid for it in 1812, some of whom would have been lawyers and older gentlemen[82]. Visual satires of the 'Englishman abroad' suggested that only old fashioned purveyors of *Ancien Régime* goods would continue to wear and attempt to retail such absurd anachronisms to a practically-dressed tourist dressed in protective leggings, his hair hidden by a tall, beaver hat [fig.7].

(78) Katrina NAVICKAS, art. cit., p. 547.

(79) Philip MANSEL, 'Monarchy, Uniform and the Rise of the Frac, 1760-1830', *Past & Present*, vol. 96, No. 1, August 1982, p. 103-132.

(80) Peter MCNEIL, '"Beyond the horizon of hair": Masculinity, nationhood and fashion in the Anglo-French Eighteenth century' in D. FREIST and F. SCHMEKEL (eds.), *Hinter dem Horizont Band 2: Projektion und Distinktion ländlicher Oberschichten im europäischen Vergleich*, 17.19. Jahrhundert, Aschendorff Verlag, Münster, 2013, p. 79-90.

(81) Steve POOLE, 'Gillray, Cruikshank and Thelwall: Visual Satire, Physiognomy and the Jacobin Body', *Romantic Circles,* https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/thelwall/HTML/praxis.2011.poole.html accessed February 2022.

(82) Farid CHENOUNE, *A History of Men's Fashion*, Paris, Flammarion, 1993, p. 10.

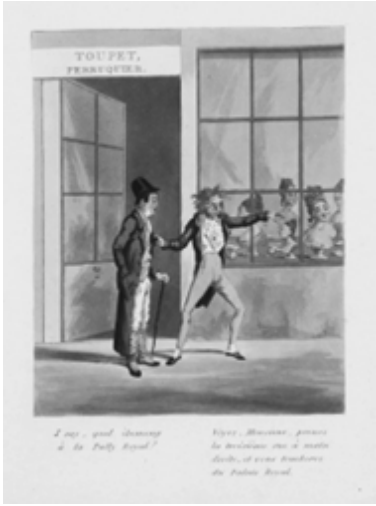

Figure 7. *Toupet perruquier*, London.: pubd. March 14, 1817 by the Proprietor [14 Mar. 1817], etching and aquatint, hand-coloured, six caption lines below image: *I say, quel chemeng a' la Pally Royal?* Courtesy Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Health and science

Politics found its corollary in new quasi-scientific beliefs about the benefits and pitfalls of customary clothing and textiles. Doctors and scientists promoted a shift away from fabrics such as silk and velvet, which were unwashable, impervious, and therefore unhealthy, towards the greater use of woollen broadcloths and cotton. Rousseau's moral speculation – 'Everything which cramps and confines nature is in bad taste' – was mapped onto new pseudo-scientific experimentation and observation[83]. English physician Walter Vaughan merged anxiety about maleness with his experiments on the dormouse and cloth in *An Essay, Philosophical and Medical Concerning Modern Clothing* (1792): 'Alas! if our venerable ancestors were but raised from the dead to see their posterity disguised so hideously with paint, powder, and several other articles of dress, they might be led to ask – "Where is a Man?" '[84]. Like others, he invoked classical ideals to advocate woollen fabrics over silks as 'the most natural, the most

(83) Jean-Jacques ROUSSEAU, *Emile*, 1762, trans. Barbara Foxley (1993), London, J. M. Dent, p. 330.

(84) Walter VAUGHAN, *An Essay Philosophical and Medical Concerning Modern Clothing*, London, Robinsons, 1792, p. 28.

wholesome' clothing of the ancients[85]. He proposed that women's cotton and silken stockings caused 'cancer, inflammation [sic], and even abortion' and proposed that stockings be made with toes[86]. John Trusler recorded his alarm at the dangers of dress and electricity, noting that silk stockings for ladies should include cotton feet to avoid lightning strikes, and that 'Hypochondrica persons' might modify traditional dress to avoid illness, wearing: 'A waistcoat of the finest flannel, kept perfectly clean and dry [...] to cover this with another of the same size made of black silk this would certainly produce a kind of electric atmosphere around the body that might possibly be one of the best preventives against the effects of damp'[87].

The less frequent use in England of court dress and uptake of clothing which relied less on fantastically expensive woven silks merged with new 'democratic' approaches to dressing to create a modern, English dress. The new focus on an unencumbered and natural body, free of corsetry, make-up, and hair pomade, made the aristocratic courtier type appear debilitated, effete and old-fashioned. In France too, many philosophical, scientific and aesthetic tracts criticized aristocratic modishness, and warned against an indolent French manhood and emasculated state. From the 1760s, French *philosophes* had characterised their age as an effeminate one dominated by corrupting female values. Men who were too preoccupied with fashion, it was claimed, deferred to women not only in matters of dress and deportment, but also in statecraft. Male manners are softening, wrote the satirist L.-A. de Caraccioli, precisely because men wear soft velvet clothing[88]. Comparing a young courtier man at a gathering with Omai (real name Ma'i), the second Pacific Islander to visit Europe 1774-1776, the novelist Fanny Burney concluded that the former was a 'meer *pedantic Booby*... I think this shews how much more *Nature* can do without *art*, than *art* with all her refinement, unassisted by *Nature*'[89].

'Modern Crops'

Were the macaroni an example of men who refused to relinquish finery because they feared a new form of power in which they could not share? Or were they willingly contesting that power with some remnant of

(85) *Ibidem*, p. 91.
(86) *Ibid*., p. 108.
(87) Dr John TRUSLER, 'Unpublished Memoirs', no pagination, Lewis Walpole Library.
(88) [Louis-Antoine de CARACCIOLI, attrib.]. *La Critique des dames et des Messieurs à leur toilette* [pamphlet, inscribed '1770']. BnF, Z 3230, No. 23/2, p. 15.
(89) Fanny BURNEY, *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, ed. by Lars E. TROIDE. Vol. II [1774-1777], Oxford: Clarendon, 1990, Burney, Letter, 1 December 1774, p. 63.

the allure of aristocratic luxury? The engraving 'Modern crops importantly employed', published in *The Bon Ton Magazine* in 1791 suggests that this might have been the case [fig. 8]. It is a satire on fashionable men's hairstyle for the year with political connotations and reference to the tumbrils. It shows 'Sir Barnaby Bow-string, a man of war', flirting with two lady milliners. Periodical articles of this time describe new names for fashion-loving men: 'A noble crop, a jack-a-dandy crop, a thundering crop, a man milliner crop, a fashionable crop, a city crop'.[90] 'While Miss Tiffany the milliner is encircling his neck with about two pounds of cotton, muslin, &c. under the pressure of which he enjoys in some degree the physical excitements of strangulation!'[91].

'Where is that honest hardiness, where that manly dignity which distinguished our ancestors, and led them to acts of valour and policy, which awed and surprised the world?' asked the article:

> 'Ask the IDIOT with his *neck and shoulders* bare, and his *cropt pole*, as if preparing for the *last ceremony* of *JACK KETCH*, those questions, and a vacant grin is all that can be extorted from his eloquence'[92].

(90) 'Modern crops', *The Bon Ton Magazine*, No. VII, Sept. 1791, p. 270-271.
(91) 'Modern crops importantly employed', *The Bon Ton Magazine*, 1791, p. 311.
(92) *Ibidem*, p. 310.

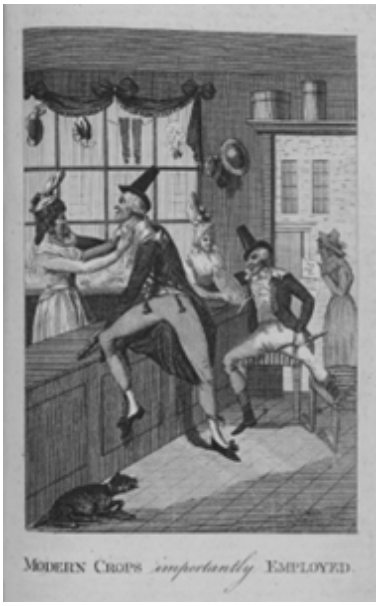

Figure 8. Modern Crops importantly employed', *The Bon Ton Magazine: or Microscope of Fashion and Folly For the Year 1791*, No. VII. Sept. 1791, opposite p 310. Courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

The executioner 'Jack Ketch' was supra-topical, and a 'crop' or a 'croppie' often indicated short hair and some association with Republican sympathy. In the same month that this sketch was published, Louis XVI accepted the new constitution. By 1792 many British political reform societies were flourishing, before the September massacres of 1792 led to the formation of Loyalist associations.

English reaction to vestimentary practices of the Revolution

Edmund Burke saw the French Revolution as illegitimate, being founded on rationalism, atheism, and lack of respect for both private property and aristocratic refinement. He refuted claims that it echoed 1688, as in his view, English Whigs had pre-empted the attempts of James II to install a subversive Roman Catholic polity. Burke condemned the change wrought in the diplomatic corps:

> 'All elegance of mind and manners is banished. A theatrical, bombastick, windy phraseology of heroic virtue, blended and mingled up with a

worse dissoluteness, and joined to a murderous and savage ferocity, forms the tone and idiom of their language and their manners'[93].

Even the neat dress of school children might be compared with revolutionary disorder. *The Times* interpreted the children's dress, looks, and 'exemplary conduct' at a 1796 welfare anniversary as showing 'the beneficial effects which the poor derive from a well regulated state of society; protected by a Constitution superior to that of any other country; and [...] a complete refutation to the wild theories of modern Reformists'[94].

Vestimentary practices of the French Revolution ranged from the clearly legible dress of the orders at The Estates General to the eighty-three women dressed in costumes expressive of the new departments at the first celebration of the storming of the Bastille in Beaufort-en-Vallée[95]. English writers and journalists described with surprise many of the revolutionary changes in French fashions such as the disappearance of the court dress so closely twinned with aristocracy. They often noted the rise of elements of demotic or working-class dress, frequently demeaned as slovenly. Following the execution of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette in early 1793 reports from Paris focussed on 'the total change of the manners and customs of this celebrated city'. Many indicated a Burkean attention paid to Republicanism as represented in clothing. In April 1794 *Bon Ton Magazine* reported on 'Modern Paris':

> 'The total change of the manners and customs of this celebrated city, is deserving attention... No idle *muscadines* are met with at the Palais Royal. Canes and sticks are out of fashion, none but the old are using the latter. Very few prostitutes are met with in the evening in the streets, and are generally disguised in the garb of modest industry... The men's dress consists of a sailor's jacket and a pair of trousers, a coloured handkerchief around the neck, and a furred cap, generally red. Thus equipt, they are called *Carmagnols*, and the dress is manly and becoming... The suspected or Aristocratical ladies generally are cloathed like fisherwomen, or *Les Dames de la Halle*'[96].

(93) Linda FREY and Marsha FREY, art. cit.

(94) Sarah LLOYD, 'Pleasing Spectacles and Elegant Dinners: Conviviality, Benevolence, and Charity Anniversaries in Eighteenth- Century London', *Journal of British Studies,* vol. XLI, 2002, p. 37.

(95) Frank E. POULSEN, 'Self-fashioning and rhetoric in the French revolution: Anacharsis Cloots, orator of the human race', *Global Intellectual History*, 2021, vol. 6, No.3, p. 302-332.

(96) *Bon Ton Magazine*, April 1794, p. 56-57.

Mrs Helen Maria Williams published her *Letters written in France, in the summer 1790...* in the same year. She noted a new 'cant' or slang in which 'everything tiresome or unpleasant: "*c'est une aristocratie*!" and every thing (sic) charming and agreeable is, "*à la nation*" '[97]. Williams recorded a radical shift in dressing:

> 'Their opera flourished, and was at this time the theatre the most in fashion. It was here too, that the greatest difference was observable in the appearance of the audience. The lobby, where formerly were to be seen brilliant groups of all the young men and women of fashion, and of all the most distinguished courtezans, who often rivalled and surpassed them in dress and appearance, was now crowded by a strange medley of ill-dressed, dirty looking persons; the men with an affectedly neglected appearance, and the women with no other distincton [*sic*] of dress or attraction than valuable shawls and expensive lace veils [...]'[98]

But Mrs Williams firmly rejected the Burkean commonplace that the French had become uncouth:

> 'every thing I have seen and heard, since my arrival in France, has contradicted this assertion, and led me to believe that the French will carefully preserve, from the wreck of their monarchical government, the old charter they have long held of superiority in politeness [...] their turn of expression is a dress that hangs gracefully on gay ideas, that you are apt to suppose that wit [...] is in France as common as the gift of speech'[99].

The arrival of the *émigrés* in London indicates that in navigating the streets of London little deference was paid due to dress. Kimberly Chrisman's research on the *émigrés* of Paris in the 1790s notes the following:

> 'The Comte de Montlosier saw an elderly Chevalier de Saint-Louis – '*maigre'* and '*coiffé à la française avec un catogan'* [a type of hairstyle] – being harassed by a group of British butchers in Oxford Road, undoubtedly because of his chivalric insignia, foreign hairstyle and gaunt appearance. The Duc de la Châtre was told 'that if I walked about in the suit I was

(97) Helen Maria WILLIAMS, *Letters written in France, in the summer 1790, to a friend in England: containing various anecdotes relative to the French Revolution; and Memoirs of Mons. and Madame Du F*, London, T. Cadell, 1794, p. 74.

(98) Mary BERRY, *Social life in England and France from the French Revolution in 1789, to that of July 1830, by the Editor of Madame du Deffand's Letters,* London, Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1831, p. 66-67.

(99) *Ibid.*, p. 197-198.

> then wearing, I should be a public laughing stock' – a tailor made him a new suit and greatcoat which he found 'of the most common and cheap materials'. Monsieur de Narbonne informed him: 'you can go anywhere as you are now. In this country people can go where they like in such an attire' '[100].

Aristocratic dress, with its trappings of ornament, was feminized practice at odds with the trend towards modern democracy. Although George Washington wore formal dress with diamond knee-buckles for his second Inauguration (1793), Jean-Antoine Houdon sculpted him with a button missing on his coat. A new type of body had emerged. The aristocrat with a repertoire of courtly gestures learned from horse-riding and the dancing master had been replaced by the 'natural' body which resisted vain and undeserving gesture. Although a less encumbered more 'natural' body emerged in the late-eighteenth century, it was still a body formed and viewed within social constructs, and the citizens of the era were far from indifferent to fashion. The meanings of Enlightenment dress at the time of the Revolution were less about the temporary symbolism adopted at the time – trousers, cockades, English-style hats – or the adoption of splendid military dress and other uniforms - than a shift in the relationship between dress and society. Whig leader the 1st Earl of Shaftesbury (1621-1683) had contended that modern manners should be polite and 'harmonious', a fashionable but not foppish 'manly liberty', working in tandem with 'the goodly order of the universe'[101]. The rapid take up of shopping and urban leisure might be widely embraced, then, but to English social conservatives the burgeoning of late eighteenth century fashion culture needed to be carefully managed *via* discipline, erudition and Ciceronian moderation.

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(100) Kimberly CHRISMAN, *L'Emigration à la mode: clothing worn and produced by the French émigré community in England, from the Revolution to the Restoration*, unpublished M.A. Diss. Courtauld Institute, London, 1997, p. 5-6.

(101) G. J. Barker BENFIELD, *The Culture of Sensibility. Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 113.