

Dissipation and Extravagance: Ageing Fops

Peter McNeil

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Abstract

My paper will compare two eighteenth-century English men who were extraordinarily fashionable in their youth, but who appear transformed in middle and old age. They were so fashionable, in fact, that dress made them famous and projected them into the arena of print-culture, theatre and press as 'macaroni' men. Whig politician Charles James Fox (1749-1806) and court painter Richard Cosway (1742-1821) used novel and extreme modes of dress in order to cement their social rank and place in the public imagination. Their style-politics was as much about the process of wearing, as the garments themselves. Previous studies of macaroni dress have tended to focus upon caricature as a fictive genre. This paper aims to knit together a cultural form with historical bodies, without suggesting that the caricature is in any way a simple reflection. In considering the authenticity of a newly discovered self-portrait of miniature-painter Cosway in old age, the under-studied area of male fashion and the staging of a life will be considered.

Dissipation and extravagance: ageing fops

The relationship between men's fashion and age has not received a great deal of attention. The shift charted by Gilles Lipovestky (1994) towards a youthful imperative in the second half of the twentieth-century can have the effect of obscuring the relationship of fashion, age and the staging of a life in earlier societies. That much more is known about this process for women's fashion is not surprising. Mapping a life through clothes has been undertaken for female subjects as diverse as eighteenth-century English-woman Barbara Johnson, or the inter-war Torontonion matron (Palmer 2001; ed Rothstein 1987). Leaving aside exceptional twentieth-century figures such as Cecil Beaton or the Duke of Windsor, less is known about how men managed ageing and sartorial change. Yet it is was elderly men – not women – in World War II Britain who complained vociferously regarding the control of clothing design by the Board of Trade (McNeil 1993: 286). As the perusal of portraits indicates, old age in the *ancien régime* did

not demand a relinquishing of fashionability for male urban elites, nor would such a position be appropriate. Nonetheless, concepts of polite interaction and attitudes towards participation in public life could lead to substantial shifts in masculine appearance.

My paper will compare two eighteenth-century English men who were extraordinarily fashionable in their youth, but who appear transformed in middle and old age. Whig politician Charles James Fox (1749-1806) and court painter Richard Cosway (1742-1821) used novel and extreme modes of dress in order to cement their social rank and place in the public imagination. They were so fashionable, in fact, that dress made them famous and projected them into the arena of print-culture, theatre and press as 'macaroni' men, a species of fop. The stage figure of the fop frequently derived his charge from the fact that he was too old for his fashion and his airs, that age literally betrayed him. The macaroni of the 1760-70s brings together ideas of male behaviour, fashion, deception, the staging of a life and nationhood. In considering the authenticity of a newly discovered self-portrait of miniature-painter Cosway in old age, the understudied area of male fashion and the staging of a life will be considered.

Men, fashion and ageing

The relationship of ageing to fashion studies is relatively under-developed. The recent text *The Long History of Old Age* (ed Thane 2005) makes deft use of the male psychological portrait but very little of the dressed body. David G. Troyansky's essay on the eighteenth-century in that volume notes that the religiosity of earlier periods began to be eroded in France by new feelings of worldliness, sentiment and respect. In England, on the other hand, he observes the continuation of earlier themes including 'negative' connotations and 'comic derision' (Troyansky 2005).¹ The caricature print is one such form which continued older ludic traditions. From the Italian for 'charge' or 'loaded', the caricature print emerged in large numbers in the eighteenth-century in industrialising Western Europe. It was in the second half of this century that the caricature which concerned itself primarily with the subject of fashion and manners rather than political or portrait themes developed. The origins and conventions of the fashion caricature include overlapping literary, theatrical, popular-religious and artistic traditions. Greco-Roman theorisations, performances and artistic depictions of the comic world turned upside down, and late medieval woodcuts, which included *memento mori* themes of the dance of death and the bonfire of the vanities established the tropes of the veneer of civilisation and the futility of dress and cosmetics in arresting earthly time. The European carnival tradition, *commedia dell'arte* and puppetry which highlight human foibles, and the figure of the hag who deploys fashion and make-up in an act of sartorial and spiritual delusion, provided subjects for major Romantic artists

working in the etching media such as Giambattista Tiepolo (1696-1770), Domenico Tiepolo (1727-1804) and Francisco Goya (1746-1828). Not fashion caricatures as such, nor were these images widely available, but their themes recur in the eighteenth-century caricature print.²

Drawing on Renaissance physiognomic studies or 'caprices' by Leonardo da Vinci, Giuseppe Arcimboldo and Albrecht Dürer, and the Baroque caricatures of Annibale and Agostoni Carracci (*Heads*, c. 1590) and Gianlorenzo Bernini, eighteenth-century Italy saw a rise in the production of recognisable portrait caricatures which included carefully delineated costumes etched by Pier Leone Ghezzi (1674-1755) and Pietro Longhi (1702-85), and painted in Rome by English artists Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92) and Thomas Patch (1725-82). These works did not circulate widely in the public realm but were designed for the amusement of aristocratic circles participating in the Grand Tour who understood the dialectic of the ideal and the debased explored in this work. Furnishing their sitters with hideous physiognomies and ill-formed bodies loaded with fine clothing and airs, the works depict the dress and demeanour of the aristocrat abroad when the mask of civility has slipped under the influence of alcohol and other vices.

The macaronis form the largest subset within the English graphical social satires produced in abundance from the early 1770s. 'Macaroni' was a topical term connoting ultra-fashionable dressing in England c. 1760-80 (McNeil 1999; McNeil 2000; Steele 1985; Rauser 2004; Ribeiro 1978). Although used occasionally to refer to women noted for their conspicuous gambling – described, like fashion, as a form of ephemeral expenditure – the term generally referred to the styling of men. Macaroni identity was not a peripheral incident in eighteenth-century culture but a lively topic of debate in the periodical press.



Figure 1: Robert Sayer, *A Macarony [sic] at a Sale of Pictures*, London, 1771, collection Peter McNeil

Motives for retaining elaborate dress requisite at court but not necessary in the streets of commercial London were various, inflected by the class interests and personal motivations of the wearers. Although sometimes conflated, the macaroni is incompatible with the dandy, who was concerned rather with an ease and elegance born of restraint rather than a register of excess. The dandy continued, however, the macaroni project of a focus on looking – and being looked at – which disrupted gendered notions of the (female) subject.

Charles James Fox – ‘squalid, dirty and fat’

Charles James Fox, the 'Original Macaroni', was famous, in part, for a shift from his macaroni youth of the 1760s to a taste for dishevelled informality in the 1790s. By 1780 he was described as 'squalid, dirty and fat' (Ayling 1991: 50). In Matthew Daryl's third suite of macaroni engravings, number eight was entitled *The Original Macaroni*. This is a portrait of Charles James Fox, not dressed as a macaroni at all, but in a bizarre costume which Dorothy George suggests may be masquerade dress. He holds a rod hung with a fox tail, another tail hangs from his neck. The image is inscribed 'Tom Fool the First'. Horace Walpole mentions young men dressed as 'Tom fools with caps and bells' who appeared at the masquerades c. 1772 (George 1935).³ The caricature may simply be playing with the notion of the ridiculous nature of macaroni dress,

which is fit only for a costume ball. Part of the joke of the caricatures of Fox must have been that he did not fit the bodily ideal of the young courtier; rather than well turned legs and a slender form, he tended to the plump. The Fox of the later years of his life is probably better known today, a supporter of the American and the French Revolutions, rotund, dishevelled and sporting democratic dress. Fox's shift from youthful macaroni to untidy middle age struck all his biographers: 'he was to lead the taste of the town through all stages from coxcombrity to slovenliness' (Trevelyan 1880: 64). Fox's place as a macaroni is here analysed with reference to his party and political affiliations, his upbringing and his place as a youth within London society.

Charles James Fox is well served by biographers and all discuss his macaronic youth (Tillyard 1994).⁴ His mother's family, the Lennoxes, were more French than English, as Fox's maternal great-grandfather, the first Duke of Richmond, Charles Lennox (b. 1672), was the illegitimate son of Charles II and Louise de K roualle.⁵ The family maintained French links throughout the eighteenth-century and this certainly informed Fox's macaronic identity as an English *petit-ma tre* (fop). These factors lend support to Darly's appellation of Fox as the 'Original Macaroni', because like macaroni features in general, Fox might literally be seen as a French 'import'. His life is representative of the translation of French authority of style into the English socio-political scene; of the birth of a particular form of style politics.

Fox had first visited Paris when he was fifteen, and as a schoolboy was seen 'with his hatt [sic] & feather very french [sic] & very much improved' (Mitchell 1992: 9). Lord Holland, not at all vexed, noted that the travel was producing the 'petit ma tre achev  [sic]' (Mitchell 1992: 10). Fox's appearance as a young macaroni can in part be imagined from a respectful portrait engraving of him at nineteen years of age (Mitchell 1992, illus. 3).⁶ The profile in the engraving is perfectly suited to display the silhouette of the typical high wig with side-curls and a large wig-bag, which appears to weave around the front of the throat *en solitaire*. He wears a frock coat with tasselled frogging, and a waistcoat with a ribbon-plaited front. The particular association of macaronic dress with a hair-style is evident here. The face also displays an insouciance which accords with *petit ma tre* stereotypes.

Charles had always been spoiled as a child; tales of his coddling are legendary, such as the time he was allowed to ride on a huge haunch of roast beef delivered to the dining table (Tillyard 1994: 80). His Regency biographer B.C. Walpole (1806: 14) used this upbringing to explain his macaroni dissipation:

Accustomed from his earliest infancy to act just as he pleased, without check or control from others, and without any motive for controlling [sic] himself, he took no trouble, when grown up, to oppose that torrent of pleasure and dissipation by which he was surrounded, but plunged with eagerness into vice and extravagance wherever fancy prompted or fashion allured.

In France and Italy Fox was well placed to absorb the elaborate male fashions of the late 1760s. He is supposed to have made a special trip to Lyon to purchase silk waistcoats, and he began to sport the red heels associated with Versailles, and carry a 'little odd French hat' (Rogers et al 1903, pp. 72-3; Mitchell 1992: 11). Back in London he turned twenty-one in 1770, the period when the macaronic pose was about to peak.

[H]e indulged in all the fashionable elegance of attire, and vied, in point of *red heels* and *Paris cut velvet* with the most dashing young men of the age. Indeed there are many still living who recollect Beau Fox strutting up and down St. James's street, in a suit of French embroidery, a little silk hat, red-heeled shoes, and a bouquet nearly big enough for a may-pole. These and similar qualifications he displayed in most of the courts of Europe which he visited in the course of his tour, and if he did not return like his maternal ancestor, Charles II. [sic] with all the vices of the continent, he at least brought back a wardrobe replete with all its fashions (Walpole 1806: 24).

Wraxall (1836: 229) 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'. Fox was perfectly poised, young and wealthy, to take on the mantle of what Walpole noted was the style of the young at a time when interest in fashion was expanding exponentially. A notorious gambler, Fox became part of the Whig club-land which was notorious for its extravagance; having straw laid in the street to dull the sound of carriages, for instance. His gambling debts and loans from Jewish money-lenders were public knowledge. The following verse, *Heroic Epistles* by William Mason, a friend of Horace Walpole, circulated in 1772 (Toynbee 1926: 70):

But hark, the voice of battle shouts from far.

The Jews and Macaroni's [sic] are at war:

The Jews prevail, and thund'ring from the stocks

*They seize [sic], they bind, they circumcise C*s F**

Here macaroni excess is seen as having merely enriched the Jews at the expense of England; in the last line Fox is made one of them; cut down to size.

Like gambling debts, dress was a very visible part of conspicuous consumption. A lavish dress, like the sumptuous Whig country estates and town-houses (Spencer House was built in the 1760s) indicated that here resided the true power in England. Whigs of two types dominated politics between 1760-90. Fox, along with Rockingham, Portland and Grey stood for ancient liberties and against the government Whigs who stood for executive authority and stability (North, Pitt and Liverpool). Fox 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 ornamented; and a pair of French shoes, with red-heels (Walpole 1807: 18).

'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,' noted a Regency writer (Walpole 1807: 41). 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 (Stirling 1911: 323).

George III – 'Farmer George' – was allied with the sober Tory William Pitt, whereas the flashier Prince of Wales was linked to Fox and the Whigs. As the Whig forebears had opposed absolutism, there was an irony in this re-importation of French court dress, wit and manners as a style detached from its original premise. The Whigs wore aristocratic dress without the autocratic agenda inherent in the French original. The French had standardised dress and manners as a hegemonic gesture; re-imported into England they had new meanings. Fox loved Paris and her society but hated the Bourbon autocracy (Derry 1972: 295). Thus his adoption of macaroni dress was not a tribute to monarchy but a statement of a cosmopolitan outlook and Whig confidence. Later he applauded the beginning of the French Revolution and compared it to 1688 (Derry 1972: 295). Fox does not appear to have used the term macaroni to describe himself but preferred the term *petit-maitre*, a term which was negative in the hands of a *philosophe*, but affectionate within salon society. In a letter to his father requesting that he stay on at Eton he

half-jokingly suggested, 'the petit maître de Paris is converted into an Oxford pedant' (Mitchell 1992: 9).

There was surely also an element of outdoing the court followers which included a large number of non-noble sycophants such as Richard Cosway, the 'Miniature Macaroni'. It also set the young Fox and his followers decisively apart from the respectable middle classes who adopted darker wardrobes. Harvey (1995: 122) notes that by the mid eighteenth-century 'many professional men and scholars, some men of business and the great majority of clerics, wore serious, to-be-respected black'. As the aristocrats were often disliked by the middle classes, the caricatures by Matthew Darly, and the fops performed on stage by David Garrick were the ideal retort, a challenge which a supremely confident figure like Fox probably relished.

The contradictions and multi-vocal meanings associated with the macaroni resound in Dick Hebdige's (1979: 3) argument that the 'meaning of subculture is, then, always in dispute, and style is the area in which the opposing definitions clash with most dramatic force.' The reiteration of signs in the caricature genre – the hair-style, the cane or sword, the pumps, the snuff-box – indicate that these objects had a powerful charge for male participants in this type of dressing. Magnifying and viewing devices such as monocles, lorgnettes and quizzing glasses for men were, as Olga Vainshtein (2008) argues for the dandy of the next generation, central 'for scrutinizing the decisive details [of dress] and judging the appropriateness of them.' Such devices conveyed both 'interest and contempt'. Feminist theory also can be used to understand the meanings of style politics – using 'rituals of consumption in dress, cosmetics, hairstyle, and gesture to bend the norms ordained by the market and to flout family and other authority' (de Grazia & Furlough 1996: 7). Contemporaries certainly interpreted the macaroni behaviour as deliberately provocative. Lord Bolingbroke cited the latter as a desirable quality when he ordered a Paris suit:

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. (Jesse 1843: 113)

One explicit element of resisting authority was also present. 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'; there were public burnings of seized goods (Maeder 1998, pp. 34-40; Rothstein 1964: 21). The Seven

Years War (1756-63) had blocked the curious traveller to see French novelties. In late 1770 Fox visited Paris again, B.C. Walpole (1806: 27) claiming that:

[I]t was an undoubted fact that the sole intention of his journey was to purchase clothes for the approaching birth-day, in defiance of the laws of his country, by which a penalty of two hundred pounds was attached to the wearing of apparel of French manufacture. Purchasing suits and lace for others, the Customs House impounded those that had not been worn and burned them.⁷

Dress continued to be significant in Fox's later parliamentary career. In 1795 when Fox opposed Pitt's Sedition and Treason Bills as threats to English liberty, he appeared at a large public meeting (estimates range from two- to thirty-thousand people). Wordsworth wrote to Coleridge:

A little after 12 the Hustings being prepared, the Duke of Bradford &c. came upon it. Much hallooing & clapping on their appearance. The Duke was dressed in a Blue Coat & a Buff waistcoat with a round Hat. His hair cropped and without powder- Fox also cropped, and without powder. His hair grisly grey... (Mitchell 1992: 140)

Wraxall (1836: 229) noted that Fox wore his frock coat and waist-coat into the House of Commons; 'neither of which seemed in general new, and sometimes appeared to be thread-bare'. His dress was designed to appeal to popular feeling; Fox wrote that Foxites had 'the popularity, and I suspect we shall have it universally among the lower classes' (Mitchell 1992: 140). His female supporters such as Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, 'adopted a dress in compliment to him, composed of a mixture of garter-blue and buff' (Walpole 1806: 101; Wraxall 1836: 229). These were the colours of Washington's army (Tillyard 1994: 309). Brewer (1986: 31) argues that Fox and his circle by this change 'were more responsible than any other group for the demise of elaborate, courtly dressing.' This is not the stream related to the dandy; 'his sartorial precision gave way to a studied neglect of his appearance' (Brewer 1986). Thus a study of Fox disrupts in a very useful and tangible way the linear fashion history which wishes to see extremism in men's fashion as a simplistic continuum. The difficulty of 'reading' the politics of dress in an uncomplicated manner is also indicated in Lubbock's useful analysis (1983: 44):

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.

Changing fashions in Parliament here denote changes in political affiliations and agendas in a time of social change. Fox proved himself adept at recognising the power of using style for his own political purposes. By the early nineteenth-century, Fox's gambling and macaroni phase, his 'dissipation and extravagance' was read disapprovingly as a youthful flaw in 'this distinguished senator and states-man' (Walpole 1806, pp. iv-v). The Whiggish behaviour of Fox and his set was demonised. The frontispiece to B.C. Walpole's *Recollections of the Life of the Late Right Honorable Charles James Fox; exhibiting a faithful account of the most remarkable events of his political career, and a delineation of his character as a statesman, senator, and man of fashion...* (1806) illustrated the contrast; the jowly Fox with unpowdered hair on the left; the macaroni on the right, arms akimbo, dress-sword in place, trimmed suit. The Regency illustrator does not appear to have understood the excesses of macaroni hair, which he omitted from the illustration.

Richard Cosway – the 'Macaroni Painter'

Daniel Roche (1994: 91) notes of the 'great cultural transformation' that was the Enlightenment: 'the hierarchy of the signs of social differentiation' weakened; 'there was a shift in the significations of appearances to emphasise social personalities in other ways, and operate differently on social space'. Clothing choices were not about simple acts of emulation but rather props in self-fashioning. The miniature painter Richard Cosway (1742-1821) provides us with a fascinating case study of another 'real' macaroni, this time low-born, whereas Fox and his contemporary Sir Joseph Banks were quite the opposite. Cosway used macaroni manners in an entirely different way but was a remarkable success story. The talented son of a Devonshire headmaster, he was sent to London to study painting before he was twelve (Reynolds 1988: 124). He won first prize in a competition conducted by the Society of Arts in 1755 (Reynolds & Baetjer 1996: 131). Cosway had ambitions to paint large format pictures but was most successful with the miniature, providing his male and female sitters with the fashionably long necks, almond eyes and soft wispy hair they desired. He provided rather more detail of their fashionable clothing than many other painters, perhaps an indication of his sartorial leanings.⁸

Cosway grew rich and successful from the patronage of the Prince of Wales, later George IV, in the 1780s, providing the prince with fashionable portraits of himself and his Whig circle and with advice on his important art collections. Cosway began to sign his miniatures in Latin from at least 1787, and for this pretension he was caricatured as *Dicky Causeway in Plain English* (1786) (Reynolds 1988: 125). He married the painter Maria Hadfield in 1781 and they lived in considerable splendour. Their standard of living caused envy amongst other painters, and

Cosway dressed with an image to match his status as court painter to one of the vainest and most sartorially extravagant English princes.

At the time of the macaroni craze, Cosway was in his early thirties and had just become the first miniaturist to be made a full member of the Royal Academy.⁹ As Graham Reynolds (1988: 126) notes, 'Cosway achieved in his life many of the social ambitions which Sir Joshua Reynolds had staked out for the artist'. Fine clothing was an essential part of that persona for Cosway. His *Self-portrait*, c. 1770-75 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York),¹⁰ shows him dressed in the height of Parisian elegance, in fabrics possibly purchased from Paris itself. This portrait was not discussed in the first macaroni articles by Steele (1985) and Ribeiro (1978), but is probably the finest representation in terms of skill and detail of the type. The height of his powdered wig, the artfully wrapped *solitaire* with pinked edges, the pale pink brocade of his waistcoat, the diaper-patterned blue and mauve silk suit brocaded with sprays of roses at the shoulders, and French needle lace could be said to provide a clear indication of what a wealthy London macaroni resembled. The ermine lining of the brocaded blue coat, being a traditional prerogative of nobility, is a particular conceit. However, without the exuberance of behaviour conveyed more readily by the caricature, Cosway's self-image is as much a fiction. In the eighteenth-century, high-art painting and caricature were both means through which such finery was read. As Hollander (1995: 27) notes of Renaissance art, forms such as engravings 'taught elegant people how to see what made them look elegant'. Cosway's portrait is designed to distance itself as far as possible from caricature which is nevertheless its implicit counter-text and context. This is how he would want to be seen in his macaroni finery. Yet the *toupée* of Cosway's wig is not far removed from the types seen in caricature. The very studied pose can be compared with Jean-Baptiste Perronneau's *Jacques Cazotte*, who wears a similar bag-wig with black satin ribbons, and inserts one hand in his coat in a pose of studied nonchalance. This type is the hand-in-waistcoat portrait which was a traditional sign of august nobility (Meyer 1995, pp. 45-63).

Cosway also posed for Johann Zoffany's commemorative painting *The Academicians of the Royal Academy* (1771-72) with the hat and cane of the courtier or macaroni at his side. He wore a green silk suit, gold waistcoat, and held a gold braided *chapeau bras*. Only he and Reynolds have swords. The pose is redolent of the swaggering posture conferred by Van Dyck on the likes of Charles I as well as that prototype the Apollo Belvedere. This pretension must have grated with Sir Joshua Reynolds, for in dressing in such a superior fashion, Cosway suggested he was inherently equal to Reynolds' superiority. Cosway wore this get-up everywhere, not

merely in the presence of the prince, and for this he was mercilessly lampooned. J. T. Smith referred to Cosway thus in *Nollekens and his Times* (1828):

He rose from one of the dirtiest boys, to one of the smartest of men. Indeed so ridiculously foppish did he become that *Mat* Darly, the famous caricature print-seller, introduced an etching of him in his window, in the Strand, as 'The Macaroni Miniature-Painter'... I have often seen Mr. Cosway at the Elder Christie's Picture-sales, full-dressed in his sword and bag; with a small three cornered hat on the top of his powdered toupée, and a mulberry silk coat, profusely embroidered with scarlet strawberries (Stephens & Hawkins 1883: 713).

Darly's funniest coup was calling Richard Cosway the 'Miniature Macaroni'. Darly made the image half the size of the rest and also depicted the painter of miniatures as very tiny, overshadowed by his sword. This must have caused great hilarity amongst its viewers, for Cosway was both short and burdened by his dress sword, which he never left off.

Lloyd (1995) notes that Cosway was adept at deflecting criticism from his peers and may have enjoyed the notoriety he attracted. Despite being called one, he owned an ultra-fashionable pet monkey. At a meeting of Academicians in the Turk's Head public house the following incident with the small Cosway and the large Francis Hayman was reputed to have occurred:

Cosway... who had been at court attended in all the gay costume of the drawing-room, with pink heels to his shoes, &c., but the room was so full that he could not find a place. 'What', said Frank Hayman, 'can nobody make room for the little monkey?' Wilson laughed, and exclaimed, 'Good G-d! how times and circumstances are changed; sure, the world is turned topsy-turvy, – formerly, the monkey rode the bear, but here we have the bear upon the monkey.' This set the table in a roar, in which Hayman joined heartily, and rising, shook hands with Cosway, who received him with the greatest familiarity and politeness, and instantly every chair in the room was set at his service (Lloyd 1995: 30).

The contemporary writer Henry Angelo claimed that George III was amused by Cosway's manners and appearance, the Royal Family enjoying a laugh at his appearance (Lloyd 1995: 31). On one unfortunate occasion Cosway tripped on his sword and fell over in the mud in front of the Prince of Wales' carriage and a large crowd.¹¹

The currency of his reputation is indicated by the appearance in 1772 of two prints satirising him, one by Robert Dighton, the other by Matthew and Mary Darly. As the miniature painter was short in stature the joke was doubly strong. One of the rarest macaroni caricatures, *The Macaroni Painter, or Billy Dimple sitting for his picture*, has traditionally been held to represent Cosway. Cosway wears a cinnamon coloured coat, blue breeches and white stockings; the sitter wears a red coat, green waistcoat, brown breeches and white stockings. It was topical enough to be included in the background of *Miss Macaroni and her gallant at a print-shop*.

The Paintress of Maccaroni's [sic] was published c. 1770 as a companion to *The Macaroni Painter*. Both images play with the notion of the fashionable observing and crafting copies of the equally fashionable; who is sitting to whom, and which is the greater work of art? As a joke-book quipped of the macaroni type: 'Why is he like a Picture? Because he is painted' (pub Cooke [1773]: 85). Cosway used dress as a means of asserting his new social rank. Caricatures perpetuate his new standing no less readily, if not more respectfully, than his own self-portrait. He was himself his greatest work of art: 'My old friend Cosway, though a distinguished artist, and a very intelligent, loquacious, entertaining little man, was certainly a mighty *macaroni*...', wrote Henry Angelo (Lloyd 1995: 31).

In 2006 a miniature appeared on the art market purporting to be a *Self-Portrait of Cosway in old age* (Christies 2006, Lot 152). Showing the sitter with a feminine papery face, powdered hair, and flattering Van Dyck dress, the work is believed to be a nineteenth-century fake by Cosway expert Stephen Lloyd.¹² Perhaps the faker had not seen what is believed to be a genuine *Self-portrait in old age* c. 1805-10 (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge). With rheumy eyes, a brown broad-cloth suit and simple but crisp linen, the hair remains archaic and emphatically in the style of Cosway's macaroni youth.

What these historical figures have in common is a recognition and exploitation of the power of dress. Underlying this insight is a more or less self-conscious understanding of the performance of identity. Dress is constructed as a costume which creates a reality, rather than as a straightforward expression of some inherent character. The power this construction afforded was put to diverse ends by different personages, and was practised with varying degrees of self-consciousness.¹³ Fox made an explicit statement of cultural alignment with French culture in order to annex an authority of taste in opposition to the authority of the English king. All the other macaronis might be said to have exploited this same authority to their own ends: Banks, for

example, to assert the dilettantism of the aristocracy; Cosway to celebrate and perpetuate his new socially-esteemed self. The creation of a reality through dress, the performance of the macaronis, is matched in the function of caricature in the reconstitution of these historic identities. Caricature is not simply a reflection of social reality, distorted for comic effect, but can be said to have created the site in which the 'macaroni' identity was consolidated. The caricatures of caricatured figures consuming caricatures depict this occurring. In this sense, the macaroni's representation in caricature is always that medium's portrait of its own power. The macaroni, indeed, is neither fact nor fiction, but represents the collapsing of a distinction between the two.

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Endnotes

¹A general history is provided by Blaikie, A 1999, *Ageing and Popular Culture*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

²The best overview of fashion and the eighteenth-century caricature remains Donald, D 1996, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London.

³All prints mentioned in this article are in the collection of the British Museum.

⁴Unfortunately many of his private papers were destroyed in 1907, making it more difficult to assess his character and motivations: his 'very humanity was incinerated' (Tillyard 1994: xx).

⁵Louise was created Duchess of Portsmouth, and given the Stuart lands in France by Louis XIV. Upon Charles II's death, the son Charles Lennox was brought up in France, as a Catholic, at the Château d'Aubigny. He later renounced his religion and returned to England, where he enjoyed a handsome income from coal dues granted by his father.

⁶Fox does not appear to have had himself painted in oils in macaroni dress.

⁷The birthday is the King's birthday, at which it was customary for a new suit to be worn

⁸See, for example, the careful rendering of stock, lace and silk in *George IV as Prince of Wales* (Reynolds 1988, pl. XV).

⁹Cosway did not exhibit in the first exhibition of the Royal Academy in 1769, but entered the schools in that year, exhibiting in 1770. He became a full member in 1771 (Reynolds 1988, pp. 124-5).

¹⁰The miniature was established as a self-portrait after comparison with engravings of the artist's profile by I Clarke and R Scriven (Reynolds & Baetjer, 1996: 131; Lloyd 1995, pp. 30, 101, 114)

¹¹This was clearly a general hazard: Fanny Burney wrote in her journal for 1774:

Giardini relates that when he was on the Continent, being obliged to wear a sword, which his Cloth prevents his being burthened with here, he was so extreamly [sic] aukward [sic], from want of Practice, that the first Day he Walked out, the sword got between his Legs, & fairly tript him Up–Over–or down– I don't know which is best to say (ed Troide 1990: 13).

¹²Correspondence with the author, 18 June 2007

¹³Pointon notes in her study of the eighteenth-century portrait: 'Only by identifying codes and conventions of representation and relating them to individually inventive acts can we reconcile the historical with the regimes of spectacle and discourse' (Pointon 1993: 5).