Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century France

MICHAEL KWASS

In the winter of 1751, after accepting a position of some responsibility in the world of finance, Jean-Jacques Rousseau fell gravely ill. Bedridden, delirious with fever, and facing the prospect of his own death, the philosopher resolved to change the course of his life. He renounced "all projects of fortune and advancement," including his new job, and vowed to spend what little time he had left in a state of "independence and poverty." After his convalescence, Rousseau remained true to his pledge and embarked on what he called his "personal reform." His first act was to change his wardrobe: "I began my reform with my finery," he wrote. "I gave up my gold trimmings and white stockings, I took a short wig, I laid aside my sword, I sold my watch." Later recounting the same episode, he stated: "I left *le monde* and its pomp. I renounced all finery: no more sword, no more watch, no more white stockings, gold trimmings, hairdo." Instead, he wore "a simple wig and clothes of good rough wool."[1]

As a philosophical statement, Rousseau's personal reform was loaded with meaning. The act of dressing down signified that the author of the recently published *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* was putting his philosophy into practice; he was turning his back on the luxury and artifice of Parisian high society and embracing a virtuous and authentic mode of living. I invoke Rousseau's reform, however, not only to raise its philosophical implications but also to make a specific sartorial observation. Although Rousseau renounced fashionable clothing and accessories, he did not jettison the wig. Instead, he abandoned his old wig to adopt a simpler and shorter model, the round wig, a gesture that raises a number of questions. Why, if Rousseau was intent on rejecting the artifice of *le monde*, did he not simply discard the wig altogether and wear his natural hair? Why opt instead for a different style? Were certain styles not implicated in the corrupt high society that Rousseau was determined to repudiate? These may seem frivolous affairs of fashion, but, as I will argue, the multiple meanings attributed to wigs illuminate an important Enlightenment transition—economic, social, and cultural in scope—from courtly to modern forms of consumption.

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[1] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1959), 1: 363; Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes de J. J. Rousseau*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1852), 1: 409. Translations throughout the article are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

Liberal scholars have long hailed the Enlightenment as the birthplace of the modern world, an era in which great thinkers deployed reason to battle faith and superstition in an effort to liberate the individual from the constraints of custom.[2] Today, historians are rightly suspicious of such linear—call them Whiggish—interpretations of the period, yet many still cling to the idea of the eighteenth century as threshold to the modern world. As it is now described, however, the modernity of the eighteenth century has less to do with a philosophical or literary canon than it does with transformations in a wide range of social, cultural, and political practices. Among such changing practices, consumption looms large. Indeed, the study of consumption has been central to the historiographical project of recasting the relationship between eighteenth-century life and modernity.[3]

Historians of consumption have generally followed social theorists in emphasizing two different aspects of modernity. While social scientists emphasize long-term processes of "modernization," such as urbanization and industrialization, cultural historians and literary critics define modernity in terms of consciousness, stressing in particular the development of a reflexive self and a heightened awareness of one's present age as new and set off from the past.[4] Both understandings of modernity underpin current historical literature on eighteenth-century Western European consumption. Highlighting socioeconomic processes of commercialization, historians argue that eighteenth-century Western Europe experienced a "consumer revolution" as men and women freed themselves from the grip of scarcity to initiate a buying spree of historic proportions. Although its geography and periodization remain highly controversial, such a revolution is commonly represented as a step toward modern consumer society.[5]

[2] See, for example, Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 vols. (New York, 1966–1969). Radical and conservative scholars also claim the Enlightenment as birthplace of the modern world, but a darker modern world where rationalism has run amok. For a Marxian critique, see Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York, 1972). For conservative critiques, see Darrin McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford, 2001).

[3] See, for example, the critical role played by consumption in two leading syntheses of the Enlightenment: Daniel Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass., 1998); and Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York, 2000).

[4] For social processes of modernity, see Craig Calhoun, ed., *Dictionary of Social Sciences* (Oxford, 2002), s.v. "modernity" and "modernization theory." For cognitive approaches, see Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York, 1982); Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004); Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, Calif., 1991); and Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and the Avant-garde* (London, 1995).

[5] The seminal study by Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington, Ind., 1982), drew wide attention to changes in eighteenth-century England. Yet historians have since underscored earlier developments, both in England (Carole Shammas, *The Pre-industrial Consumer in England and America* [Oxford, 1990]; Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660–1760* [New York, 1988]) and in urban regions on the continent (Richard A. Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300–1600* [Baltimore, Md., 1993]; Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* [New York, 1987]). Although consumption was not particularly robust in the eighteenth-century German lands, Daniel Purdy argues that fashion journals there created a bourgeois consumer culture; Purdy, *The Tyranny of Elegance: Consumer Cosmopolitanism in the Era of Goethe* (Baltimore, Md., 1998). With respect to France, historians have mined after-death inventories to demonstrate a dramatic rise in consumption in the eighteenth century. Much of this work focuses on Paris: Cissie Fairchilds, "The Production and Marketing of Populuxe Goods in Eighteenth-

At the same time, the study of consumption, especially French consumption, has taken a cultural turn, opening new doors between the Enlightenment and late modernity.[6] Daniel Roche, whose work has defined the field, argues that the birth of consumption was an integral part of a larger cultural change in which the traditional values of a stationary Christian economy gradually gave way to the egalitarianism and individualism of modern commodity culture. For Roche, the story is principally one of emancipation: "It is important to recognize that . . . commodities did not necessarily foster alienation; in fact, they generally meant liberation."[7] The diffusion of fashion led to "a new state of mind, more individualistic, more hedonistic, in any case more egalitarian and more free."[8] Less optimistic than Roche but equally intent on establishing a connection between Enlightenment consumption and modernity, Jennifer Jones contends that the late-eighteenth-century discourse on fashion helped to produce modern, essentialized definitions of gender. As social differentiation faded from fashion commentary, gender differentiation took its place.[9]

As with all sharp historiographical turns, acknowledging the growth of consumption has produced a host of questions in its wake. First, historians disagree on the extent to which consumption did in fact reshape eighteenth-century society. Although some see in the rise of consumption the revolutionary birth of modern consumer society, others cautiously emphasize consumption's economic and social limits.[10]

Century Paris," in John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993), 228–249; Annik Pardailhé-Galabrun, *The Birth of Intimacy: Private and Domestic Life in Early Modern Paris*, trans. Joyce Jocelyn Phelps (Philadelphia, Pa., 1991); Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge, 1994). But it is now clear that the French provinces did not lag far behind: see Madeleine Ferrières, *Le bien des pauvres: La consommation populaire en Avignon (1600–1800)* (Seyssel, 2004); Michel Figeac, *La douceur des Lumières: Noblesse et art de vivre en Guyenne au XVIII siècle* (Bordeaux, 2001); and Benoit Garnôt, *Un Déclin: Chartres au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1991). In the French case, periodization hinges on clothing. Although Roche's figures apply mainly to the eighteenth century, Clare Haru Crowston pinpoints the 1670s as the decade in which the consumption of French women's clothing began to rise. See Crowston, *Fabricating Women: The Seamstresses of Old Regime France, 1675–1791* (Durham, N.C., 2001), chap. 1.

[6] Studies incorporating a cultural approach to French consumption include Crowston, *Fabricating Women*; Jennifer M. Jones, *Sexing La Mode: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France* (Oxford, 2004); Steven L. Kaplan, *The Bakers of Paris and the Bread Question, 1700–1775* (Durham, N.C., 1996); and Rebecca L. Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomical Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000). An interdisciplinary approach to consumption is also apparent in recent work on luxury. See Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, eds., *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650–1850* (Manchester, 1999); and Berg and Elizabeth Eger, eds., *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires, and Delectable Goods* (Houndmills, 2003).

[7] Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, 550.

[8] Daniel Roche, "Apparences révolutionnaires ou révolution des apparences," in Madeleine Delpierre, ed., *Modes & révolutions, 1780–1804* (Paris, 1989), 111.

[9] Jones, *Sexing La Mode*. There are echoes of this thesis in Lynn Hunt, "Freedom of Dress in Revolutionary France," in Sara E. Melzer and Kathryn Norberg, eds., *From the Royal to the Republican Body* (Berkeley, Calif., 1998), 224–249; Catherine Lanoë, "Cosmétiques et entreprises féminines à la fin du XVIIIe siècle," in Natacha Coquery et al., eds., *Artisans, industrie: Nouvelles révolutions du Moyen Âge à nos jours* (Paris, 2004), 269–281; and Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, 116. For similar arguments regarding England and Germany, see, respectively, David Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity: England, 1550–1850* (Berkeley, Calif., 2002); and Purdy, *The Tyranny of Elegance*.

[10] Skeptics of revolutionary change in English consumption include Ben Fine and Ellen Leopold, "Consumerism and the Industrial Revolution," *Social History* 15 (May 1990): 151–179; and Carole Shammas, "Changes in English and Anglo-American Consumption from 1550 to 1800," in Brewer and Porter, *Consumption and the World of Goods*, 177–206. Skeptics of revolutionary change in early modern European consumption in general include Jan de Vries, "Between Purchasing Power and the World of Goods: Understanding the Household Economy in Early Modern Europe," in Brewer and Porter, *Con-*

How far-reaching were the effects of the so-called "revolution" in consumption? Second, studies have not analyzed with sufficient specificity the cultural ramifications of new modes of consumption. How exactly did the emergence of new forms of consumption alter understandings of self and society? Generalizing about the emancipatory effects of consumption runs the risk of reconstructing, along materialist lines, an older liberal or Whig interpretation of the Enlightenment. Instead, we need to investigate more closely the meanings attached to specific consumer goods, and to consider how such meanings evolved.

Social and cultural approaches to consumption dovetail in a history of one of the most successful commodities of the eighteenth century: the wig.[11] The social life of this odd consumer good reveals much about the chronology, social depth, and geographic range of new consumer practices in the Age of Enlightenment. Rather than validating simplistic conceptions of consumer revolution, the wig's diffusion demonstrates a dramatic expansion in an intermediate zone of consumption situated between aristocratic luxury and popular necessity. Equally important, the cultural life of the wig casts doubt on the long-standing theories of consumer emulation formulated by Georg Simmel, Thorstein Veblen, and Norbert Elias, for the meaning of the wig cannot be interpreted solely in the context of conspicuous consumption or the pursuit of social status. Indeed, the language of eighteenth-century taste leaders suggests an attempt to move beyond a courtly consumer culture in which the main purpose of goods was to mark social rank. Through the printed word, taste leaders carved out a new set of consumer values—convenience, natural authenticity, and self-expression—to mediate the relationship between consumption and status.

IT IS COMMON TO REGARD THE WIG of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as an aristocratic ornament of Old Regime Europe, an exclusive marker of high birth and status worn by the privileged few. Indeed, the wig enjoyed the most noble of pedigrees, its origins stretching back to the seventeenth-century French courts of Louis XIII and Louis XIV, where fashion had become part of an aristocratic world of power and display. By the end of the Sun King's reign, wigs had spread well beyond France, crowning kings at royal courts across Europe and becoming an essential feature of European noble costume.[12] And yet, despite this illustrious lineage, the wigs of eighteenth-century Western Europe seem to have tumbled down the social hierarchy, so far down that writers now observed them sitting atop the commonest of heads.[13] For the marquis de Mirabeau, a French gentleman-physiocrat who de-

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sumption and the World of Goods, 85–132; and Giovanni Levi, "Comportements, ressources, procès: Avant la 'révolution' de la consommation," in Jacques Revel, ed., *Jeux d'échelles: La micro-analyse à l'experience* (Paris, 1996), 187–208.

[11] The benefits of focusing on the history of particular goods are discussed in Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things," in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), 64–91.

[12] Richard Corson, *Fashions in Hair* (New York, 1965), chaps. 8 and 9; John Woodforde, *The Strange Story of False Hair* (London, 1971).

[13] For the social diffusion of wigs in England, see John Styles, "Manufacturing, Consumption, and Design in Eighteenth-Century England," in Brewer and Porter, *Consumption and the World of Goods*, 538; and Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (New Haven, Conn., 2002), 128–129. For

cried the spread of luxury, the social diffusion of the wig was a most disturbing phenomenon. "Everyone [in Paris] has become a Monsieur," he lamented in his mid-century best-seller *L'Ami des hommes*. "On Sunday, a man came up to me wearing black silk clothes and a well-powdered wig, and as I fell over myself offering him compliments, he introduced himself as the oldest son of my blacksmith or saddler; will such a seigneur deign to dance in the streets?"[14] Equally struck by the presence of wigs among the lowborn, Louis-Sébastien Mercier, a shrewd observer of Parisian daily life, listed the many types of ordinary men who had taken to wearing wigs: schoolmasters in the environs of Paris, old choirmasters, public scribes, law court ushers, shop boys, legal and notarial clerks, domestic servants, cooks, and kitchen boys.[15]

Did the French wig truly undergo such a dramatic process of diffusion? Literary accounts are colorfully suggestive, but they need to be tested against more reliable kinds of evidence, such as the size of the wig trade, the social composition of wigmakers' clientele, and the incidence of wigs in after-death inventories. We begin with the wig trade. Although historians have argued that the French luxury and fashion trades expanded dramatically in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to became a substantial sector of the urban economy, the loss of many Parisian guild records has made it difficult for the long-term growth of particular trades to be tracked with any precision.[16] The trade in wigs makes for an excellent case study in this respect. Unlike masters of other trades, master wigmakers purchased venal offices from the French monarchy, leaving a long paper trail that makes them much easier to count.[17]

The numbers are impressive. From 1673, when an independent wigmakers' guild was created, to the late eighteenth century, the number of French master wigmakers grew more than four times over, far outpacing the kingdom's rate of population growth. In Paris, the number of masters skyrocketed from 200 in 1673 to 835 in 1765 to 945 in 1771.[18] By 1776, one Parisian almanac explained that it would be super-

the German lands, see Christof Nicolaï, *Recherches historiques sur l'usage des cheveux postiches et des perruques*, trans. Hendrik Jansen (Paris, 1809). For colonial America, see Woodforde, *The Strange Story of False Hair*, chap. 9.

[14] Victor de Riqueti, marquis de Mirabeau, *L'Ami des hommes ou traité de la population*, 2 vols. (Avignon, 1756–1758), 1: pt. 1, 152.

[15] Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris* (Amsterdam, 1782), chaps. 32 and 491.

[16] Most accounts rely on the rough estimates of Jacques Savary des Bruslons, *Dictionnaire universel de commerce*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1741). See Crowston, *Fabricating Women*, chap. 2; James R. Farr, *Artisans in Europe, 1300–1914* (Cambridge, 2000), 62–70; Jones, *Sexing La Mode*, chap. 3; Steven L. Kaplan, "The Luxury Guilds in Paris in the Eighteenth Century," *Francia* 9 (1982): 257–298; Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, chaps. 10–12; Michael Sonenscher, *Work and Wage: Natural Law, Politics, and Eighteenth-Century French Trades* (Cambridge, 1989), chap. 7; and Sonenscher, "Fashion's Empire," in Robert Fox and Anthony Turner, eds., *Luxury Trades and Consumerism in Ancien Régime Paris* (Aldershot, 1998), 231–254.

[17] The origins of the wigmakers' guild date to 1634, when the crown lumped wigmakers together with barber-surgeons and water and steam bath operators to form a single guild. This early effort at guild consolidation did not take hold, as surgeons formed their own guild in 1659. In 1673, two royal edicts turned barber-wigmaker-bath operator masterships into venal offices. Henceforth, rather than receiving *lettres de maîtrise* from the lieutenant-general of police and the *procureur du roi* of Châtelet, master wigmakers, like other royal officeholders, paid a *finance* to receive a hereditary office from the grand chancellery.

[18] The figures for 1673 and 1765 are compiled from the Bibliothèque nationale (hereafter BN), Joly de Fleury, 408, nos. 96–99. For 1771, I added the 110 charges created by the edict of February 1771. My figures are slightly higher than those provided by Catherine Lanoë, "Les barbiers-perruquiers de

fluous to list the names and addresses of the most famous wigmakers, "because there is no neighborhood where one does not find many of them, and there is nothing easier than informing oneself about the most renowned."[19] Such a steep rise in wigmakers might be expected in Paris, the center of European fashion in the eighteenth century, but master wigmakers mushroomed in provincial cities as well. In the booming port town of Nantes, the number of master wigmakers jumped from 20 in 1691 to 92 in 1789.[20] In the demographically more stable city of Rouen, the profession expanded from 7 masters in the middle of the seventeenth century to 20 masters in 1680 to 83 in 1781.[21]

And master wigmakers were merely the tip of the professional iceberg. Below the level of master, journeymen were employed in great numbers. In western France, for example, throngs of *garçons perruquiers* trudged up and down the Atlantic coast, from Bordeaux to Le Havre, fanning out across the Breton and Norman peninsulas or turning inland toward Orléans, Rouen, Versailles, and Paris. In Nantes, as many as 683 *garçons* a year, on average, moved in and out of the city between 1773 and 1786.[22] In Rouen, the wigmakers' guild placed a stunning 500 to 600 *garçons* a year in the city's wig shops in the 1780s.[23] Figures for Parisian journeymen remain elusive, but Louis-Sébastien Mercier estimated their ranks at nearly 10,000.[24] Such numbers, moreover, do not include the countless *chambrelans*, artisans who produced wigs illegally without the guild's consent. We can only guess at their number—Mercier put the figure for Paris at 2,000—but given the intense strife between master wigmakers and journeymen, the temptation to slip out of the regulated world of work and produce wigs clandestinely must have been irresistible for many young men.[25]

Paris au XVIII siècle" (Mémoire de maîtrise, Université de Paris I, 1989–1990), 83, who does not account for ten offices created in 1760, and slightly lower than those given by Mary K. Gayne, "Illicit Wigmaking in Eighteenth-Century Paris," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38 (2004): 120, who puts the guild's 1771 peak at 1,014 masters. The rise in the number of masterships reflected the crown's desire to satisfy public demand for wigmakers as well as to generate revenue from office. BN, Joly de Fleury, 408, nos. 64–113.

[19] Daniel Roche, ed., *Almanach parisien en faveur des étrangers et des personnes curieuses* (Saint-Étienne, 2001), "Perruquiers."

[20] Archives Municipales de Nantes (hereafter AM Nantes), HH 91, statutes of December 12, 1692. M. J. Mavidal and M. E. Laurent, eds., *Archives parlementaires*, 82 vols. (Paris, 1879–1913), 4: 100, *cahier* of Nantes wigmakers.

[21] Geneviève Blondel, *Les Communautés Rouennaisses d'arts et métiers* (DES, Caen, 1962), 90–92; Archives Départementales de la Seine-Maritime (hereafter AD Seine-Maritime), 5 EP 142, deliberations of wigmakers' guild, October 7, 1680; and AD Seine-Maritime, C 149, memoir on wigmakers in the generality of Rouen (1781). Such examples could easily be multiplied for large towns throughout the kingdom. See Archives Nationales (hereafter AN), F-12 10, for wigmakers in Toulon; Philip Benedict, ed., *Cities and Social Change in Early Modern France* (London, 1989), 42–43; James R. Farr, "Consumers, Commerce, and the Craftsmen of Dijon," in Benedict, *Cities and Social Change*, 149; Farr, *Artisans in Europe*, 65; Jean-Claude Perrot, *Genèse d'une ville moderne: Caen au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1975), 269–271, 977; and Jean-Pierre Poussou, *Bordeaux et le Sud-Ouest au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1983), 26–28.

[22] AM Nantes, HH 101, registration book. No figures are available for earlier periods, since the first laws requiring journeymen to register departures and arrivals with local guilds appeared in the late 1760s. Registration records are far more accurate than *capitation* rolls, which underestimate the ranks of journeymen.

[23] AD Seine-Maritime, 5 EP 148, registration book.

[24] Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, chap. 32.

[25] Gayne, "Illicit Wigmaking." For strife between wig masters and journeymen, see Cynthia M. Truant, "Independent and Insolent: Journeymen and Their 'Rites' in the Old Regime Workplace," in Steven L. Kaplan and Cynthia J. Koepp, eds., *Work in France: Representations, Meaning, Organization,*

Most astonishing was the penetration of the wig trade into small towns and villages in the countryside. Daniel Roche and Laurence Fontaine have described how peddlers, markets, and fairs acted as intermediaries of consumption, channeling urban consumer goods to rural villages.[26] The geographic spread of the wig trade suggests, however, that some fashion goods need not have been imported into the countryside. Indeed, in the eighteenth century, it was not uncommon for wigmakers to establish shops in relatively small towns in order to cater to a local clientele. After conducting his own investigation into the wig trade in 1781, the intendant of Rouen learned that while the provincial capital was home to 83 masters, the *généralité* as a whole had as many as 416. The intendant was especially surprised to find that a "third-order town" such as Le Havre had 29 master wigmakers, a "considerable" number given the town's population of 18,000. Even small villages, he discovered, such as those that dotted the countryside between Rouen and the Atlantic coast, could boast several wigmakers. The little town of Aumale, whose population fell below 2,000 in the eighteenth century, welcomed its first master wigmaker in 1710. By 1789, it had 7.[27]

Clearly, the wig had become big business in the eighteenth century—big enough to suggest that it was no longer an exclusive luxury article. If certain non-aristocratic professional groups had already taken to wigs in the seventeenth century, including high magistrates and clergymen, financiers, well-placed domestic servants, and wigmakers themselves (who, like other luxury and fashion artisans, enjoyed the products they so diligently produced), many more middling groups appear to have appropriated the wig in the eighteenth century.[28] A mid-century account book belonging to a Rouen wigmaker named Le Tellier confirms this impression.[29] Le Tellier sold wigs to parish *curés* and *procureurs*, hardly aristocratic types, and set the price of his least expensive wigs as low as twelve *livres* (less than half the cost of a decent secondhand coat or the simplest of silver snuffboxes), putting them within easy reach of merchants, professionals, and successful artisans.[30] Further, Le Tellier's single

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and Practice (Ithaca, N.Y., 1986), 158–162. Illicit wigmakers probably catered to the lower end of the market, as did non-guild cosmetic retailers. Lanoë, "Cosmetiques," 281.

[26] Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, 378–379; Laurence Fontaine, *History of Pedlars in Europe*, trans. Vicki Whittaker (Cambridge, 1996).

[27] AD Seine-Maritime, C 149; Joan Reinhardt, "A French Town under the Old Regime: Aumale in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1983), 118–122. The following small to medium-sized towns had numerous master wigmakers as well: Paimbeouf (9 masters in 1786), Archives Départementales de la Loire Atlantique, E 162; Mayenne (9 masters in 1766), AN, F-12 105; Valognes (18 masters in 1791), *Archives parlementaires*, vol. 31, 608; Valencienne (15 masters in 1786), Philippe Guignet, *Mines, manufactures et ouvriers du Valenciennois au XVIIIe siècle* (New York, 1977), 383.

[28] For magistrates, E. Glasson, "Les origines du costume de la magistrature," *Nouvelle revue historique de droit français et étranger* 8 (1884): 109–137. For clergy, Jean-Baptiste Thiers, *Histoire des perruques* (Avignon, 1777). For financiers, the 1699 painting of Samuel Bernard, in Catherine Lebas and Annie Jacques, *La Coiffure en France du Moyen âge à nos jours* (Paris, 1979), 120. On the precocious dress of domestics, see Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, chaps. 6 and 7. For that of fashion artisans, see Crowston, *Fabricating Women*, 373–375; Jones, *Sexing La Mode*, 158; Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, 321–322; and the *Galerie des modes*, which describes the fashionable dress of tailors and hairdressers as well as that of their higher-ranking clients.

[29] AD Seine-Maritime, EP 130.

[30] For coat and snuffbox prices, see, respectively, Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, 358–359; and Laurence Fontaine, "The Circulation of Luxury Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris: Social Redistribution and an Alternative Currency," in Berg and Eger, *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century*, 92.

shop could produce more than a hundred wigs a year, meaning that the number of wigs produced annually by the totality of the city's wigmakers could well have been in the thousands. Le Tellier's customer base, price structure, and scale of enterprise all suggest that by mid-century the wigmakers of Rouen were producing wigs for a clientele that extended well beyond the nobles and magistrates who composed the city's elite.

That the proliferation of shops such as Le Tellier's contributed to a greater social diffusion of wigs is borne out by the surprisingly robust presence of wigs in the after-death inventories of the middling classes. Drawn up by notaries, who listed the movable possessions belonging to an individual at the time of his or her death, such inventories provide the most direct evidence of the social diffusion of wigs in the eighteenth century. First, inventories demonstrate that the spread of wigs encompassed better-off Parisian artisans. Of the 101 eighteenth-century Parisian bakers for whom Steven Kaplan found inventories, nearly one-fourth, 23 of the wealthier bakers, possessed a wig. Of the 23 wig-wearing bakers, seven owned two wigs, one owned four, and another owned five.[31] Mirabeau's confusing encounter with the bewigged son of his blacksmith (or saddler) was doubtless an exaggeration, but it was a plausible exaggeration—and therefore an effective one—in a city where many bakers sported wigs of their own.

Inventories also confirm what the growth of the wig trade indicates: that the spread of wigs was not limited to large cities. Among inventories of *fermiers* in the Ile de France, the region around Paris where large-scale commercial agriculture took hold, Jean-Marc Moriceau found an increasing incidence of wigs over the eighteenth century. From 1650 to 1689, he found no wigs at all, but from the turn of the eighteenth century on, the percentage of farmers' inventories that listed wigs rose substantially, to 12 percent between 1690 and 1709, 29 percent between 1710 and 1729, 16 percent between 1730 and 1739, 21 percent between 1740 and 1749, and—here's the real jump—46 percent between 1750 and 1759. By mid-century, many of the rustic *fermiers* of the Ile de France had transformed themselves into bewigged gentlemen farmers.[32]

Circling farther from Paris, we find similar patterns. In the small Norman town of Pont-St-Pierre, five of thirteen inventories drawn up between 1750 and 1775 registered wigs, including one bourgeois who possessed two wigs even though his total fortune amounted to a paltry forty-five *livres*. Other wig-owning residents included a poor noble, a business agent of the local marquis, and a gardener who worked for another noble family.[33] (Such men, it is worth recalling, need not have traveled as far as Rouen to purchase their wigs, since wigs were produced in neighboring towns).[34] Lest one think that the diffusion of wigs in the Norman countryside was exceptional, inventories from Savoy also attest to the spread of wigs among small town and village notables.[35]

[31] Kaplan, *The Bakers of Paris*, 350–351.

[32] Jean-Marc Moriceau, *Les Fermiers de l'Ile-de-France* (Paris, 1994), 759.

[33] Jonathan Dewald, *Pont-St-Pierre, 1398–1789: Lordship, Community, and Capitalism in Early Modern France* (Berkeley, Calif., 1987), 18–19, 97, 205.

[34] AD Seine-Maritime, C 149, lists wigmakers in the nearby towns of Caudebec, Elbeuf, Les Andelys, and Louviers.

[35] Jean Nicolas, *La Savoie au 18e siècle: Noblesse et bourgeois*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1978), 1: 344. Pre-

By all accounts, the wig was an eminently successful consumer good in eighteenth-century France. Whether or not its diffusion lends credence to the concept of a consumer revolution depends largely on what is meant by the term "revolution." To be sure, there were real social limits to the dissemination of wigs. In urban France, day laborers and the majority of artisans went without wigs, as did the peasantry in the countryside. Only a fraction of the male population ever wore this accessory, a salutary reminder that the eighteenth century was hardly an age of mass consumption.[36]

Still, by early modern standards, the social diffusion of the wig was remarkable. While in the seventeenth century wigs adorned the heads of kings, great nobles, wealthy financiers, and high magistrates, wigs in the eighteenth century spread to provincial nobles, *fermiers*, professionals, merchants, shopkeepers, clerks, and wealthier master artisans—middling groups whose number and purchasing power grew substantially over the century.[37] The breadth of the wig's geographic diffusion is also worth noting. In France, the wig's itinerary ran well beyond Versailles, Paris, and provincial capitals to reach towns and villages deep in the provinces. No peddlers were necessary for this kind of geographic diffusion, since wigmakers established shops and served clients in surprisingly small communities. The question of the wig's chronological development is the most difficult to assess. The wig certainly enjoyed a successful career during the age of Louis XIV, but the key decades for its diffusion appear to be those from the Regency (1715–1723), a period of great consumer vitality, to mid-century, when new and relatively inexpensive styles were widely available.[38] Clearly, by the third quarter of the century, the wig had become a commonplace commodity among a range of middling groups.

The compelling demand for wigs also demonstrates that, in practice, fashion consumption was not always gendered feminine in this period, even if contemporary critics of consumption often characterized it that way.[39] While Roche found that, below the level of nobility, eighteenth-century Parisian women spent twice as much on clothes as did men, it cannot be assumed that such sexual dimorphism extended to other objects of consumption, including hair products and services.[40] Indeed, a

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dominantly francophone, Savoy was still an independent duchy in this period. For further provincial evidence, see Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, 204; Benoît Garnot, *La culture matérielle en France aux XVIe, XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1995), 102; Yves Durand, *La société française au XVIII siècle* (Paris, 1992), 177; and Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, archives de la Bastille, 11127, which describes bewigged smugglers in eastern provinces.

[36] It is worth noting that limits on the wig's diffusion had nothing to do with French sumptuary laws, which never targeted wigs and were abandoned in the eighteenth century.

[37] For the rise of purchasing power in France, see Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, 557–558; Roche, *The People of Paris*, trans. Marie Evans (Berkeley, Calif., 1987), 74–94. For Europe in general, see James C. Riley, "A Widening Market in Consumer Goods," in Euan Cameron, ed., *Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History* (Oxford, 1999), 261–264; and de Vries, "Between Purchasing Power and the World of Goods."

[38] The Regency merits closer study as a moment of consumer change. As early as 1720, Étienne Lécuyer de la Jonchère included expenditure on wigs in his example of a townsman's budget; la Jonchère, *Système d'un nouveau gouvernement en France*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam, 1720), 1: 276.

[39] For representations of wayward female consumers in France, see Jennifer Jones, "*Coquettes* and *Grisettes*: Women Buying and Selling in Ancien Régime Paris," in Victoria de Grazia with Ellen Furlough, eds., *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley, Calif., 1996), 25–52. For the British case, see G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago, 1992), 190–205.

[40] Apart from the years of the Directory, women rarely purchased whole wigs. But increasingly in

study of male consumption in Hanoverian England suggests that men actively consumed goods that scholars have mistakenly coded as feminine.[41] The demand for men's wigs should alert historians to the dangers of conflating femininity and consumerism.

If the diffusion of the wig illuminates any large-scale transformation in consumption, that transformation was not a sudden, pervasive consumer revolution so much as a steady and unmistakable expansion in a particular type of commodity: the accessory. Economist Ben Fine has argued against the notion of consumer revolution by stressing limits on clothing production in eighteenth-century England, yet even he acknowledges the spectacular growth of the market in secondary accessories.[42] Although fine fabric and other luxury goods remained beyond the reach of the multitude, cheaper secondary accessories became widely available and, to the consternation of many a moralist, helped to change the appearance of the middling and to some extent the lower orders. In the universe of European goods, such accessories came to inhabit an intermediate zone of consumption wedged between aristocratic luxury and popular necessity. While luxury consumption showed no signs of abating in the eighteenth century, the intermediate zone of consumption expanded dramatically to become a prominent and permanent feature of late modern economy and society.[43]

Studies have demonstrated that this middle zone of consumption became increasingly crowded with clothing, furniture, and household furnishings. The example of the wig brings into focus two equally important constellations of intermediate goods: hygienic accessories (toiletries, or what are known today as "personal care products") and portable accessories such as snuffboxes, canes, fans, watches, and umbrellas.[44] Relating to bodily function and appearance—and appealing to both

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the second half of the eighteenth century, they hired professional hairdressers who added false hair to their natural coiffures. Until direct comparisons between male and female expenditure have been made, it would be hasty to conclude that women spent more on hair than men. Even the French cosmetics industry was driven in part by male consumers, who bought pomade and powder for wigs as well as cosmetics for their faces. See Morag Martin, "Consuming Beauty: The Commerce of Cosmetics in France, 1750–1800" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Irvine, 1999), 30–31, 122; and Lanoë, "Cosmétiques." Further, if we were to include other objects of consumption such as equipage and furniture, male consumption would likely exceed female consumption. What requires further study is the decision-making process by which households determined what they were going to buy and for whom. For two case studies, see Christine Adams, *A Taste for Comfort and Status: A Bourgeois Family in Eighteenth-Century France* (University Park, Pa., 2000), 38–49, 79; and for England, Amanda Vickery, "Women and the World of Goods," in Brewer and Porter, *Consumption in the World of Goods*, 274–301. See also de Vries, "Between Purchasing Power and the World of Goods."

[41] Margot Finn, "Men's Things: Masculine Possession in the Consumer Revolution," *Social History* 25 (May 2000): 133–155. Other studies that disrupt the master narrative by which men were supposedly cast as producers and women as consumers include Adams, *A Taste for Comfort*, 38–43; Leora Auslander, "The Gendering of Consumer Practices in Nineteenth-Century France," in de Grazia and Furlough, *The Sex of Things*, 79–112; Crowston, *Fabricating Women*; Garnot, *La culture matérielle*, 108; and Vickery, "Women and the World of Goods."

[42] Fine and Leopold, "Consumerism and the Industrial Revolution." For French accessories, see Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, 205, 219; Jones, *Sexing La Mode*, 27–28; and Garnot, *Un Déclin*, 216–226.

[43] For two penetrating analyses of this zone, see Jean-Yves Grenier, "Modèles de la demande sous l'ancien régime," *Annales ESC*, May–June 1987, 497–527; and Jan de Vries, "Luxury in the Dutch Golden Age in Theory and Practice," in Berg and Eger, *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century*, 41–56.

[44] In newspaper advertisements, health products, toiletries, and accessories were objects of greater consumer attention than were clothing, furniture, and household furnishings. See Colin Jones, "The Great Chain of Buying: Medical Advertisement, the Bourgeois Public Sphere, and the Origins of the

sexes—such accessories became so much a part of the daily lives of eighteenth-century men and women that it would be difficult to write a history of the self in the Enlightenment without acknowledging their proliferation.

HAVING OBSERVED THE RISE OF THE WIG as an object of consumption, it is important that we go on to explore the wig's sociocultural significance. How do we explain the demand for wigs in the eighteenth century? What meanings were attributed to wigs as they spread through the upper and middle sections of the social hierarchy? At first glance, it appears that the wig's diffusion can be explained in terms of consumer emulation. Formulated by Georg Simmel and Thorstein Veblen at the turn of the twentieth century, the emulation thesis holds that men and women's desire to consume stems principally from social rivalry, that is, from the desire to maintain or enhance social status through material display. In modern society, Veblen theorized, the upper class sets the standard of consumption for subordinate classes, which strive to imitate that standard in their pursuit of status.

> In modern civilized communities the lines of demarcation between social classes have grown vague and transient, and wherever this happens the norm of reputability imposed by the upper class extends its coercive influence with but slight hindrance down through the social structure to the lowest strata. The result is that members of each stratum accept as their ideal of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum, and bend their energies to live up to that ideal.[45]

Thanks to the work of sociologist Norbert Elias, the emulation thesis holds a particularly prominent place in the historiography of Old Regime France. Alluding directly to Veblen, Elias explained how "conspicuous consumption" was "an indispensable instrument in maintaining social position, especially when—as is actually the case in this court society—all members of the society are involved in a ceaseless struggle for status and privilege." For Elias, who considered France the quintessential court society, elite values and forms of consumption "constantly percolated downwards" to inferior groups who attempted to imitate their superiors.[46]

Deeply influential, Elias's trickle-down model for the diffusion of courtly norms and behavior has been used to explain patterns in clothing and furniture consumption in the Old Regime,[47] and it may also help to account for the success of the wig.

French Revolution," *AHR* 101, no. 1 (February 1996): 13–40; Martin, "Consuming Beauty," chap. 2; and for Britain, Neil McKendrick, "George Packwood and the Commercialization of Shaving," in McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, 146–194.

[45] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York, 1975), 84. The concept of the trickle-down effect is usually attributed to Georg Simmel, "Fashion," *The International Quarterly* 10 (October 1904): 130–155. But similar ideas were articulated in the eighteenth century by Bernard Mandeville, Charles Secondat Montesquieu, and Richard Cantillon.

[46] Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York, 1983), 56 n. 30, 63–65. Elias argued that standards in social conduct also percolated downward. See Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford, 2000), 386–387, 422–436.

[47] Philippe Perrot, *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie: A History of Clothing in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Richard Bienvenu (Princeton, N.J., 1994), chap. 2; Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (Berkeley, Calif., 1996), pt. 1; and Rosalind Williams, *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, Calif., 1982), chap. 2. Roche, too, frequently refers to social distinction to explain the spread of fashion, although he rightly criticizes Elias and Perrot for pitting a

Indeed, given that during the reign of Louis XIV the fashion press itself underscored the influence of the court and the imitative process by which court fashion spread to successive social groups, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that emulation at least partially explains the wig's social trajectory.[48] There was, after all, an ancient association between hair and status. In classical Greece and Rome, where hair symbolized supernatural power, rulers distinguished themselves by displaying abundant and flowing locks. This kind of symbolism continued to operate in the Middle Ages, when long-haired kings and chieftains disgraced political rivals and criminals alike by cropping their hair or shaving their heads.[49] Such age-old understandings of hair were not lost on eighteenth-century men of letters. In a passage that would be paraphrased by other dictionaries and encyclopedias, the entry for hair in Diderot's *Encyclopédie* stated:

> Long hair was a mark of honor and liberty among the ancient Gauls . . . Among the first Franks, and in the beginning of our monarchy, it was a characteristic of princes of the blood . . . Whereas long hair was the mark of royal blood, other subjects wore their hair cut short around their head. Some authors claim that haircuts were more or less short, depending on the degree of inferiority in the ranks; in such a way that the monarch's head of hair became, so to speak, the yardstick of social rank [*l'étalon des conditions*].[50]

If length of hair was a marker of status, the rise of the wig seems easily explicable. In fact, at least one eighteenth-century fashion historian, Guillaume Molé, suggested that Louis XIII had tapped into this ancient association between hair and status when, as a young man, he let his natural hair grow long. As he grew older and began to suffer from premature balding, he resorted to wearing a wig, a practice that his courtiers were quick to emulate.[51] Once the wig became fashionable at court, the emulation thesis holds, it would have become an object of desire among lesser social groups—country nobles, merchants and professionals, and even well-off artisans—who sought to confer a degree of dignity upon themselves by imitating their superiors. To borrow the language of economists, the wig seems to have been a much-

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declining aristocracy against a rising bourgeoisie. See Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, 42–43, 56–57, 185, 295, 308, 360, 509.

[48] See *Mercure Galant* 3 (1673): 322–324; and Jones, *Sexing La Mode*, pt. 1. A well-known 1671 civility manual by Antoine de Courtin, *Nouveau traité de la civilité*, encouraged readers who did not have direct access to court to find people who did and imitate them (1728 ed., 127).

[49] H. P. L'Orange, *Apotheosis in Ancient Portraiture* (New Rochelle, N.Y., 1982), 30–34; Fabrice Virgili, *Shorn Women: Gender and Punishment in Liberation France*, trans. John Flower (Oxford, 2002), 181–186. A critical site for personal honor in the Middle Ages, the head became a special object of attention in early modern civility manuals. Sarah-Grace Heller, "Anxiety, Hierarchy, and Appearance in Thirteenth-Century Sumptuary Laws and the *Roman de la rose*," *French Historical Studies* 27 (Spring 2004): 334–335; Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, 372–373; Françoise Piponnier and Perrine Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, trans. Caroline Beamish (New Haven, Conn., 1997).

[50] Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts, et des métiers*, 17 vols. (Paris, 1751–1765), s.v. "cheveux." For paraphrased statements, see Philippe Macquer, ed., *Dictionnaire raisonné universel des arts et métiers* (Paris, 1773), 436; and MM. Hurtaut and Magny, *Dictionnaire historique de la ville de Paris et de ses environs*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1779), 4: 14.

[51] [Guillaume François Roger Molé], *Histoire des modes françaises* (Amsterdam, 1773), 108–113. An alternate story of the wig's origins has the abbé de la Rivière appearing at the court of Louis XIII in 1620 with a full wig of blond hair. Four years later, the king took a wig as well, and the accessory became a success. See Diderot and d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie*, s.v. "perruque"; [Deguerle], *Éloge des perruques* (Paris, [1799]), 6–7; Woodforde, *The Strange Story of False Hair*, 14–15; and J. Quicherat, *Histoire du costume en France* (Paris, 1877), 514.

desired "positional good"—a good that positions its owner or user in a given social order.

There is doubtless much truth to this interpretation of the wig's meaning. In 1666, on the far side of the English Channel, Samuel Pepys, a man of middling background and great social ambition, bought an expensive wig and "made a great show of it" in church.[52] Pepys's diary makes it clear that showing off his new wig was part of a larger strategy by which he aimed to enter respectable society. Similarly, it appears that wealthier artisans in France wore wigs to bolster their social position with respect to other city dwellers. How else to interpret the fact that Parisian baker Jean-Baptiste Hornet donned his wig before making rounds to settle accounts with his customers?[53] In all likelihood, he believed that his wig would enhance the cut of his figure and help him make a more imposing impression on his debtors. And how else to read the warning delivered by a disgruntled journeyman to a master baker that the journeymen "had had his hat during the past year, and now they wanted his wig"?[54] In this verbal threat, the wig undoubtedly served as a symbol of status.

Pictorial evidence also suggests that the wig was a positional good. One 1776 fashion pamphlet depicts men of descending social and professional status wearing different kinds of wigs or no wigs at all.[55] The seigneur, bishop, nobleman, magistrate, financier, abbé, bourgeois, and doctor all wear wig styles appropriate to their station. The artisan and gardener have natural hair under their hats. And the bald beggar exhibits an absence of hair altogether. Likewise, the 1783 engraving by J. L. Delignon titled *Le Seigneur chez son fermier* contrasts a bewigged landlord, dressed in fashionable attire, and a wigless tenant, bald and wearing an out-of-fashion coat.[56] If, as these images suggest, the wig was principally a marker of social status, a positional good, then it is not unreasonable to conclude that its downward social diffusion was driven by a process of emulation.

We should be careful not to press the emulation thesis too far, however, for the thesis has taken a severe beating in recent years. Historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and philosophers alike have criticized status-oriented approaches to consumption for being too narrow.[57] It is not so much that the emulation thesis is wrong per se, critics argue, but that in light of the plurality of meanings that consumers attribute to possessions, the thesis is insufficient. In addition to social identity, goods communicate messages about sexuality, nationalism, ethnicity, and individual identity; they trigger memory, mark stages in the life cycle, and bestow special meaning

[52] Woodforde, *The Strange Story of False Hair*, 24.

[53] Kaplan, *The Bakers of Paris*, 350.

[54] Michael Sonenscher, *The Hatters of Eighteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, Calif., 1987), 16.

[55] *Les Costumes françois representans les differens états du royaume avec les habillements propres à chaque état* (Paris, 1776).

[56] For additional illustrations contrasting bewigged nobleman with wigless (often bald) commoners, see BN, *Cabinet des Estampes*, Collection de Vinck, vol. 12, nos. 2017, 2055, 2062–2063; and Collection Henin, vol. 100, no. 8676, and vol. 117, nos. 10237–10238.

[57] Critics of the emulation thesis include historians Maxine Berg, Laurence Fontaine, Richard Goldthwaite, Dena Goodman, Colin Jones, Jennifer Jones, Giovanni Levi, Stana Nenadic, Daniel Purdy, Woodruff Smith, Amanda Vickery, and Lorna Weatherill; sociologist Colin Campbell; anthropologists Grant McCracken and Daniel Miller; and philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky. Although Pierre Bourdieu's momentous *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London, 1984), seems to reinforce the emulation thesis insofar as it stresses consumption's role in social differentiation, the book demonstrates that lower social groups are not necessarily inclined to imitate their sociocultural superiors.

on particular rituals and ceremonies. Thus, in pursuing the meaning of the wig, it may be helpful to consider interpretations beyond simple status-based theses. Freeing the wig from the constraints of the emulation thesis opens up new possibilities of interpretation.

One way to get at additional meanings attributed to wigs is to consider how taste leaders characterized specific changes in wig fashion. By "taste leaders," I mean self-proclaimed experts who, participating in the century's flourishing public sphere, used the printed word to influence consumer practices or to shape understandings of changes in fashion.[58] The taste leaders under consideration here fall into two groups, neither of which had strong ties to the court. The first group includes writers, from *philosophes* to fashion critics, who published on the subject of wigs in the second half of the eighteenth century. It does not include the small number of moralists who denounced wigs in categorical terms, completely dismissing them as a sign of mounting luxury and effeminacy.[59] The focus here is on the many more writers who engaged with wig fashion, seeking to interpret and guide it even as they criticized it. Such writers implicitly legitimated the wig's diffusion as they offered a range of commentary on its meaning.

Embedded in the world of commercial practice, the second group of taste leaders—producers of wigs themselves—brings us closer to comprehending how ordinary consumers understood wigs. It is possible to learn how wigmakers shaped the meaning of their products by analyzing the advertisements they placed in the burgeoning corpus of provincial and Parisian newspapers. By the late eighteenth century, in addition to long-time Parisian newspapers such as the *Mercure de France*, France produced around forty provincial advertiser-newspapers, which according to one estimate reached a readership of between 50,000 and 200,000, "and maybe many more."[60] In advertising their goods and services in provincial and Parisian newspapers, wigmakers articulated a particular set of consumer values that aimed to enhance the appeal of wigs.

How did taste leaders characterize wigs and wig fashion? Unlike their forebears in the fashion press of the late seventeenth century, taste leaders in the second half of the eighteenth century seldom spoke of wigs in terms of status or emulation. Instead, they distanced the wig from its courtly origins and from issues of social competition to set it in three alternative contexts: convenience, nature, and physiognomy. To discuss wigs in such contexts was to carve out a set of consumer values that evoked a new age of consumption.

The concept of "convenience" (*la commodité*) was central to the eighteenth-cen-

[58] I borrow the concept of taste leader from Frank Mort, *Cultures of Consumption: Masculinities and Social Space in Late Twentieth-Century Britain* (London, 1996), 8. Referring to professional marketers and advertisers, Mort writes: "These experts claim to provide answers to a set of pressing questions about the disintegration of established consumer patterns and the emergence of new ones."

[59] My aim in excluding such writers is not to deny their existence but to restore some balance to French fashion scholarship, which places undue emphasis on such moralists as Rousseau and Mercier. Few writers completely rejected wigs in the name of sexual differentiation. The earliest tract of this sort that I found was *Sur la coiffure et la perruque des petits-maîtres* (Paris, 1723). Later in the century, Mercier lambasted men for imitating "women in this art of curling, which effeminates and denatures us." Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, chap. 32.

[60] Jones, "The Great Chain of Buying," 18–19. Jones argues that this readership was composed principally of the middling sort, but he acknowledges that nobles, artisans, shopkeepers, and domestic servants also read the *Affiches*. I am grateful to Morag Martin for helping me locate wig advertisements.

tury luxury debates.[61] Defending luxury against traditional critiques, pro-luxury writers strategically linked luxury to the less threatening notion of convenience, which they defined as the quality by which an object provided ease and pleasantness or relieved one of physical burden. Associating luxury with its benign cousin convenience, apologists argued that luxury posed no moral threat to society.

Emphasis on convenience was not limited to the luxury debates, however. Indeed, a similar language of convenience was employed to define a host of new consumer goods, from novel forms of architecture and furniture to clothing and, yes, wigs.[62] In the case of wigs, eighteenth-century commentators asserted that wearing someone else's hair was far more convenient than caring for one's own. "The convenience of wigs has made wearing them a nearly universal custom," observed classicist and teacher Jean Deguerle.[63] If Deguerle failed to mention why he thought wigs were so convenient, the *Encyclopédie méthodique* explained that wigs possessed several advantages over natural hair, "one of the greatest of which is to relieve men of daily cares."[64] In an age when civility manuals prescribed the perpetual cleaning, combing, and styling of hair, it was easier to have your head shaved and don a wig than to groom your own hair, particularly when your local wigmaker could service your wig for a small fee.[65]

The concept of convenience inevitably arose whenever taste leaders contrasted the full-bottom wigs of Louis XIV's reign to the new styles introduced since the Regency. The dominant style from the 1660s to 1715, the full-bottom reached its height, literally, in the second half of the reign of Louis XIV. An impressively large and dramatic wig, it was marked by several distinguishing characteristics: a central part, high side peaks, and, most notably, long, flowing hair down the front, side, and back. (See Figure 1.) Full-bottoms were so large that one wig could require up to

[61] Michael Kwass, "Ordering the World of Goods: Consumer Revolution and the Classification of Objects in Eighteenth-Century France," *Representations* 82 (Spring 2003): 87–116.

[62] As applied to consumer goods, the French idea of convenience was similar but not identical to the British notion of comfort. John E. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities and Design in Early Modern Britain and Early America* (Baltimore, Md., 2001); Woodruff D. Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability, 1600–1800* (New York, 2002), 83–86. Whereas English comfort pertained principally to residential architecture and furniture, French convenience applied to a wide variety of goods and services. In the home, *les commodités* denoted improvements ranging from ventilation to the addition of small functional rooms (such as toilettes and closets) to the use of specialized furniture such as cushioned chamber pots (Georges Vigarello, *Histoire des pratiques de santé* [Paris, 1999], 176–177; Pardailhé-Galabrun, *The Birth of Intimacy*, 143–144). *Chaises de commodité*, adjustable reclining chairs, appeared in noble households in the late seventeenth century (Donna Bohanon, "Furnishings de Commodité" [unpublished paper, 2005]), while the *commode* became a popular fixture in Parisian households during the eighteenth century (Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600–1800*, trans. Brian Pearce [Cambridge, 2000], 176). One mid-century dress with rigid panniers was named *paniers à commodité* because women could rest their elbows on them (Jacques Ruppert, *Le Costume: Époques Louis XIV et Louis XV* [Paris, 1990], 48). The same sort of convenience applied to the *robe retroussée dans les poches*, a dress whose back could be stuffed into skirt pockets to allow for freer movement. Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, 39.

[63] Deguerle, *Éloge des perruques*, 34. See also Diderot and d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie*, s.v. "cheveux"; Alfred Franklin, *La vie privée d'autrefois* (Paris, 1887), 61; Macquer, *Dictionnaire raisonné*, 436; and Samuel Pepys, cited in Woodforde, *The Strange Story of False Hair*, 22–23.

[64] *Encyclopédie méthodique: Arts et métiers mécaniques*, 8 vols. (Paris, 1783–1790), 6: s.v. "perruquier."

[65] Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, *Les Règles de la bienséance* (1703), in *Cahiers lasalliens* 19 (Rome): 6; and Courtin, *Nouveau traité de la civilité*, 129–130. The wigmaker Le Tellier appears to have charged three or four *livres* for occasional maintenance. AD Seine-Maritime, EP 130.

FIGURE 1: The full-bottom wig. Pierre Mignard, *Portrait de Colbert de Villacerf*, c. 1685. Reproduced by permission of La Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York.

ten heads of hair.[66] From the Regency on, however, the wig diversified. Long wigs continued to be worn for courtly ceremonies, but they were joined by an array of shorter and neater styles, including *perruques en bonnet*, *à bourse*, *à noueds*, and *à cadogan*.[67] The mid-century account book of the Rouen wigmaker Le Tellier lists

[66] Woodforde, *The Strange Story of False Hair*, 29. Louis XIV's wigmaker, Binet, famously declared that he would strip the heads of every subject to cover that of the sovereign. Diderot and d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie*, s.v. "perruque." The hair used in wigs came from women who apparently sold their hair to traders at provincial fairs. Although forbidden by guilds, hair from horses and goats was occasionally used. AN, F-12 99, 471–475.

[67] Hence, one 1775 Paris guidebook lists a wigmaker who fabricated both "les Perruques longues,

several different models within a range of prices.[68] The least expensive (12–20 *livres*) and most popular was the *perruque en bonnet*, the round wig that many gentleman farmers, bourgeois, doctors, surgeons, and guild masters wore;[69] this was the wig that Rousseau adopted when he quit Parisian high society for the simple life of the countryside. The *perruque à bourse* or bagwig was also popular and relatively inexpensive, although the kingdom's elite were known to wear elegant versions of it as well. The most expensive wig that Le Tellier sold was the *perruque à noueds* (27–35 *livres*), which featured knotted hair hanging down the back.[70] All of these models marked a general evolution in the wig away from the large and expensive full-bottom toward smaller and less expensive styles. Even when hair on the new wigs remained long, it was pulled back in tails or knots or stuffed into bags.

According to Diderot, who penned the article "perruque" for the *Encyclopédie*, the old full-bottom wigs of Louis XIV's reign were excessively puffy, ridiculously long in front and in back, and prohibitively expensive (up to a thousand *écus*). Nothing about them compared favorably to the "convenient" wigs of his own day.[71] Countless other fashion critics agreed, including the prolific observer of French customs Louis-Antoine Caraccioli: "the wigs of the last century had an immensity that covered at least half of the body: those of today have a much more elegant air."[72] Size no longer mattered; convenience and style were what distinguished contemporary wigs.[73]

To drive their point home, taste leaders drew an analogy between the wig and another consumer good that diversified after the reign of Louis XIV: the book.[74] The full-bottom wigs of Louis XIV's reign were commonly called *in-folios*, in reference to the bulky, oversized tomes of the past. Louis-François Métra, for example, used this metaphor to describe the famous wig collection of Antoine-Gabriel de Sartine, navy minister and former lieutenant-general of the Paris police, a position that involved the regulation of the capital's book trade: "The collection of his wigs, *in-folio* as well as *in-quarto* and *in-douze*, large and small format, some more square than others, amount to sixty or eighty pieces of the most beautiful selection and highest

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de Cour & de cérémonie" and "les perruques à bourse." [Roze de Chantoiseau], *Premier Trimestre: Tablettes Royales de Renommee* (Paris, 1775), 61–63. Louis XIV wore a short wig for his *lever* but replaced it with longer ones for the rest of his day. Franklin, *La vie privée d'autrefois*, 63.

[68] AD Seine-Maritime, EP 130.

[69] Moriceau, *Fermiers*, 762; [Jacques-Antoine Dulaure], *Pogonologie, ou histoire philosophique de la barbe* (Constantinople and Paris, 1786), 12.

[70] The *Almanach parisien*, 162, lists *perruques nouées* for roughly the same price, from thirty to thirty-six *livres*. Another relatively expensive wig among Le Tellier's offerings was the *perruque quarrée*, which, at twenty-four *livres*, featured two long tails in back and was the wig of choice for magistrates.

[71] Diderot and d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie*, s.v. "perruque." Although Diderot signed his name to the entry, Quicherat (575) claims that the Parisian wigmakers' guild supplied the essay.

[72] Louis-Antoine Caraccioli, *Dictionnaire critique, pittoresque et sentencieux* (Lyon, 1768), s.v. "perruquier," 226–227. See also Dulaure, *Pogonologie*, 8; François-A. de Garsault, *Art du perruquier* (s.l., 1767), chaps. 3 and 7; Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, chap. 491; *L'Encyclopédie méthodique*, s.v. "perruquier"; C. S. Walther, *Manuel de la toilette et de la mode*, 3 vols. (Dresde, 1771–1780), 2: pt. V, chap. 2, 11–14, 27.

[73] Thus, fashion magazines at the end of the Old Regime explained that the number of side curls, rather than length and fullness, distinguished formal from informal wigs. See *Magasin des modes nouvelles françaises et anglaises* (January 1, 1789, planche II). Helen Clifford, " 'Fashion is superior to merit': Silverware and Its Substitutes in the Second Half of the 18th Century," in Coquerie et al., *Artisans, industrie*, 367–383, notes a similar development in British household metal objects, namely that style became more highly valued than intrinsic worth.

[74] The diversification of the book is described in Henri-Jean Martin and Roger Chartier, eds., *Histoire de l'édition française*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1984), 2: 120–139.

quality."[75] To fashion critics, *in-folios*—both the books and the wigs—seemed excessively formal, expensive, heavy, and unwieldy. By contrast, the smaller, lightweight, cheaper, and more portable models that were introduced after the reign of Louis XIV stood for a new age in which convenience had taken the place of excessive baroque display. One fashion editor portrayed this transformation in the following terms: "Men of the court, Merchants, and Financiers judged that it was time to abdicate great heads of hair. Louis XIV, who loved them so much, no longer existed: a young prince ascended the throne, and the in-folio wigs were disgraced. New editions were made, which were more convenient, more portable; hence the wigs à queue, à bourse, à l'Espagnole, à la Financière, & others whose names have not come down to us."[76]

The bagwig, which Diderot called "the most modern" of all, became emblematic of this transition.[77] (See Figure 2.) Describing the convenience of post-Regency wigs, fashion critic Guillaume Molé explained that the bagwig was at first worn only while traveling, running morning errands, or getting around in the rain—all informal activities that required a great deal of movement; it was considered "indecent" to appear in a bagwig before *les Grands* or in public ceremonies.[78] But because "the invention appeared convenient," editor Conrad Walther explained, "men desired to make use of it." "With time, bagwigs acquired some consideration: they were allowed to appear in the best company" and eventually became the standard for fashionable dress.[79] Thus, the wig that toppled the *in-folio* had its origins not in the stiff and conspicuous public ceremony of the royal court, but rather in the less formal hustle and bustle of daily life under the Regency.[80] By mid-century, the bagwig had become one of the most popular wigs on the market, a sign for taste leaders of the material and aesthetic progress of their age.[81]

The idea of convenience was not simply a product of the fertile imaginations of fashion observers. Looking to attract customers, wigmakers themselves exploited the concept in advertisements. In growing numbers of provincial and Parisian newspa-

[75] François Métra, *Correspondance secréte, politique et litéraire*, 18 vols. (1787–1790; repr., Geneva, 1967), 2: 289.

[76] Walther, *Manuel de la toilette*, 2: pt. V, chap. 2, 28.

[77] Diderot and d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie*, s.v. "perruque."

[78] [Molé], *Histoire des modes françaises*, 119–120; Molé is paraphrased in Walther, *Manuel de la toilette*, 2: pt. V, chap. 2, 15; and *Magasin des modes nouvelles françaises et anglaises*, January 1, 1789. The bagwig began as an element of informal, private morning wear but gradually spread to more formal, public gatherings in the afternoon and evening. Men's frock coats and women's mantuas and *robe volantes* underwent a similar evolution, suggesting a pattern of movement from private to public life. Philip Mansel, *Dressed to Rule* (New Haven, Conn., 2005), chap. 4; and Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, 34–37.

[79] Walther, *Manuel de la toilette*, 2: pt. V, chap. 2, 15. Walther explained the earlier fashion for knotted wigs in similar terms. Because fashion-conscious young men disliked the "inconveniences" of great heads of hair, they began to knot their hair in back during the summer and then all year round. The style soon caught on.

[80] For the rectitude of the court, see Georges Vigarello, "The Upward Training of the Body from the Age of Chivalry to Courtly Civility," in Michel Feher, ed., *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* (New York, 1989), 148–199. The civility expert de la Salle made it clear that convenience had no place in traditional court propriety; *Règles de la Bienséance*, 2, 9, 54–57, 69.

[81] For the success of the bagwig, see AD Seine-Maritime, 5 EP 130; J. Berthelé, ed., *Montpellier en 1768* (Montpellier, 1909), 148–149; and AM Nantes, HH 92, guild deliberations, 1748–1767, which reveal that bagwigs were a standard model for *chefs d'ouevre*. References to bagwigs were also prevalent in wig advertisements.

FIGURE 2: The bagwig. Maurice Quentin de La Tour (1704–1788), *Autoportrait*, pastel sur papier, Amiens, Musée de Picardie (cliché x). Reproduced by permission.

pers, wigmakers touted the "convenience" that new designs and technical improvements afforded wig wearers. Echoing a medical literature that sought to free the body from constrictive attire, one type of convenience that wigmakers were particularly keen to underscore was the comfort and free movement of the head.[82] In typical fashion, the Parisian wigmaker Neuhaus announced the invention of a new "elastic skin that grips the wig" without any irritating loops or garters. "This skin has the softness of velvet, & does not at all inconvenience the head, of which it follows every movement."[83] While Neuhaus's wigs were promoted as flexible and soft, other ad-

[82] Nicole Pellegrin, "L'Uniforme de la santé: Les médecins et la réforme du costume," *Dix-Huitième Siècle* 23 (1991): 129–140.

[83] *Annonces, affiches et avis divers*, March 8, 1777.

vertisements featured a range of design modifications that enhanced convenience: ointments that attached wigs to the head without melting or otherwise bothering clients, wigs stripped of ribbons that cut off the circulation of blood or irritated the skin, and wigs (*à mouvement naturel*) that were comfortable enough to sleep in.

In a similar vein, wigmakers designed wigs to withstand the inconveniences of bad weather. One master was reportedly working on a kind of sports wig that protected the wearer while keeping its shape in water and wind, the perfect accessory for "hunters, horse people, travelers, couriers, men of the sea, finally for all those who expose themselves to inclement weather." Likewise, "economical wigs" made of iron thread were designed to withstand rain, wind, and hail, all without causing the wearer any pain or discomfort.[84]

Far from an object of Veblen-style conspicuous consumption, then, the post–Louis Quatorze wig was, according to taste leaders, an accessory of convenience. Rather than casting the wig as a positional good, taste leaders highlighted the physical ease and personal utility that present-day wigs afforded. While fashion critics argued that the convenience of wigs signaled the coming of a healthy, utilitarian aesthetic of consumption, wigmakers exploited the concept of convenience to market wigs to what had become a relatively broad customer base. Indeed, the emphasis that taste leaders placed on convenience suggests that utility should not be understood, as many economists today understand it, as an innate quality that inheres in certain goods, but rather as a consumer value that has its own history. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the value of utility was represented as one of the principal goals of consumption, even consumption well above the level of subsistence.

It is tempting to interpret this shift toward convenience in wigs as an early sign of what J. C. Flügel famously dubbed "the great masculine renunciation."[85] According to Flügel, after the French Revolution, bourgeois men rejected extravagant dress in favor of simple, dark, sober costume that symbolized the denial of beauty and pleasure and the acceptance of duty, self-control, and work. Women, by contrast, continued to wear colorful and ostentatious clothing, becoming the principal agents of conspicuous consumption. Elaborating on Flügel's theory, historians of dress and gender have extended its reach deeper into the eighteenth century, relating it to prerevolutionary prescriptions for greater sexual differentiation and for a sharper division between a male public and female private sphere.[86]

Although the wigs of the eighteenth century did indeed stand in marked contrast to the extravagant full-bottoms of the past, their evolution challenges variations on the Flügel thesis. First, taste leaders who applauded the convenience of new wigs did not aim to renounce pleasure and embrace sobriety. On the contrary, convenience was meant to enhance pleasure and beauty, setting newly designed wigs apart from their clumsy, hulking forebears. The explicit renunciation of an older courtly aesthetic in the name of convenience preceded and was qualitatively different from the more austere renunciation that would occur in the nineteenth century. Further, convenience was not a strictly gendered concept, since women as well as men were

[84] Garsault, *Art du perruquier*, 28–29. See also Walther, *Manuel de la toilette*, 2: pt. V, chap. 2, 29–30; [Roze de Chantoiseau], *Premier Trimestre*, 61–63; and [Molé], *Histoire des modes françaises*, 304–305.

[85] J. C. Flügel, *The Psychology of Clothes* (London, 1950), 110–119.

[86] For variations on the Flügel thesis, see note 9.

expected to participate in the new aesthetic. Little in the language of taste leaders suggests that convenience was a distinctively masculine attribute.[87] Current research on the French Revolution provides additional reasons to avoid projecting nineteenth-century gender ideology back onto the prerevolutionary period. The consensus that the Revolution by its very nature excluded women from politics and the public sphere, relegating them to a separate private realm, has been fatally challenged.[88] The most exclusive forms of masculine citizenship, it now appears, developed only very late in the Revolution (during the Directory, but especially during the Consulate and Empire) in reaction to women's civil gains. Work on masculinity and dress also reveals that the deepest transformations in masculinity occurred when French society was militarized under Napoleon.[89] This historiographical shift has important implications for gender and consumption in the prerevolutionary period, because it makes it difficult to speak of a monolithic "Age of Revolution," spanning from Rousseau to the 1804 civil code, that founded the ideology and practice of separate spheres. Indeed, in terms of consumer culture, the emphasis on convenience suggests that the period from the Regency to the Revolution should be treated as a distinct epoch, one that was moving beyond courtly forms of consumption but was not necessarily dominated by the rigid understandings of gender that would prevail in the next century.

Convenience was not the only value stressed by eighteenth-century taste leaders. They also described the evolution of the wig in the context of nature. Historians have noted that from the 1770s into the Revolution, the concept of nature, which was central to Enlightenment philosophy, spilled into the commercial domain, where

[87] Compared to men's short and tidy wigs, the towering female hairdos of the late 1770s suggest a divergence in masculine and feminine appearance, but such notoriously extravagant coiffures as the *Belle-Poulle* were worn only by courtiers for special occasions. In general, the rise and fall of women's hair paralleled that of men's, as the high styles of the reign of Louis XIV gave way to simpler fashions. See Legros, *L'Art de la coëffure des dames françoises* (Paris, 1768); Baronne d'Oberkirch, *Mémoires*, 295–296; Richard Corson, *Fashions in Hair: The First Five Thousand Years* (New York, 1965), chaps. 8 and 11; and Françoise Vittu, "1780–1804 ou vingt ans de 'révolution des têtes françaises,' " in Delpierre, *Modes & révolutions*. In dress, the trend toward simplicity, comfort, and lightness encompassed feminine as well as masculine clothing, which may explain why certain fashions (the frock coat, riding habits) could migrate from male to female wardrobes. One male hairstyle, the *cadogan*, was even adopted by women.

[88] Formed largely around Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1988), the consensus has not survived the scrutiny of two formidable works: Suzanne Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (Berkeley, Calif., 2004); and Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton, N.J., 2001). Focusing on social and literary practices (rather than prescriptive representations), both works demonstrate that women possessed an active voice during much of the Revolution.

[89] André Rauch, *Le premier sexe* (Paris, 2000), argues that the nineteenth-century model of masculinity was based on Napoleonic notions of martial virility and, increasingly after 1830, professional bourgeois respectability. For changes in gender and citizenship under Napoleon, see Jennifer Heuer, *The Family and the Nation* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2005). The militarization of masculine dress and the proliferation of uniforms during and after the Empire is discussed in Mansel, *Dressed to Rule*, chaps. 4 and 5; Richard Wrigley, *The Politics of Appearances* (Oxford, 2002), 266–267; and Perrot, *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie*, 136, 163. For the psychological theory supporting postrevolutionary bourgeois masculinity, see Jan Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750–1850* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005), chap. 4. According to William Reddy, male impulses to exclude women "were not, as Joan Landes has implied, primarily of Rousseauian origin, but dated from the Napoleonic years" and "seemed to grow stronger as the nineteenth century developed." Reddy, *The Invisible Code: Honor and Sentiment in Postrevolutionary France, 1814–1848* (Berkeley, Calif., 1997), 229. Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, Conn., 2004), suggests that gender boundaries in England did not harden until 1780–1800.

new clothing fashions were taking on a simpler, natural look.[90] Even wigs, which we might expect to have been associated with Old Regime artifice and frivolity, were cast in this discourse of nature. François-Antoine de Garsault, for example, began his manual on the craft of wigmaking with the usual disparaging remarks about full-bottom wigs. In the infancy of the craft, he wrote, "people were so enamored [of wigs] that they could never have enough hair on their heads. The wigs were immense in width & in length, & sooner depicted the face of a bear or lion than the form of a human head." By the 1760s, however, the art of wigmaking had completely changed. To make a wig today, Garsault explained, "is to construct a kind of skin, through which one attaches and arranges curly or straight hair so artistically that, when placed on the head, it appears to be real. It is a matter here of imitating *la belle nature*."[91] The phrase *la belle nature* invoked an eighteenth-century aesthetic principle by which the arts were understood to represent the reality of nature. For Garsault, wigmakers were imitating artists who were depicting nature.

Hardly dabblers in aesthetic theory, wigmakers characterized their work in similar if simpler terms: they claimed that they were imitating nature directly. In fact, more than any other single theme, the theme of nature dominated wig advertisements. As early as 1754, well before the shift to more natural dress, a wigmaker named Sarriere claimed that his wigs "perfectly imitate natural hair"—a claim that would become a formula for wig advertising in the final decades of the Old Regime.[92] This trend was exemplified by the entrepreneurial efforts of a master wigmaker named Chaumont, the guild's most active advertiser, who moved his shop to the fashionable St. Honoré quarter. In a series of advertisements from the 1760s to the 1780s, Chaumont promoted several technical innovations that allowed him "to imitate nature perfectly in all wigs, notably those with bags."[93] Most of these innovations involved making the front piece of the wig, the toupet, meet the forehead and temples in such a seamless manner that the bewigged man's hair would look entirely natural. By reducing the thickness of the toupet (using a technique that, Chaumont claimed, had won the approval of the Royal Academy of Science) and artfully effacing its front edge, Chaumont produced wigs that "make allusion to the best planted head of hair."[94] By 1788, Chaumont had discovered a way to eliminate all edging and fabric from his toupets so that "one could not distinguish any difference between the uniformity of Nature and the perfection of the Craft."[95]

Wigmakers' ubiquitous appeal to nature points to two conclusions. First, it sug-

[90] Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, chap. 6; Jones, *Sexing La Mode*, chap. 6; Crowston, *Fabricating Women*, 43–47, 63, 71–73.

[91] Garsault, *Art du perruquier*, 5. Mercier makes a similar observation: "Only a century ago the wig was a rare and costly ornament . . . Today, without ruining oneself, one crowns his top with a false head of hair for four pistoles; and this wig is better made, better fitting, and imitates natural hair to the point where you can't tell them apart"; *Tableau de Paris*, chap. 491.

[92] *Annonces, affiches et avis divers*, October 7, 1754. The idea of natural clothing arose at mid-century, Roche explains in *The Culture of Clothing*, chap. 15, but the practice of wearing natural clothes seems to have followed the natural turn in wigs and cosmetics. Martin, "Consuming Beauty," 141–157, 213–217.

[93] *Mercure de France*, April 1767. Diderot and d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie* (s.v. "perruque"), also deemed the bagwig the most natural-looking.

[94] *Mercure de France*, June 1775. See also the *Mercure* of April 1774, January 1776, and November 22, 1788, and *L'Avant-Coureur* of March 16, 1767, and February 27, 1769.

[95] *Mercure de France*, November 22, 1788. Other wigmakers featured similar techniques to make wigs indistinguishable from natural hair. See, for example, the advertisements by Boqueton and Martine in *Avis divers*, June 14, 1777, and January 3, 1778.

gests a modification of the argument put forward by Jennifer Jones, that the fashion press of the late eighteenth century assuaged moral concerns about the excesses of fashion by relegating fashion to a circumscribed feminine domain.[96] The case of the wig suggests that fashion was tamed not so much by turning it into a purely feminine affair but by rooting consumer goods—masculine as well as feminine—in nature. In a world that was changing with worrisome speed, the idea that goods were somehow natural may have provided consumers with a degree of ontological security. Second, the appeal to the natural suggests a connection between consumerism and authenticity, a connection that goes to the very heart of contemporary Western consumer culture.[97] Although in the eighteenth century, moralists such as Rousseau criticized the growth of consumption by positing the existence of a natural authentic self that was increasingly vulnerable to corruption and luxury, the concept of natural authenticity did not necessarily undercut the century's consumption. On the contrary, in the case of wigs, taste leaders actively appropriated the idea. Equating authenticity with bodily verisimilitude, they asserted that new techniques of production not only repaired nature's defects or enhanced her endowments, but made such improvements look genuinely natural. False hair now looked authentic. In this respect, the wig came to be considered as much a prosthesis as an article of fashion. As one critic put it, "Our way of dressing ourselves, of styling our hair, & of wearing our shoes, is more analogous to the construction of our body than it has ever been."[98] Authenticity was to be grounded in the body, including its hair. In an age when the *literati* sought natural forms of religion, history, law, and philosophy, taste leaders promoted a similar turn in the commercial domain, establishing an odd yet enduring link between modern consumption and the pursuit of authenticity.

If the new wigs of the eighteenth century were deemed more convenient and natural than the old *in-folios*, they were also understood to be more suitable for expressing individual character. Indeed, when framing the meaning of wigs, taste leaders consistently alluded to physiognomy, "the art of knowing the *moeurs*, the inclinations of people through inspection of the face."[99] It has been claimed that after receiving much attention in the seventeenth century, physiognomy fell out of favor until the 1770s, when Lavater and others turned the art into a science.[100] Yet, far from stagnating earlier in the eighteenth century, the physiognomical belief that facial features expressed one's moral and psychological essence thrived in works of literature and in the domain of commerce.[101] Well before Lavater's works appeared, taste leaders emphasized that instead of burying men's faces, as had the old *in-folios*, the wigs of their day expressed individual character by accenting one's facial "air."[102]

[96] Jones, *Sexing La Mode*, 180.

[97] Celia Lury, *Consumer Culture* (Cambridge, 1996); Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880–1940* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1989), pt. 3; and Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (New York, 1999).

[98] Walther, *Manuel de la toilette*, 2: pt. VI, chap. 9, 59–60.

[99] *Dictionnaire de L'Académie française*, 1st ed. (1694), s.v. "physionomie."

[100] Jean-Claude Courtine and Claudine Haroche, *Histoire du visage: Exprimer et taire ses émotions XVIe-début XIX siècle* (Paris, 1988), 117.

[101] For literature, see Christopher Rivers, *Face Value: Physiognomical Thought and the Legible Body in Marivaux, Lavater, Balzac, Gautier, and Zola* (Madison, Wis., 1994), chap. 2.

[102] Diderot and d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie*, s.v. "perruque." Repeated in *Encyclopédie méthodique*, s.v. "perruquier." British observers also noted that newer wigs made men's faces more visible; Corson, *Fashions in Hair*, 292.

Ambitious wigmakers seized on this idea, publicizing how particular techniques of production enhanced their customers' physiognomies. In a series of advertisements in the *Mercure de France* and *Annonces, affiches et avis divers*, the Parisian wigmaker Rochefort announced that after many years of research, he had invented a new kind of mannequin for the head that allowed him to size wigs "with Mathematical precision, following different individual tastes; so that they naturally follow the contours of the face." The new mannequin not only helped Rochefort make wigs that were comfortable and natural-looking but allowed him as well to tailor his wigs to the individual faces of his clients.[103] Rochefort was not the only wigmaker to publicize the physiognomical advantages of his wigs. Chaumont claimed that by allowing his clients to choose a hairstyle from among several that "varied according to different tastes," he was better able to capture the particular "air" of his clients' faces. The editors of the newspaper *L'Avant-Coureur* acclaimed his technique: "If hair is styled to go with physiognomy & bring it out, one must commend the method of Sr Chaumont, Wigmaker, which we have already advertised in our pages. The Sr Chaumont never sizes any wig for which he has not designed the facial contour. In the presence & following the choice of individuals, he then sketches the hairstyle which suits their physiognomy the best."[104] Claiming to highlight the faces of their clients, wigmakers exploited the individualistic thrust of physiognomy for commercial purposes.[105]

The physiognomic attributes of wigs were taken to satiric extremes by Jean-Henri Marchand, a Parisian lawyer and fashion advocate known for his wit. Stung by the decision of the editors of the *Encyclopédie* not to assign him the entry on wigs, Marchand published his own *L'Enciclopédie perruquiere* in 1757. The purpose of this short treatise was to observe "every physiognomy and the relationship it should have to a type of hairstyle that is proper to it. People who are happy, sad, crazy, serious, bilious, the young, the old, the healthy, the sick, the pimply, the fat, the skinny, the large-foreheaded, the small-foreheaded . . . should not be styled in a uniform way." Accordingly, Marchand illustrated forty-five different styles of bag- and tiewigs designed for particular faces and personalities. (See Figure 3.) Matching each style with a face was intended to help the individual reader select the right wig for himself: "Every man eager to turn himself out will have this work within reach, and will choose the form which most flatters the air of his face."[106]

By attaching personalized names to the bewigged men whom he illustrated, fur-

[103] *Mercure de France*, October 1755, January 1757.

[104] *Mercure de France*, January 1764; *L'Avant-Coureur*, August 7, 1769. See Chaumont's other advertisements in *L'Avant-Coureur*, February 27 and June 12, 1769.

[105] This explains why wigmakers also advertised new techniques for pulling hair back from the face and securing it with ointment. *Annonces, affiches et avis divers*, February 12, 1781. A similar attention to facial appearance manifested itself in the commercial fields of dental care, cosmetics, and portraiture. See Colin Jones, "Pulling Teeth in Eighteenth-Century Paris," *Past & Present* 166 (February 2000): 100–145; Martin, "Consuming Beauty"; Anne de Herdt, "Liotard: Entre portrait de cour et portrait bourgeois," in Xavier Salmon, ed., *De soie et de poudre* (Versailles, 2003), 75–101. For a different interpretation of fashion and physiognomy, see Roy Porter, "Making Faces: Physiognomy and Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England," *Études Anglaises* 38 (October–December 1985): 385–396.

[106] [Jean-Henri Marchand], *L'Enciclopédie perruquiere* (Amsterdam, 1757), 27. Marchand's discussions of style did raise questions of professional status ("a churchwarden and a musketeer must each preserve the character that is proper to them"), but the majority of his wig styles were meant to express individual personality type.

FIGURE 3: Physiognomic wigs. J. H. Marchand, *L'Enciclopédie perruquiere*, nos. 4, 12, 44. Reproduced courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

thermore, Marchand seems to have been playing satirically with the world of feminine fashion. Just as women's hairstyles and accessories were marketed with fanciful names that expressed individual character traits ("gentle smile," "honest composition," "restlessness"—indeed, the front of a women's hairdo was even called the "physiognomy"),[107] Marchand labeled his illustrations ("M. A Ladorable," "M. A Laparesseuse," "M. A Linconstance," and so on) to match particular styles of side curls with the personalities of the men who wore them. The joke lay in the fact that such curls were male, not female, but the concept of physiognomy had so infused wig fashion that the implicit comparison was not too far off the mark.

There is no doubt that among the stars of the Enlightenment, hairstyle as well as dress became a medium for the expression of self. Rousseau, as we know, stepped down to a round wig to reflect his social independence; Jean-Baptiste Greuze sported idiosyncratic side curls (pigeon wings with spirals) to signal his creative genius; Benjamin Franklin, upon arriving in France in 1776, abandoned ornamental dress and wig in favor of plain clothes and a cap of marten fur; Diderot preferred to be portrayed without a wig; and Marie-Antoinette caused a stir when she allowed herself to be painted as an individual woman without any signs of royal station.[108] The social and cultural life of the wig reminds us that while the period's greatest personalities created identities through the flagrant use of fashion and hair, countless ordinary

[107] Hurtaut and Magny, *Dictionnaire historique de la ville de Paris*, s.v. "modes"; *Almanach parisien*, 156, 167. For feminine hairstyles, see the advertisements of Legros, Donnadieu, and Lagarde, respectively, in *L'Avant-Coureur*, January 16, 1769, August 7, 1769, and April 2, 1770. Women's hairstylists must do each personality differently and "match the style to the affections of the soul"; Walther, *Manuel de la toilette*, 2: pt. VIII, chap. 12, 67. "To be perfect," wrote Legros, the hairdresser "needs to have in mind a taste and *esprit* for each woman"; *L'Art de la coëffure*, 33. Garnot sees in the proliferation of women's *coiffes* and bonnets the same desire to personalize clothing; *Culture materielle*, 111 .

[108] Alden Cavanaugh, "The Coiffure of Jean-Baptiste Greuze," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38 (Fall 2004): 165–181; Bernard Bailyn, *To Begin the World Anew: The Genius and Ambiguities of the American Founders* (New York, 2003), chap. 3; Walther E. Rex, *Diderot's Counterpoints: The Dynamics of Contrariety in His Major Works* (Oxford, 1998), 26–38; and Desmond Hosford, "The Queen's Hair: Marie-Antoinette, Politics, and DNA," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38 (Fall 2004): 183–200. See also Purdy, *The Tyranny of Elegance*, chap. 7.

men were routinely encouraged to accentuate their selves on a less conspicuous level by wearing a wig that was tailored to their face and personality.[109]

By organizing the meaning of wigs around the idea of character, taste leaders shifted public attention from social identity to individual identity. In theoretical terms, they downplayed the notion of the social or relational self, which orients itself to the external values around it, and emphasized instead the idea of the reflective self, which consciously pursues the project of its own construction.[110] If the self of the royal court had primarily been relational, insofar as courtiers tailored their behavior to meet imperatives of social decorum, that invoked by eighteenth-century taste leaders was primarily reflective. Hence consumer guides such as the *Manuel de la toilette et de la mode* contrasted old luxury goods that merely "announced" the consumer's "rank" with present-day goods that signaled the consumer's own aesthetic "genius."[111] Developed and publicized by Enlightenment taste leaders, the concept of the reflective self would go on to become an integral part of late modern consumer culture.[112]

THE WIG STRADDLED TWO OVERLAPPING FORMS of consumption in Old Regime France. The first form, courtly consumption, expanded dramatically in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Whereas feudal modes of consumption had been directed toward domestic service and hospitality, courtly consumption involved greater spending on durable and semidurable consumer goods.[113] At court, where gatherings of nobles made consumption more visible, aristocrats used luxury goods to signal their rank to one another and to express their collective elevation above the rest of society. Indeed, it was the capacity of luxury goods to communicate high rank that justified them. As Pierre Nicole observed, "The splendor that goes with the position of the great . . . is what makes them honored by most people. And since it is good that they be honored, it is just that grandeur be allied to external magnificence."[114] The large,

[109] For a similar account of the processes of individuation at work in food consumption, see Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, chap. 3.

[110] I borrow the terms "relational" and "reflective self" from Jerrold Seigel's lucid book *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 2005).

[111] Walther, *Manuel de la toilette*, 2: pt. VII, 3–4 (see also 2: pt. VI, 58–60, 71–72; pt. VII, 68; and pt. VIII, 18 and 60).

[112] Both social and reflective self merit closer historical study. Emphasizing the social self of court society, Norbert Elias and Roger Chartier describe how courtly interdictions were internalized by individuals. According to Chartier, seventeenth-century civility "is best understood as above all a social seeming. Every man must strive to be as he seems, and thus adjust his moral nature to the appearances demanded by his position in the world"; Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton, N.J., 1987), 86–87. However, Jonathan Dewald notes that some seventeenth-century nobles began to develop notions of private selfhood in response to the court's overbearing social pressure; Dewald, *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture* (Berkeley, Calif., 1993), chaps. 4 and 6. Scholarship on the eighteenth-century reflective self has long focused on the novel and its creation of an emotional inner life. Yet, despite Colin Campbell's attempt to join romanticism and consumerism in *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford, 1987), I would argue that the self elaborated in the commercial domain was not identical to that developed in Romantic literature. Consumer practices reveal a different (although perhaps intersecting) vector of individuation.

[113] Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art*, 150–158.

[114] Quoted in Dewald, *Aristocratic Experience*, 170. See also Michael Moriarty, *Taste and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century France* (Cambridge, 1988).

expensive full-bottom wig was part of this world of socially instrumental magnificence.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, wigs had spread beyond elite circles to enter an intermediate zone of consumption between aristocratic luxury and popular necessity. This pattern of social diffusion may partially be explained in the familiar terms of Veblen and Elias, as an emulation-driven extension of courtly consumption. Yet a closer look at the meanings attributed to wigs suggests that there was more going on than the Veblen-Elias model indicates—that taste leaders formulated new understandings of consumption as they responded to an expanding intermediate zone of goods.[115] Remaining curiously silent about social status and rank—matters treated explicitly in earlier commentary on dress—eighteenth-century fashion critics and wigmakers used the printed word to shift public attention to an alternative set of consumer values based on convenience, nature, and physiognomy. By linking the wig to such values, taste leaders distanced the accessory from its aristocratic origins, to place it in a strikingly modern context.

Such a context can be called modern because the values forged by taste leaders have become basic features of contemporary consumer culture. But it was also modern insofar as it contributed to the construction of a new form of historical consciousness that valorized present over past. Taste leaders publicized the idea that the French were living through a turning point in history, a moment in which society was liberating itself from an archaic material culture and embracing a new consumer aesthetic.[116] Even the once courtly wig was recast as an agreeable product of a distinctively new and better age. Superseding conspicuous display, the concept of convenience endowed post–Louis Quatorze wigs with a utilitarian purpose that signified the material and moral advances of the present day. Perfecting the natural appearance of wigs distinguished them from the artificial styles of the past and rendered them suitable for an epoch that placed a premium on authenticity. And attention to physiognomy personalized wigs, accentuating the individual (rather than the social) character of the faces they framed. The wig, therefore, was not simply an aristocratic luxury good brought low. As its reach extended deeper into eighteenth-century society, it took on meanings that evoked a new age of consumption.

This is not to suggest a Whig history of the wig. It is important to treat the language of taste leaders critically. Despite the rhetorical claims of fashion commentators and wigmakers, the evolution of the wig did not conform to a linear history of progress, individualism, and liberty. First, it should not be inferred from the absence of class in taste leaders' language that consumers were somehow freed from

[115] Similar challenges to Elias's court-centered model of cultural diffusion have been mounted by historians of sociability, who argue that elite sociability shifted during the Enlightenment from courtly civility to a less formal and more inclusive code of politeness. Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, chap. 3; Daniel Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670–1789* (Princeton, N.J., 1994); and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and Jean-François Fitou, *Saint-Simon and the Court of Louis XIV*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago, 2001), Appendix 1. I am advancing a parallel critique with respect to consumption.

[116] Here I part ways with Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present*, who minimizes the Enlightenment's sense of rupture with the past to emphasize the French Revolution's impact on modern historical consciousness. True, the Revolution's ideological and military mobilization politicized historical consciousness, but the Enlightenment—including its consumer culture—had already encouraged the feeling that one was living in a new age.

long-standing imperatives of social status. Nobles continued to wear ceremonial wigs at Versailles, where etiquette kept courtly notions of rank and status alive.[117] Wealthier urban men, meanwhile, purchased wig models that best suited their particular profession, social station, and financial capacity. And everywhere the bewigged minority established a sharp visual distinction between its respectable self and the wigless majority. Convenience, nature, and individuality were values that most French men could not afford to express. Thus, in practice, wigs continued to mark social status even if taste leaders were reluctant to characterize wigs of their day as positional goods.[118]

Further, a hierarchy did exist within the seemingly classless language of taste leaders. Although they rejected an older, allegedly unsophisticated consumer culture in which goods directly signaled social rank, taste leaders implicitly constructed a new model of distinction in which the status meanings of consumption would be mediated by principles of utility, authenticity, individuality, and, one could add, cleanliness, taste, and health.[119] Goods would continue to indicate status, but they would no longer do so directly. Rather, they would now signal a commitment to certain values, which would in turn express status. Thus, what in court society had been a close and direct link between consumption and status was now loosened to accommodate a host of mediating values. By promoting such values without explicitly addressing their social implications, taste leaders flirted with the fiction that personal consumption was no longer about class. (Was there not something modern in this as well?) But their rhetoric clearly implied the formation of a new social hierarchy based on aesthetic knowledge and the financial capacity to consume goods that reflected such knowledge. An older hierarchy of raw socio-legal rank was to be supplanted by a new one divided by levels of wealth and consumer competency.[120] Historians should therefore be careful when assessing the language of Enlightenment taste leaders: what looks like emergent egalitarianism is better understood as inequality transformed.[121]

Finally, this account of the wig suggests that we should pay closer attention to the periodization of consumption, especially with respect to gender. A number of historians have argued that eighteenth-century changes in clothing consumption her-

[117] For the persistence of courtly consumption, see Natacha Coquery, *L'Hôtel aristocratique: Le marché du luxe à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1998).

[118] The production of wigs, like their consumption, scarcely supports a Whig interpretation, given the sharp social conflict between masters and journeymen that the trade generated. See Gayne, "Illicit Wigmaking"; and Truant, "Independent and Insolent."

[119] For cleanliness, taste, and health, see, respectively, Georges Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France since the Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge, 1988); Jones, *Sexing La Mode*, chap. 4; and Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, chaps. 1–2. The development of mediating principles helps to explain why sumptuary law, which was predicated on a direct relationship between consumption and status, declined in the eighteenth century. See Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions: A History of Sumptuary Law* (New York, 1996), 373–378.

[120] For a superb analysis of how Parisian nobles were caught up in precisely this kind of sociocultural transformation, see Mathieu Marraud, *La Noblesse de Paris* (Paris, 2000), 370–400, 535–546. See also Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*.

[121] Again, the histories of sociability and consumption are analogous in this respect. Antoine Lilti, "Sociabilité et mondanité: Les hommes de lettres dans les salons parisens au XVIIIe siècle," *French Historical Studies* 28 (Summer 2005): 415–445, argues that scholars have exaggerated the egalitarianism of Enlightenment sociability. Literary representations notwithstanding, Enlightenment salons continued to operate as important sites of social distinction.

alded the coming polarization of nineteenth-century gender roles, in which men were cast as producers and women as consumers. Yet, as current work on the French Revolution suggests, we must be careful to balance prescriptive representations with the realities of social practice. The success of the wig reminds us that eighteenth-century fashion consumption was not always gendered feminine. Indeed, the moralist critique that wigs symbolized the increasing effeminacy of men and should therefore be rejected does not seem to have had much purchase on the minds of male consumers before the very end of the century.[122]

Thus, if we are at all to retain Flügel's concept of a "great masculine renunciation," we must recognize that it unfolded in two stages. The first stage, which occurred during the eighteenth century, was largely aimed at moving beyond courtly forms of consumption to establish a consumer ethic consistent with Enlightenment values of utility, nature, and self. The second stage, which in France began in earnest during the militarization of society under the Consulate and Empire, involved a full-scale redefinition of masculinity and a hardening of gender boundaries. The case of the wig suggests that during the first stage, proto-republican warnings about luxury and effeminacy were either widely ignored or, more likely, deflected by consumer values that endowed goods with a degree of moral sustainability.[123] By relegating courtly consumption to the past while linking intermediate-level goods to modern values of utility, authenticity, and individuality—indeed, to the value of progress itself—taste leaders answered or at least dulled the impact of moralist critiques and helped to lay the ideological foundations for the rise in eighteenth-century consumption.

[122] The use of wigs and powder declined in the 1790s, to disappear altogether during the Consulate. The demise of the wig has been attributed to a variety of political, medical, and gender concerns. Martin, "Consuming Beauty," 226–233; Morag Martin, " 'The Great Masculine Renunciation': Coping with Masculine Hair-Loss in France, 1780–1830" (unpublished manuscript); Lanoë, "Barbiers-perruquiers de Paris," 185–190; Vittu, "1780–1804 ou vingt ans de 'révolution des têtes françaises,' " 54–55; and Wrigley, *The Politics of Appearances*, 233–234, 239.

[123] For other examples of how French taste leaders responded to critiques of consumption, see Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, chaps. 1–2; Martin, "Consuming Beauty," chap. 5; and for a later period, Lisa Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Berkeley, Calif., 2001).

Michael Kwass is Associate Professor of History at the University of Georgia. Since receiving the David H. Pinkney Prize for *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, 2000), he has published widely on the luxury debates of the eighteenth century. He is now working on a book-length study of smuggling and the politics of consumption in prerevolutionary France.