

HAIR, AUTHENTICITY, AND THE SELF-MADE MACARONI

Amelia Rauser

In the 1774 satire *What is this my son Tom*, a rustic country farmer pokes unceremoniously at the tiny hat sitting atop his son's enormous wig (fig. 1). Though he is nowhere so labeled by title or verse, Tom is a country boy turned macaroni, bearing all the marks that by that year had been codified into the macaroni type: fine sprigged fabric, tight clothes, oversized sword, tasseled walking stick, delicate shoes, and, most recognizably, an enormous wig. This wig, combining a tall front with a fat queue or "club" of hair behind, was the feature that epitomized the macaroni's extravagant artifice during London's macaroni craze of the early 1770s.

Named for the pasta dish that rich young Grand Tourists brought back from their sojourns in Rome, the macaroni was known in the 1760s as an elite figure marked by the cultivation of European travel.¹ But as *The Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* explained in its inaugural issue in 1772, "the word Macaroni then changed its meaning to that of a person who exceeded the ordinary bounds of fashion; and is now justly used as a term of reproach to all ranks of people, indifferently, who fall into this absurdity."² Macaroni fashion was contagious, and as it spread beyond its original cadre into the rising middle-sorts, it took on a life of its own in the print media, becoming a phenomenon that far outstripped the effect of the relatively few macaroni men who actually strode the streets of London.³ Indeed, the figure of the macaroni became a catalyst for debate over how Britons could heed the siren call of luxurious consumption, individualism, and cultural sophistication without "exceed[ing] the ordinary bounds of fashion"

Amelia Rauser is Associate Professor of Art History at Franklin & Marshall College. She is currently working on a book-length study of irony, authenticity, and individualism in eighteenth-century caricature.



Figure 1. Anon., *What is this my Son Tom*, printed by Sayer & Bennett, 1774. Mezzotint. Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

and becoming thereby both effeminate and inauthentic. Whether his class origins were elite or bourgeois, in his adoption of elite continental dress and manners, the macaroni represented an apotheosis of aristocratic values that seemed to fly in the face of calls to sober, masculine virtue. Yet the fact that “all ranks of people” could turn macaroni meant that macaroni-dom was one possible outcome of the kind of social aspiration that was central to bourgeois mores. Thus, the macaroni was not born, but made—self-made, both for good and for ill.⁴

In this essay, I will make two main claims. First, we will see that the macaroni blurred boundaries of class, gender, and nationality, and acted as both a cautionary tale and a secret exemplar for the rising middle classes as they debated how to become urbane cosmopolites while remaining authentically British. Second, I will argue that the medium of caricature was crucial to this debate, since individual portrait caricature not only unmasked the macaroni’s inauthenticity, but also, and paradoxically, made a desirable spectacle out of his eccentric individualism. In

both cases, the macaroni's hair functioned as a potent and multivalent symbol of the self-made man. As we shall see, macaroni caricature in the 1770s was linked to the contemporary fascination with character and to the evolution of the modern self.⁵

THE MEANING OF MACARONI HAIR

The extravagant size of the macaroni's hairstyle seemed to speak at once to his embrace of artifice, decadence, and the pursuit of pleasure. For most of the eighteenth century, artifice was considered necessary to civilized social intercourse, smoothing the rough jostling of instinct and will. As Marcia Pointon has noted, public life was seen as frankly theatrical, and the wig, which ruled men's fashion only from about 1660 to 1810, made absolutely clear the artificiality of a man's public persona, as part of the costume men put on to assume their proper identity.⁶ Wigs and hair were explicitly associated with both masculinity and public life, as one commentator explained in 1770:

Men should dress suitable to their various ranks in life, whether as a magistrate, statesman, warrior, man of pleasure, &c. for the hair, either natural or artificial, may be dress'd to produce in us different ideas of the qualities of men, which may be seen by actors, who alter their dress according to the different characters they are to perform.⁷

While men did sit without their wigs at home and in private (often wearing cloth caps in their stead), the accidental exposure of a man's bald head was an acutely embarrassing, quasi-sexualized action, akin to a man dropping his pants, and decidedly impolite in mixed company.

By contrast, women were expected to wear their own hair. During the 1770s in England, women's hairstyles also reached unprecedented heights; one frequent joke held that because their hair was so tall, ladies were forced to sit on the floors of their carriages in order to fit inside.⁸ But complete artifice was disallowed for women's hairstyles. However augmented by false hair, padding, powder, and decorations, women's hairstyles were properly to remain "natural," personal, and distinct from the public and frankly artificial dress of men's hair.

Macaroni wigs, because they were so extreme in their size and extravagance, seemed to subvert the traditional meaning of the masculine wig. Instead of sober public virtue, the macaroni wig represented something grotesque, decadent, and effeminate. Wigs had always had barely latent sexual meanings; hair had long been associated with sexuality, and because wigs were made from women's hair, gender confusion was always possible.⁹ Yet it was the macaroni wig that seemed to expose the gender play and artifice that was latent in the wig-wearing of more sober and virtuous men. A 1780 comedic "lecturer" on wigs, Edward Beetham, in discussing the gross "quantity of powder lavished upon" the macaroni wig, went on to claim that "grammarians are at a loss whether to rank them with the masculine or feminine, and therefore put them down as the Doubtful Gender."¹⁰ These characteristics of extremity and subversion can be found in other aspects of macaroni identity as well. In his gender and sexual identity, class, and nationality, the macaroni blurred the boundaries of established categories and thus put pressure on the sober, bourgeois ideal of masculinity, on the one hand, and the expressive possibilities of the age of sensibility on the other.

MACARONIS, POLITENESS, AND SENSIBILITY

To understand the significance of the macaroni in a culture of politeness and sensibility, we can first turn to *The Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine or Monthly Register*, a journal that flourished from 1772–73.¹¹ Yoking together the worlds of theater and fashion, the journal contained short articles reviewing the latest plays in London and tidbits of theatrical gossip. It also featured a macaroni print to begin each issue (some had more than one), each illustrating an article recounting the history of the highlighted, unnamed, but known, macaroni. Besides theater and macaronis, the magazine was filled with essays on behavior, manners, and decorum for both men and women. Articles like “The Character of a Gentleman,” “The Art of Being Well-Bred in the Streets,” and “An Essay on Politeness” appeared in every issue, instructing readers to behave with modesty, reserve, and balance—a strange addition, it might at first appear, to the gossip and theatrical news. In fact, the internal conflict between an individual’s sincere expression of feeling and the polite artifice necessary for civil society was at the heart of the *Macaroni Magazine* and of the fascination with the macaroni himself.¹²

The central problem with politeness for aspiring Britons is made visible in the *Macaroni Magazine* article, “An Essay on Politeness”:

Modern politeness . . . which is so ornamental, is very apt to run into disagreeable extremes; amongst the French it is too often disguised by affectation and insincerity; and that simplicity of manners which the English affect so much, and which is so amiable, is equally apt, under the name of honest bluntness and sincerity, to degenerate into rusticity and barbarism.¹³

The contrast in manners is cast in nationalist terms, underlining the foreignness of the macaroni who adopted an ornamental and affected politeness. The emphasis on sincerity reveals its value to the culture of sensibility, yet the essayist fears the potential for barbarism if naturalism is given too free reign. While the macaroni represents one dangerous extreme, the bluff but good-hearted, plain honest Englishman represents another, since his crude public demeanor is lacking necessary polish.

This was precisely the humorous dilemma of *What is this my son Tom* (fig. 1), which dramatizes this contrast between too-rough rusticity on the one hand and too-elegant refinement on the other. The verse beneath the image calls attention to the folly and excess emblemized by the macaroni: “Our wise Forefathers wou’d express / Ev’n Sensibility in Dress; / The modern Race delight to Show / What Folly in Excess can do” (fig. 1). But with his coarse posture, straggling hair, and old-fashioned frock coat, the farmer is no exemplar of “sensibility in dress” either. Instead, the lesson in manners, particularly necessary for bourgeois Britons newly confronted with a wealth of goods and entertainments, was to find the middle way, to cultivate one’s politeness and worldly sophistication while somehow remaining “natural,” authentic—and British. Balance, or the avoidance of extremes, was considered key to true gentility.

As these examples show, the old acceptance of artifice as a necessary part of public life was giving way to a new fear of the deceptiveness, corruption, and

arbitrariness of manners; yet the desire to be polite and to avoid the rusticity of complete sincerity remained.¹⁴ Fear of being duped by the gap between soul and surface was rampant, and writers expressed real difficulty in being able to discern the true character of men. “It often happens,” offered the author of the ironic “Character of a Mighty Good Kind of Man,” “that those ‘mighty good kind of men’ are wolves in sheep’s cloathing, and that their want of parts is supplied by an abundance of cunning, and the outward behaviour and deportment calculated to entrap the short-sighted and unwary.”¹⁵

In this milieu, the macaroni exemplified the dangers of artifice. *The Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* “dissected” a macaroni to expose the root of his inauthenticity, and found that his “pineal gland, which has been supposed to be the seat of his soul, smelt very much of essence and orange flower water.” Further, his face had no blood vessels, which explained his inability to blush. Finally, the heart was found to be a gargantuan illusion: “[It] appeared at first view, to be of a more than ordinary size; but O mirabile dictu! No sooner had my friend touched it with the point of his knife, than it became like a full-blown bladder when pricked;—a mere skiny substance.”¹⁶ The bodily features probed here are clearly linked to the discourse of sensibility—the blush and the heart, in particular, were the physical signs of the true experience of sentiment.¹⁷ Yet it is just these features which the macaroni lacks and whose lack he dissembles. Though the macaroni might appear to be a modern man of both sensibility and politeness—refined, elegant, and with a heart of extraordinary size—he is unmasked here as a superficial fraud.

The notion that the macaroni wore an inauthentic social mask was reinforced by his link with the masquerade, as evidenced in the *Pantheon Macaroni* (fig. 2). Once again, the most salient feature of this macaroni is his enormous wig. The Pantheon in London, famed for its masquerade balls, opened right during this macaroni moment, and its elegant public rooms were considered paradigmatic spaces for the macaroni. Partygoers paid a small fee to enter the rooms at the Pantheon dressed either in character costume (as, for example, a milkmaid or Henry VIII) or in a domino, the unisex costume comprised of a black silk gown, mask, and tricorn hat.¹⁸ Custom held that all revelers, except royalty, unmasked at midnight. Such balls were seen as places of sexual dalliance and moral depravity, since participants could leave their regular identities behind and masquerade as other classes and even other genders. The masquerade dramatized the thrill and the danger of self-creation, and as a metaphor for modern selfhood caused anxiety over the gap between the perceived surface—the social mask—and the unseen real character beneath, precisely the same issues focused on the macaroni himself.

The artificiality associated with the macaroni identity suggests that some practitioners might have embraced it as a performative, even parodic, form of self-expression, one that thumbed its nose at the sober, middle-sort values that were emerging as norms. Indeed, several historians have hazarded that the macaroni might represent an early homosexual subculture.¹⁹ For example, while the *Pantheon Macaroni* (fig. 2), with his mirrored dressing table, pots of cosmetics, and corsage, certainly seems intended to be read as “effeminate,” the cat carved into the chair behind him may provide specific evidence for the claim that the macaroni was associated with homosexual practices; it might mark the man as a “catamite,” a young male lover of an older man.²⁰



Figure 2. Philip Dawe, *Pantheon Macaroni* [*A Real Character at the Late Masquerade*], printed for John Bowles, 1773. Mezzotint. BM Sat 5221. © The British Museum, London.

But same-sex sexual behavior was not universally attributed to macaronis by contemporaries. Instead, his gender seemed to occupy a confusing middle space between male and female, while his sexual appetite was alternately painted as weak and voracious. Textual commentary on the macaroni characterized him as a “hermaphrodite,” of “doubtful gender,” an “amphibious creature,” or as “The Macaroni; A New Song” put it in 1772: “His taper waist, so strait and long, / His spindle shanks, like pitchfork prong, / To what sex does the thing belong? / ’Tis call’d a Macaroni.”²¹ The macaroni was often explained as too narcissistic, too eccentric, or simply too physically weak to be properly sexual.

Yet there were also prominent tales of macaronis’ aggressive heterosexuality, as in the story of the Vauxhall Affray, in which three macaronis were challenged to a duel after ogling a woman in Vauxhall Gardens in 1773.²² Macaroni hair remained a potent sexual symbol here; *The Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* reported in May 1773 an encounter at the Pantheon masquerade between a Lord “dressed as a macaroni buck,” and another unnamed nobleman “in the character of a Gardener.” The “macaroni” is described solely in terms of his enormous wig: “The club of hair, which was supposed to have proceeded from the

Nobleman's head, was of such a prodigious size, that it covered both his shoulders, and was, at a moderate computation, nearly the size of a two-gallon bottle." Contemplating this, the "gardener" is reported to have remarked, "I was thinking what a nice method of wooing you fine folks have got into—you may do it all in dumb shew—and what a world of vexation and trouble it would have saved me, if I had been acquainted with it before I courted my Jannet. But may I ask you a civil question Sir—for I have woundy curiosity to know—have you not said too much?—is it not larger than the reality?"²³ The analogy between large wig and large genitalia here is humorously undercut by the suggestion of masculine overcompensation.

There is another explanation for the construction of macaronis as effeminate, one that has to do more with evolving ideals of masculinity in this period. The highly decorative fashion of the macaroni has long been remarked by costume historians as a last gasp of extravagance before the "great masculine renunciation" of decorative fashion and the embrace, instead, of the sober black that men wore throughout the nineteenth century.²⁴ This process has usually been interpreted as a middle-sort rejection of aristocratic foppery, and it is certainly true that the values generally attributed to the bourgeoisie—thrift, modesty, private virtue—lay behind the rejection of courtly ornament and the embrace of simpler suits based on casual country wear. Yet as David Kuchta has recently argued, both the elite and the middle classes were claiming the moral high ground on the issue of public character and masculine virtue, as they struggled for cultural dominance and the political and economic leadership of the nation.²⁵ Indeed, virtuous masculinity (and ridiculing macaronis) became a patriotic cause, as the "true-born generous Briton . . . in his honest heart, loaths the foppery of the present degenerate times as much as he glories in its contempt and ridicule."²⁶

The contest between macaroni and sober citizen, then, was not a literal contest between aristocrat and bourgeois, though their traits certainly became coded in class terms. Rather, it was a contest between two ideals of masculinity, each of which was open to men of varied class origins. This meant, on one hand, that those men who adopted the macaroni style were probably interested in rejecting the growing hegemony of the sober and virtuous masculine ideal. On the other hand, the sober and virtuous man saw the macaroni as a parasitic and conspicuous consumer, instead of an industrious producer.²⁷ Thus, the macaroni's perceived effeminacy might be more attributable to his embrace of an alternative (and moribund) mode of masculine identity, than to a specific link to homosexual behavior. Yet most men of means probably felt some current of attraction in each of these models, and the confusion and paradox over these models of masculinity and their competing claims to authenticity, politeness, fashionability, and sensibility are palpable in the many representations of the macaroni in print, and in particular of his extravagantly fashionable, yet overtly artificial, hair.

Confronted with the confusion of artificial social personae and individuals whose identities exceeded or rejected familiar categories, many contemporaries seemed to be longing for a kind of personality x-ray machine—a visual analog to the "dissection" performed by the *Macaroni Magazine*—in order to look deep beneath the surface of a man and avoid the unspecified dangers of entrapment by a deceptive, artificial character. Not incidentally, a technology was being developed to fulfill this need: caricature.

CARICATURING THE MACARONI

In fact, caricatural social satire was a relatively new genre which sprang to life in tandem with the macaroni craze and which shared many of its paradoxical features.²⁸ The macaroni prints, pioneered by James Bretherton and Matthew and Mary Darly in the early 1770s and immediately copied by other printmakers, were among the earliest published, personal caricatures made.²⁹ Caricature's emergence into the public sphere via the macaroni paralleled the adoption of macaroni style itself: both caricature and the macaroni were Italian imports, both had previously been associated with the elite but were now reaching the bourgeoisie, and both prized the spectacle of singularity and individualism. While some historians have deemed it fortuitous that caricature appeared in public just as macaronis were stalking the streets of London, this was no coincidence.³⁰ Instead, caricature developed as a mode of representation particularly well-suited to articulating the obsession with surface and self that drove the macaroni phenomenon as well.

Invented in the artistic studios of Baroque Rome, caricature was, like pasta, brought back to London by aristocratic Grand Tourists as a souvenir of their journey and the wit and cultivation it symbolized.³¹ Caricaturing became a favorite parlor game and amusement at country houses among the elite. What was entrancing about caricature was its individual delineation of personality through expressive deformation. In its very form, then, personal caricature signified cosmopolitanism, elitism, education, insiderness, and individuality. As the craze for homemade caricatures grew, print publishers Matthew and Mary Darly relocated their shop from Fleet Street, where print sellers were traditionally clustered, to the fashionable West End of London.³² There, between 1771 and 1773, the Darlys published six sets of satirical "macaroni" prints, each set containing 24 portraits, which inspired a whole genre of contemporary social satires. These prints were so popular that the new Darly shop became known, and represented, as "The Macaroni Print-Shop" (fig. 3). Other printmakers, like James Sayers and Carington Bowles, soon followed the trend.

The space of the Darlys's print shop reinforced the cultural significance of the macaroni. Beyond treating the joys and dangers of fashion in their subject matter, the macaroni prints were fashionable items in themselves, commodities for sale in a shop that in its location and appointments appealed to an expanding consumer culture in London. In the second half of the eighteenth century, London was rife with new sorts of luxury goods and, partly because of their colonies, Britons were becoming enriched at an unprecedented rate. This luxury culture provoked both excitement and anxiety among the swelling ranks of the middle classes, as men "self-made" by wealth discovered the need also to acquire sophistication and polite manners. The self-made macaroni, even as he seemed to embrace the social forms of courtly, aristocratic life, dramatized the thrill and danger of striving for social mobility.³³

But as *The Macaroni Print Shop* shows, the interior of the shop was not the only place those prints could be seen. In fact, the sidewalk in front of the shop, where viewers congregated to laugh and point at the prints pasted in the windows, was a free space for communal consumption of these new social satires. The joke of this image, of course, is that the audience for the prints is as ridicu-



Figure 3. Anon., *The Macaroni Print Shop*, published by Matthew Darly, 1772. Etching. BM Sat 4701. © The British Museum, London.

lous as the subjects of their scrutiny. There is an identity between the subject and the audience, in all their variety of noses, body types, hairstyles, and footwear, as well as in the range of social classes represented. Representations of the macaroni, then, were enmeshed in a setting that was public, urban, and decidedly British in its fluidity and inclusiveness of social classes.³⁴

In format, the Darly macaroni prints adhere to a consistent formula: single figures, shown full-length and often in profile, are posed in a barely delineated setting but with minute attention paid to details of costume, physiognomy, and posture (fig. 4). As Shearer West has noted, this formula is distinctly similar to that developed by the Italian artist Pier Leone Ghezzi for his coveted personal caricature drawings made for Grand Tourists, many of them British, in Rome in the first half of the eighteenth century.³⁵ The foreignness of the macaronis was emphasized in the Darly's first series, as the titles of the figures—"Monsieur le Medicin," "Monsieur le Friseur"—as well as their costume and deportment, mark them as continental. These prints are probably intended as humorous types, rather than real individuals. But *My Lord Tiptoe, just arrived from Monkey Land* (fig. 4), appears to depict a British toff made ridiculous by his adoption of foreign dress and habits. With his mincing posture and enormous wig, this gentleman has turned macaroni after a visit to France. Thus, the Grand Tourists or Dilettanti caricatured by Ghezzi, the continental travelers who were the original subjects of personal caricature, were the same men who were liable to be labeled as macaronis once they got back to Britain.



Figure 4. Anon., *My Lord Tip-Toe, Just Arrived from Monkey Land*, published by Matthew Darly, 1771. Etching. BM Sat 4686. © The British Museum, London.

The Darlys's macaroni prints were a published, printed, domestic version of the older personal, hand-drawn, private caricature made in Italy. Yet by publishing the macaroni caricatures, the Darlys were doing more than simply bringing the form to a wider audience. Publishing them actually transformed the meaning of the personal caricature. It changed caricature from a private, self-congratulatory artifact to something subject to public scrutiny, and it transformed the elite Grand Tour souvenir into a moralizing counterexample for an amused, middling-sort public. This change defused the social elevation of the macaroni not only by satirizing his habits, but also by appropriating and inverting the very forms of his connoisseurship.

The blurring of class identity was a critical feature of the macaroni. Diana Donald has argued that the audience for macaroni satires was mostly elite, and that the satires' critique was mainly directed against striving middle-sorts of people who made themselves ridiculous by their clueless aping of continental fashions.³⁶ This explains the many macaroni prints that include middleclass or even artisanal occupations, such as the *Grub-Street Macaroni*. Yet, as we have seen, most of the visual and textual critiques argue above all that class is not destiny; rather, the individual character and his behavior is what makes the man. Indeed, "The Gambling Macaroni" is condemned thusly: "In short, the general tenor of his life seems to bespeak a man, who thought his title, alone, sufficient to exculpate him with the world for the prosecution of the most unmanly and dissipated

courses.”³⁷ Furthermore, the court is particularly despised as a locus of inauthenticity: “*A Description of Court*. In this place truth and falsehood, vice and politeness, good and evil, equally reign; where they who are displeased smile, and they who are pleased dissemble their passion. . . .” Far from criticizing those who seek to better themselves, the macaroni satires instead show such persons the right way to become moral and exemplary individuals, regardless of their origins, whether high or low.

Caricature had heretofore been considered inappropriate for representations of political ideals to be circulated in the public sphere; because of its history, it was associated with privacy, elitism, individualism, and frivolity, and was therefore unsuitable for the public sphere’s ideal disinterestedness. The macaroni was equally inappropriate for the public sphere. In fact, the macaroni, like his predecessor, the fop, was said to disdain the archetypal space of public sociability in the eighteenth century, the coffeehouse. Macaronis were reputed to drink only milk and to avoid roast beef, ale, and smoke.³⁸ To caricature macaronis was acceptable, then, since both the subject and the medium worked to reinforce the values and standards of the public sphere.

THE MACARONI: CELEBRATING CHARACTER

And yet, despite the macaroni’s extreme behavior, inauthenticity, and foreignness, there is still a strong current of attraction in the critiques of the macaroni, and especially in the caricatures. In fact, by the mid-1770s the macaroni prints that depicted individuals, rather than types, rapidly lost their initial status as cautionary counterexamples and transformed instead into desirable role models. This occurred precisely because of their emphasis on the macaroni’s remarkable individualism and even his eccentricity.

The macaroni phenomenon was deeply tied to the contemporary fascination with character.³⁹ While they purport to critique the superficiality, extravagance, and exaggeration of the macaroni figure, the satires also represented his up-to-date fashions in careful detail. The viewer is ostensibly meant to disapprove of the excessive attention to self that the subject displayed, and yet is simultaneously enthralled by the spectacle of his eccentricity. In an age that valued both timely fashion and timeless, sentimental sincerity, the macaroni print provided both an ideal (up-to-the-minute sophistication), and its opposite (the worst sort of superficiality). Again, the size and extravagance of the macaroni hairstyle seemed to emblemize the twinned allure and repulsion of the eccentric macaroni, as it was both fashionable and false. In the case of the individuated macaroni caricature, especially those published by the Darlys, what began as clearly ridicule rapidly transformed into something almost laudatory.

The Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine seemed cognizant of the danger that these satires could be consumed not as cautionary tales, but as models of sophisticated behavior and as a blueprint for achieving an admirable singularity. Of the first print of a macaroni published in its first issue, the essayist explains, “Having thus given the origin of the word Macaroni, we shall now beg leave to give the public an example; though we could by no means propose it as a pattern; not that we need in the least fear the contagion to reach men of the plainest

understanding: but, when we reflect on the wide empire folly holds in this country, probably, the caution will not be altogether unnecessary.”⁴⁰ The author worries with good reason, for just like the text, which then indulges in a lengthy account of the life and times of this character, the print makes the subject look rather more dashing than ridiculous. In fact, much of the moralizing in macaroni tracts seems more like a tacked-on rationalization for a juicy indulgence in the details of a singular character.

Surely it was also something of a coup to be one of the Darlys’s macaronis, to be sufficiently well-known and distinctive enough in identity to warrant caricature. Indeed, as early as 1772, the Darlys’s macaronis often seemed more like visual guessing games about the individual who was portrayed, than moralizing satires on the person’s dress or behavior. For example, *The Fly-Catching Macaroni* and *The Simpling Macaroni* (figs. 5, 6) depict the naturalist Joseph Banks and his assistant, Daniel Solander, both of whom had just returned from the famous round-the-world voyage with Captain Cook in 1771. While both men were prominent citizens in London, renowned scientists and world travelers, friends to the likes of Benjamin Franklin and members of the Royal Society, there is no evidence that they actually dressed or behaved like macaronis in life. The prints hint at macaroni fashion in their depiction of bag-wigs and in Banks’s sword and plume, but extravagant dress or hair is not the main emphasis of the image. Instead, much of the imagery is consumed with giving the viewer clues to the figures’ identity. Visual clues include the attributes of the men’s professions and claims to fame, such as the global poles straddled by Banks and the plant specimen of Solander, as well as the portrait-like physiognomic treatment of the men’s faces. Textually, further clues are given through the titles and rhyming couplets that hint at their names: “Like Soland-geese from frozen zone I wander—On shallow **Banks** grows fat **Sol*****”—allowing the viewer to fill in the rest of the name him or herself (fig. 6).

Certainly the main point of these prints does not seem to be ridiculing the men’s artifice, effeminacy, or fashionable extravagance, nor do they humiliate or demean the subject. To the contrary, these macaroni prints portray the subject as marked by the unique attributes of his identity, perhaps even as a modern replacement for the allegories and personifications, such as liberty or Britannia, which viewers had been trained to recognize by their attributes in the older emblematic system of representation. Now, not only abstractions but real, contemporary Britons are given this kind of particularity and attention in the public sphere. Indeed, *The Fly-Catching Macaroni* itself can be spotted in the left window of *The Macaroni Print Shop* (fig. 3), enthralling and amusing the sidewalk public.

These macaroni prints elevate the status of the individual portrayed, merely by suggesting he is well-known enough to be portrayed in this way. But they also compliment the viewer, suggesting he or she is a kind of insider, well-versed enough in the contemporary world to read the clues and make the accurate guess of identity. “Macaroni” here, then, has little to do with foppish dress or over-refinement; instead it seems to be merely a synonym for “personal caricature.”⁴¹ And because caricature signified insiderness and sophistication as well as exaggeration and superficiality, being caricatured could be read as a mark of desirable individualism as well as a warning of its dangerous extreme.



Figure 5. Anon., *The Fly-Catching Macaroni*, published by Matthew Darly, 1772. Etching. BM Sat 4695. © The British Museum, London.



Figure 6. Anon., *The Simpling Macaroni*, published by Matthew Darly, 1772. Etching. BM Sat 4696. © The British Museum, London.

Indeed, eccentricity and individualism were hailed as the marks of real Englishmen. As the *Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* put it in February 1773, “One Frenchman alone is sufficient to represent fifty Frenchmen; but forty-nine Englishmen are insufficient to represent fifty of their own countrymen.” Such a notion, that Britons were all unique characters, reveals how the individual caricature of a macaroni could so quickly invert from ridicule to celebration. True British character avoided extremes and artificiality, yes, but it was also singular, identifiable, and even eccentric. Significantly, the hairstyles of these celebratory Darcy macaronis, most featuring known individuals, are considerably more restrained than those in the prints that feature macaroni “types,” such as *What is this my son Tom* (fig. 1). Instead, the eccentricity of the macaroni self, no longer visually invested only the outward markers of costume and hairstyle, is recognizable in the singular attributes of the man’s achievement and identity. Thus, while many aspects of the macaroni phenomenon were clearly antithetical to evolving ideals of sober, modern masculinity, the main feature of macaroni prints—their riveting depiction of a singular character—could be seen to reinforce, rather than contest, these manly British virtues.

The macaroni phenomenon, then, seemed to play a multifaceted role as men negotiated this development of self and identity. On one hand, macaronis represented the undesirable extreme of the civilizing process and their critique flattered those viewers who were wise enough not to fall into the traps of a decadent and luxurious society.⁴² Satires that stressed this message often featured outrageous hairstyles to underline the point. Yet on the other hand, the macaroni was also a sign that Britons were attempting to rival the continent in sophistication and politeness, and their representation in caricatural portraits rewarded both the subjects and the audience of the satires for their knowledge and presentation of singular, individual identities. The paradox is that the macaroni, an icon of inauthenticity, became through the unmasking effect of portrait caricature a real individual—known, individuated, perhaps eccentric, but also thereby authentic—a modern, manly Briton. Thus, the paradoxes of the macaroni in the 1770s are the paradoxes of British caricature itself in its Golden Age: originally foreign, it came to seem perfectly British; cautionary and moralizing, it was also consumed as an attainable ideal; supposedly about surfaces, extravagance, and exaggeration, it nonetheless set itself an agenda of unmasking and truth-telling. The figure of the macaroni is thus a kind of cipher for the ambitions and paradoxes of British culture at this inflection point of evolving modernity.

NOTES

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1. It has occasionally been argued that the use of “macaroni” for fashionable British males comes from the Italian *maccherone*, meaning “fool,” but as the *Oxford English Dictionary* contends, macaronis were in fact named for the pasta dish, a food known in England (with its characteristic topping of cheese) as an Italian food since at least the early seventeenth century. This is also the etymology explained in the inaugural issue of *The Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* (October 1772): “Macaroni is, in the Italian language, a word made use of to express a compound dish made of

vermicelli. . . . This dish was far from being universally known in this country till the commencement of the last peace: when, like many foreign fashions, it was imported by our *Connoscenti* in eating, as an improvement to their subscription-table at Almack's. In time, the subscribers to those dinners became [sic] to be distinguished by the title of MACARONIES. . . ." For the distinguishing characteristics of macaroni fashion, see Valerie Steele, "The Social and Political Significance of Macaroni Fashion," *Costume* 19 (1985): 94–109, and Aileen Ribeiro, "The Macaronis," *History Today* 28 (July 1978): 463–468.

2. *The Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine, or Monthly Register* (October 1772): 1.

3. As Miles Ogborn has put it: "Macaronis went from being something life-sized, extravagantly decked out and at court, to being something small, made of paper and widely distributed." See "Luxury, Sexuality, and Vision in Vauxhall Gardens," *Textual Practice* 11.3 (1997): 445–461, 446.

4. For thoughtful explorations of masculinity, class, and politeness, see Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660–1800* (New York and London: Longman, 2001) and David Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity, England 1550–1850* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 2002). Kuchta also uses the term "self-made" to describe the sober, virtuous, and prosperous model of masculinity that emerged in the later eighteenth century, a slightly different inflection than the notion of self-construction that I intend here.

5. Shearer West, "The Darly Macaroni Prints and the Politics of 'Private Man,'" *Eighteenth-Century Life* 25 (Spring 2001): 170–182, was the first to suggest this connection between the macaroni and the contemporary interest in character and eccentricity. On the eighteenth-century meaning of character, see Deidre Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago and London: Chicago Univ. Press, 1998); on the invention of the modern, interiorized self at the end of the eighteenth century, see Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2004) and Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1989); for another example of the complex link between caricature and the modern self, see Amelia Rauser, "Embodied Liberty: Why Hogarth's Caricature of John Wilkes Backfired," in *The Other Hogarth: Aesthetics of Difference*, ed. Bernadette Fort and Angela Rosenthal (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001), 240–57.

6. Wigs were introduced to the English court by Charles II. On the history and significance of wigs, see Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1993), 114–123, and Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2002).

7. D. Ritchie, *A Treatise on the Hair* (London, 1770), 78. Cited by Marcia Pointon, "The Case of the Dirty Beau: Symmetry, Disorder, and the Politics of Masculinity," in *The Body Imaged: The Human Form and Visual Culture Since the Renaissance*, ed. Kathleen Adler and Marcia Pointon (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), 175–189, 175.

8. See for example the Darly hairstyle satire *The Vis-à-Vis*, in *Darly's Comic Prints of Characters, Macaronies, etc.*, 1 vol., 116 plates, folio. (London, 1776), New York Public Library, call number MDY++.

9. Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, 121.

10. Pointon, "The Case of the Dirty Beau," 180.

11. This journal is also known by the name *The Macaroni, Scavoir Vivre, and Theatrical Magazine*, a longer title it assumed partway through its brief run.

12. Philip Carter argues that this conflict is the result of a transition between two phases of manly sociability in this period: the first emphasizing the informal ease of polite conversation, and the second, in part responding to the potential artifice of politeness, focusing on the culture of sensibility and the sincerity guaranteed by the wordless expression of sympathy. See Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, 124–162.

13. *Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* (March 1773): 264.

14. Barbara Maria Stafford addresses the generalized anxiety in this period over a "deliberately fabricated incongruity between seeming and being," visible in everything from paper currency to

fashion, theater, and the masquerade; see *Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 86. On the effect of this anxiety on self-presentation, see Jay Fliegelman's account of the "elocutionary revolution" in *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1993). In "Making Faces: Physiognomy and Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England," *Etudes Anglaises* 38.4 (1985): 385–396, Roy Porter notes that this anxiety resulted in the cultural fascination with physiognomy.

15. *Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* (May 1773): 373.

16. *Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* (November 1772): 215.

17. G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992).

18. For a brief analysis of a real masquerade ball, see Aileen Ribeiro, "The King of Denmark's Masquerade," *History Today* 27.6 (June 1977): 385–389; for a more wide-ranging and theorized account, see Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1986).

19. For example, Peter McNeil, "'That Doubtful Gender': Macaroni Dress and Male Sexualities," *Fashion Theory* 3.4 (1999): 411–448.

20. The observation and interpretation of this detail comes from Peter McNeil, "'That Doubtful Gender,'" 426. "Catamite" is a Latinate form of "Ganymede."

21. *Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* (October 1772): n.p.

22. Ogborn, "Luxury and Sexuality," 453.

23. *Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* (May 1773): 372.

24. See Anne Hollander, *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress* (New York and London: Kodansha Press, 1994); Aileen Ribeiro, *The Art of Dress: Fashion in England and France, 1750–1820* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1995), 211; Valerie Steele, "Macaroni Fashion"; and David Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit*.

25. Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit*, 137–147.

26. *Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* (March 1773): 258.

27. Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit*, 121–126.

28. I am referring here specifically to the emergence of deformative personal caricature into the public sphere in the 1770s, as opposed to the vibrant market in emblematic and allegorical political satire, and to Hogarthian social satire, which had long been a feature of the public sphere. See Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1996), 60.

29. As Diana Donald notes, while Bretherton's prints of Henry Bunbury's caricatures in 1771 may have established the trend, the Darlys were the ones to capitalize on its popularity. See Donald, *The Age of Caricature*, 80.

30. See, for example, Aileen Ribeiro, "The Macaronis," *History Today* 28 (July 1978): 463–468, 466, who remarks that "the macaronis were a godsend" to early practitioners of caricature.

31. Many writers have detailed the Italian origins of the art of deformative portrait caricature; for a good account of the caricatures of one master, Bernini, see Irving Lavin, "Bernini and the Art of Social Satire," *Drawings by Gianlorenzo Bernini from the Museum der Bildenden Künste* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1981), 27–54.

32. See Timothy Clayton, *The English Print, 1688–1802* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1997), for detailed accounts of printmakers and the print market in eighteenth-century London. On the Darlys, see also Harriet J. Stroomberg, *High Heads: Hair Fashions Depicted in Eighteenth-Century Satirical Prints Published by Matthew and Mary Darly* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1999); and David Alexander's helpful review, "The Darlys' Satires of Hair Fashions," *Print Quarterly* 17.2 (June 2000): 173–175.

33. For luxury and consumption, see Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1982); Maxine Berg, "New Commodities, Luxuries, and Their Consumers in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650–1850*, ed. Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1999); and David Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1992). The notion of self-invention was taken to a further extreme around 1800 with the successor to the macaroni, the dandy; Beau Brummel exaggerated the modesty of his origins in order to appear entirely self-created. See Ellen Moers, *The Dandy, Brummell to Beerbohm* (New York: Viking Press, 1960), 17.

34. Indeed, the inclusiveness of middle and lower classes in the public sphere and in the consumption of caricature was one of the features most remarked upon by foreign visitors to Great Britain. The Spanish diplomat and friend of Francisco Goya, Leandro Fernández de Moratin, who was in England during 1792 and 1793, wrote: "Everything is a fit subject for these plates (caricature); literature, morality, and politics especially. . . . I have never seen Royalty more violently demolished than in the English caricatures: there is no sovereign in Europe, however much feared and however powerful he may be, who has escaped being made a figure of fun and providing amusement at the price of two or three reals for the population of London." Quoted and translated by Xavier de Salas, "Light on the Origin of *Los Caprichos*," *Burlington Magazine* 121.920 (November 1979): 711–716, 712.

35. West has identified the similarity of the Darly prints to two earlier genres: not only the drawn caricatures of Ghezzi, but also the printed genre of the cries of London, with which they share a specificity of professions, and, she argues, a disparaging satire of the lower orders.

36. See, for example, her argument that "the caricatures of the 1770s had harped on the vulgarity of the commercial classes, in their attempts to vie with people of fashion. This was a view of society whose premise was the age-old belief in the 'naturalness' of aristocratic authority, and fears of usurpation by the lower orders." Donald, *The Age of Caricature*, 98–99.

37. *Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* (November 1772): n.p.

38. This physical sensitivity continued in the later type of the dandy; Beau Brummell once claimed that he caught a cold by being put into a room at a country inn with a "damp stranger." Moers, *The Dandy*, 18–19.

39. West, "The Darly Macaroni Prints," 170–182.

40. *Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* (October 1772): 1.

41. Shearer West makes a similar observation, saying that "for a brief time, 'macaroni' became synonymous with 'humor,' with its connotations of both personality and laughter." West, "The Darly Macaroni Prints," 179.

42. Philip Carter, *Men and Emergence of Polite Society*, 156.