The Head and the Hair: Absolutism, Consumerism, and Sexuality in Ancien Régime France as Seen Through the Lens of the Coiffure

by

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Class of 2013

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Departmental Honors from the College of Social Studies

Middletown, Connecticut April, 2013
Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank the following people and institutions for providing a tremendous amount of intellectual and moral support throughout this process. I could have never accomplished this thesis without them…


A special dedication goes to Noah Langholz, Class of 2014, a bright, engaging, and compassionate young man whom we all miss dearly. May he rest in peace.

Je vous remercie, et, plus important, je vous aime.
“Un hémisphère dans une chevelure”

Laisse-moi respirer longtemps, longtemps, l’odeur de tes cheveux, y plonger tout mon visage, comme un homme altéré dans l’eau d’une source, et les agiter avec ma main comme un mouchoir odorant, pour secouer des souvenirs dans l’air.

Si tu pouvais savoir tout ce que je vois! tout ce que je sens! tout ce que j’entends dans tes cheveux! Mon âme voyage sur le parfum comme l’âme des autres hommes sur la musique.

Tes cheveux contiennent tout un rêve, plein de voilures et de mâtures; ils contiennent de grandes mers dont les moussons me portent vers de charmants climats, où l’espace est plus bleu et plus profond, où l’atmosphère est parfumée par les fruits, par les feuilles et par la peau humaine.

Dans l’océan de ta chevelure, j’entrevois un port fourmillant de chants mélancoliques, d’hommes vigoureux de toutes nations et de navires de toutes formes découpant leurs architectures fines et compliquées sur un ciel immense où se prélasse l’éternelle chaleur.

Dans les caresses de ta chevelure, je retrouve les langueurs des longues heures passées sur un divan, dans la chambre d’un beau navire, bercées par le roulis imperceptible du port, entre les pots de fleurs et les gargoulettes rafraîchissantes.

Dans l’ardent foyer de ta chevelure, je respire l’odeur du tabac mêlé à l’opium et au sucre; dans la nuit de ta chevelure, je vois resplendir l’infini de l’azur tropical; sur les rivages duvetés de ta chevelure je m’enivre des odeurs combinées du goudron, du musc et de l’huile de coco.

Laisse-moi mordre longtemps tes tresses lourdes et noires. Quand je mordille tes cheveux élastiques et rebelles, il me semble que je mange des souvenirs.

- Charles Baudelaire, “Le Spleen de Paris”
Part I: An Introduction

Today, the hairstyles of the Bourbon ancien régime France, such as the coiffures of Marie-Antoinette or the voluminous wigs of King Louis XIV, seem like objects of humorous curiosity, like distant and terribly pompous ancestors of the toupee or the beehive. Yet in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries in Europe, and especially in France, no self-respecting woman or man above a certain social rank would be seen without an intriguing or impressive hairstyle, be it a powdered wig or a tower of curled locks. This fact is not only due to societal pressures amongst the upper and middle classes of France, but is also linked to the quickly expanding availability of choices concerning hairstyling. The plethora of options concerning wigs and coiffures made life simpler at times, for a man could simply shave his head and wear a wig every day, not bothering with the upkeep of his natural hair. As for female hairstyles, there was a certain whimsy and confidence in being able to choose a look from an ever-expanding array of hairstyles, whether they were comprised of the woman’s own hair or not. The prevalence of such coiffures and male wigs (which were known in France as perruques and in the British Isles and their colonies as periwigs) speaks to not only a trend in fashion, but also to an evolution in consumerism that has changed the landscape of material culture since its inception.

The question that this thesis seeks to answer is the following: Why is a story concerning hair culture significant, and what can the history of hairstyles in Bourbon France tell us about the economic, sexual, and to an extent, political culture of the era? Even today, this époque evokes memories of courtly ladies with lavish hairstyles waltzing with renowned politicians who donned powdered wigs.
Such dreamy images involving this time period may seem unimportant, but actually are very helpful in explaining the stylistic and commercial history of France. In this history of hairstyles, we encounter a very interesting juncture between the issues of corporeality, consumerism, and displays of riches and power.

I employ hair as a lens for studying Bourbon ancien régime France due to its seeming outlandishness from a modern point of view, the novel culture that arose around it, and, more philosophically, hair’s liminal character as a dead, detached, and malleable part of the human body.

I argue that hair was politicized and commercialized in this era to a degree never known before, and was frequently correlated with the rise in what one may see as other bourgeois or even upper-class products such as hats, jewelry, lace, or silks. Thus hair and these other goods have an instructive way of showing the generally positive increase in commercial or consumer culture. In addition, consumer hair culture in the ancien régime brought forth for the first time certain boutiques and professions in a form that we still recognize today, such as the hair salon and the hairdresser. Such statements may not seem significant on their own, but they act as a facet of analysis that can elucidate certain components of absolutist monarchies, the development of consumer culture, and the interactions that occur between gender, power, class, and appearance.

There is a certain “immortality of hair,” for it survives the decay of the human body yet remains a part of it.¹ While today, many facets of the body, from the epidermis, to fat cells, to various internal organs, are treated in a manner that

could be considered to be commercial and objectified, hair has a much longer history and exists in a more intermediary state—that of the easily fabricated and mutated, and a natural growth of the body. Even beyond the wig, there are myriad numbers of products that serve to treat, constrain, and manipulate one’s hair.

With this stated, while the French Bourbon reign will be the central topic in terms of geography and temporality, it would be fruitless to examine this French régime in a vacuum. In order to contextualize both the history and the argument, the history of consumer culture and of the various cultures surrounding hair must be studied. That said, for the sake of achieving specificity, the Western world, and mainly Europe, will be used most frequently in these cases. In this vein, due to the nature of commercial activity being centered in urban areas, cities and courts will act as the focal point for our data and analysis. By cross-examining these attitudes and developments regarding consumption and hair, we will reach a fuller understanding of the importance of coiffures in Bourbon France.

Finally, as a logistical note, I recommend that the reader attempt to pay attention to the footnotes, for they frequently include not only citations, but also elucidating and fascinating, albeit sometimes tangential, information pertaining to the topic at hand. After all, it is commonly the entertaining anecdotes and strange digressions that provide the most sparkle and intrigue in a story.
It is essential to both define such terms as consumerism, commercial, material, and capitalist culture before discussing them and their implications within the Bourbon régime. These expressions seem rather interchangeable, and I argue, perhaps controversially, that they should be. That said, in short, consumerism or consumerist culture revolve around *exchange* for goods or services, and *consumption*—into which we will later delve—while materialist culture connotes a greater fixation on *acquisition* and *objectification*.

Capitalism, meanwhile, has an even more fluid definition. Few, if any, societies have witnessed actual free markets with no restraints on trade, which are often the traits that people use most frequently to define the capitalist system. The British Marxist economist Maurice Dobb convincingly argues that free trade has never actually existed. He puts forth the idea that it was only during the nineteenth century that, at the most, the United States and Great Britain came close to realizing an unrestricted economy, but the countries soon turned towards more protectionist and social welfare-oriented policies.

Consequently, the classical definitions of the market as being something in which information concerning products is perfectly communicated, dynamism exists between small buyers and sellers, factors of production are completely mobile, et cetera., have not ever existed.\(^2\) Regardless, there is a clear link between production, purchase, creation, and usage that is inherent in the comprehension of capitalistic

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workings. When we then consider such understandings of consumer culture, material culture, and a capitalistic market, the three definitions seem to have some common denominator in the idea of consumption.

*Consumption* is thus the key word at hand in connection with all of these concepts in that they all entail a relationship between supply and demand, and a market—whether it includes slavery, feudalism, guilds, or paid labor—of some kind. In our argument, then, it does not seem inappropriate to use these three terms interchangeably at times.

In the discussion of consumption, the historian Rosalind Williams engages with the etymology of the word in a very intriguing manner. She mentions that the English word “consumption” has two possible roots. One is derived from the Latin term *consumere*, which roughly translates to “to take away with” or “to use up entirely.” This links up with an understanding of consumption as a sort of positive feedback loop of production and purchase. That is, although certain historical episodes provide evidence to the contrary, the more a society produces, the more the society consumes, and a cycle of voracious use of goods and resources begins. Williams remarks that in this case, “consumption is considered equivalent to destruction, waste, decay—in short, to a death-directed process.” We may also think of the word “decadence” to convey this understanding of consumption. Such terminology evokes the seminal work of the economist and political scholar Joseph

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3 This etymological thought only refers to Romance or Romance-influenced languages.
Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, in which he discusses the idea of “creative destruction” as being integral to the very nature of capitalistic society itself.

“Creative destruction” essentially entails change and its necessary role in markets, production, and consumption. Especially in terms of fashion trends, this reference to a somewhat cannibalistic framework makes perfect sense, as styles continually replace one another. The following quote from Schumpeter elucidates the point at hand:

> “Capitalism is by nature a form or method of economic change and not only never is but never can be stationary…the fundamental impulse that sets and keeps the capitalist engine in motion comes from the new consumers’ goods, the new methods of production or transportation, the new markets, the new forms of industrial organization that capitalist enterprise creates.”  

Schumpeter’s use of the term “capitalism,” at least in this quote, is quite easily associated with the conception of the material or consumer culture that we discuss.

The alternative Latin etymology of “consumption” has more positive connotations. The word can be seen as derived from *consummare*, which comes from the phrase *com summa*. In comparison to the first derivation, this other term means “to make the sum” or “to sum up” and thus entails a feeling of completion and

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satisfaction. In this sense consumption can refer to the fulfillment of one’s needs, as contentment springs from one’s usage of an item.

Given that there are diverse economic, sociologic, anthropological, and archeological definitions of what we may plainly define as consumption, this thesis will use as a starting point the terminology that sociologists Max Weber and Roberta Sassatelli have put forth. Weber’s conception of a consumer society is one in which “the satisfaction of daily needs” is realized through “the capitalist mode.”6 Sassatelli interprets this to mean that “daily desires are satisfied through the acquisition and use of ‘commodities,’ [which are] goods which are produced for exchange and are on sale on the market.”7 Furthermore, Sassatelli writes, “Consumer culture is more than commodization and affluence, more than conspicuous consumption and the democratization of luxuries. Consumer culture also produces consumers.”8 That is, production, advertising, social pressures, and other forms of want-formation create reasons to purchase, and consequently, generate people who want to consume marketed goods or services.

Meanwhile, material culture, which necessarily deals with objects, also has a strong sociological component in terms of how people buy into such a system. Thorstein Veblen was one of the first economists to systematically discuss the issue of in the manner in which social comparison informs consumer desires, and thus material culture. His work claims, “The motive that lies at the root of ownership is

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8 ibid., 6
emulation…[as] the possession of wealth confers honour.” In other words, he asserts that society imposes standards of comparison on people, which motivate consumer activity through the feeling of relative deprivation, or the need to ‘keep up.’ Historian Daniel Roche also addresses this social dimension by noting that “the practitioners and interpreters of fashion…[exalt] the desire of the privileged, true or false, to distinguish themselves from lesser mortals.” Amartya Sen has furthered the notion of the social goals of consumption by adding the factor of commitment—be it out of a feeling of familial responsibility, business ethics, or anything else—as a vital issue in economic behavior and hence consumption. Like Sen, Sassatelli advances considerations in consumption that go beyond emulation. She writes:

“Emulation as a universal impulse or instinct like envy, [in terms of Veblen’s analysis] doesn’t allow for a modern culture of consumption also being expressed in the historical construction of a distinctive cognitive, emotional, and moral outlook…also, in a Veblenesque model, we can’t easily conceive of imitation and identification on the one hand, and as a necessarily creative and selective process, on the other. Furthermore, the social dimension seems to have a pleonastic character, because only public practices of consumption may appear as social, whereas private ones may be presented as having some sort of pre-cultural function…Veblen tends to provide only a partial socialization of consumption, whereas there seems to be no

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reason to suppose that private consumption is any less culturally shaped or expressive of values.”\textsuperscript{12}

Consequently, it is necessary to account for a less conscious and conspicuous dimension of consumption—one in which material culture is bred into a society and in which new ideas, not mere imitations, come about. In this quote, Sassatelli alerts us to the fact that Veblen’s conception of consumption as being nearly purely driven by emulation does not account for any creative production. Furthermore, at times, emulation is simply imbued into a person due to long-standing ideals within a society. This can occur without any articulated motives, and may display itself in multiple manners. Consequently, while we discuss trend-dissemination in this text, we cannot disregard the personal preferences that people have for each other, goods, and services. For example, a consumer may purchase a “trendy” item purely because he finds it attractive, and may continue to purchase or use that item after it is no longer fashionable. All of these concerns factor into a consumer or commercial culture.

Sassatelli acknowledges that there is yet another dimension to consumption. She writes of a “politics of consumption” in which “both the ways in which consumption is represented and the ways in which it is carried out are deeply intertwined with power relationships.”\textsuperscript{13} Many sociologists and political thinkers


\textsuperscript{13} The author goes on to note that “For the sake of analysis… [consumption habits] may be seen as amounting to four intertwined dimensions: They concern social differences in everyday life as well as cultural representations; they work through
before her time discussed consumption or material accumulation as a private action, which was only associated with domestic usage and the family, and was thus in opposition with any views of public or political considerations. Indeed, the etymology of the word “economy” relates back to the ancient Greek term for “household management.”¹⁴ However, as Sassatelli deftly notes, this viewpoint is often misguided. Consequently, there are prominent political and power aspects of consumption. This is evident whether one considers the existence of sumptuary laws, royal or celebrity trendsetters, or money’s use as a tool for exchange. Sassatelli goes on to note the following:

“For the sake of analysis…[consumption habits] may be seen as amounting to four intertwined dimensions: They concern social differences in everyday life as well as cultural representations; they work through consumers’ identities and their engagement with visions of normality as well as through the systemic effects of consumption on other spheres of life.”¹⁵

For an example of the politicization of consumption, we may turn to the sumptuary laws of France. Eighteen decrees with regard to clothes and ornament were passed between 1485 and 1660, which clearly represented a socio-political attempt on the part of the nobility to defend their appearance, and thus their station.

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When monetarist and mercantilist economic thought was in vogue during the seventeenth century, an argument was even put forth that consumer expenditure on, for example, silks, was diverting bullion away from the nation. In the words of Roche, “the policing of expenditure…affected every subject.”

With these various lenses of politics, economics, and societal concerns to dissect consumer behavior in France during the reign of the Bourbon kings, we can see that, despite the large body of literature that asserts that the creation of a consumer culture only developed in the nineteenth century, there is strong evidence—which ranges from Venetian trading in the 1400s to the Dutch tulip economic bubble of the 1600s—that a significant growth in capitalism, consumerism, and materialism occurred in Europe much earlier than the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The importance

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18 Sassatelli writes that, “In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there were…important transformations of the *economic culture* as a whole: these are centuries which saw both the development of a new rationalist orientation to production among emergent social groups, and the appearance of a more reflexive and self-sustained culture of consumption among not only the elites but also the upper-middle strata of the population. These observations enable us to take into consideration what, broadly speaking, characterized the *culture of consumption* in the 17th and 18th centuries. They are helpful in correcting Weber’s well-known hypothesis which, as already suggested, links the birth of capitalism to Calvinist worldly asceticism and thus to a particular *culture of production*.”

More specifically for our purposes, economist Werner Sombart notes that fashion—if understood as “a general concept for a complex of temporarily valid cultural forms,” on which people may or may not spend money—then it existed much earlier than the era of the Industrial Revolution. He argues that we see “true fashion” in the Italian cities of the fifteenth century, spreading north during the Renaissance, and being characterized by a “foolish reverence” for the trends disseminating from France. In this we witness an argument for the existence of a
of this gradual socio-economic shift will be highlighted throughout the thesis, as we examine the relationships between human, object, and consequently the consumerized facets of the human body.

After considering these definitions and theories of consumption, we will move on to examine the context of the culture surrounding hair, and how hair and materialism have been intertwined prior to the Bourbon régime. Finally, and only then, will we be able to unfold and examine the emergence of markets in an era typically defined by a rigid division between the bourgeoisie, nobility, and the impoverished commoners. This discussion will shed light on the intersections and power dynamics between these classes, as well as on the effect that the absolutist—although eventually fading—power of the Bourbon régime had on economic, and thus consumptive, behaviors during this era.

fairly rapid exchange of goods (most notably for us in clothing industries) well before the nineteenth century.
From ancient times, hair has been a symbol of sexual and political power. One merely needs to think of the tale of Samson and Delilah, or of the early Aryan settlers of India, who worshipped their sun god as ‘the long-haired’ or ‘the golden-haired,’” in order to see this. In the Roman Empire, the poet Claudian, who lived around 400 C.E., invoked a sun god to “scatter daylight abroad with more copious locks.” These tales and conceptions elucidate the connection between strength, power, virility, and hair that has been so prevalent throughout history.

Sociologist Anthony Synnott elaborates upon such junctures between the body, hair, and society by eloquently combining gender and corporeality into the discussion. He argues:

“The sociology of hair calls attention to the close relation between the physical body and the social body in the two aspects of gender and ideology. Gender and ideology are ‘made flesh’ in the hair as people conform to, or deviate from, the norms, and even deviate from deviant norms; they thereby symbolize their identities with respect to a wide range of phenomena: religious, political, sexual, social, occupational, and other.”

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Elaborating on the relationships between hair and power, historian Wendy Cooper adds a psychological and biological lens to this point of view. She states that since facial and body hair are some of the most obvious features that differentiate the appearances of men and women, “it is not surprising that hairiness has become a symbol and proof of masculinity.” As for women’s hair and its sexual connotations, Cooper argues in a Darwinian fashion that because the female body has become so “denuded” of hair, the largest remaining area of hair—that of the head—has grown in desirability. She notes, perhaps more controversially, that due to a process of “displacement,” a female human’s “head hair is to the male a symbol of her pubic hair and hence of her very womanhood.”

Beyond her analysis, longer hair, which has been more typical for women throughout the ages, is, in a Veblenesque analysis, a status symbol, for it is expensive, or at least time-consuming to keep, and often keeps the wearer from performing tasks in the most efficient manner.

In addition to the aforementioned sense of sexual displacement, there are other ways in which people alienate hair from the body. Due to the plasticity of hair, it can easily appear or disappear in a way that affects a person’s sense of comfort. By emphasizing the unnatural through the conscious removal of hair, a defamiliarization (or ostranenie) of something perceived as common and human may occur.

Combining defamiliarization and sexuality, historian Robin Bryer asserts that the length of hair acts as a record of the passage of time, and also, by virtue of

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22 ibid., 65.
its mutability, has the “capacity to assist fantasy and escape.” A quite apt illustration of this ability is the fable of Rapunzel. We may of course look to other tales and forms of literature such as F. Scott Fitzgerald’s “Bernice Bobs Her Hair” or Charles Baudelaire’s “Un Hémisphère dans une Chevelure” to unlock the fantasies—be they sexual, exotic, temporal, or social—that the female hairstyle holds. Combined, these textual and thus communal methods of describing hair

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23 In the fable, a beautiful girl is locked away in a high tower by a witch, who daily uses the girl’s “splendid long hair, as fine as spun gold,” to climb back home. Yet when a prince stumbles across the tower, he convinces Rapunzel to let down her locks in order to let him up. The two become lovers, and while tragedy ensures after the witch finds out about the affair, eventually, as most fairy tales do, the prince and Rapunzel live happily ever after. This story not only conveys the capacity of hair to be used for escape and fantasy, but also its power, and perhaps even its ability to empower a woman.


24 Fitzgerald’s short story tells of a plain girl living in 1920s America who comes to stay with her cousin, and announces that she intends to bob her hair. To her cousin’s envy, she soon becomes the toast of the town, although she actually hasn’t cut it yet. When she finally takes the leap, the hairstyle looks atrocious, and in order to get back at her jealous, conniving cousin, cuts off her long, beautiful locks in her sleep. The story thus speaks to social-climbing fantasy, varying expectations of beauty, and the ability to escape from or to enter into a world of pain due simply to a hairstyle.

Baudelaire’s prose poem, an ode to a woman’s luxurious locks, touches on the power of hair to evoke memory, exoticism, and decadence. He writes, “Tes cheveux contiennent tout un rêve…[et] quand je mordille tes cheveux élastiques, il me semble que je mange des souvenirs” (“Your hair contains a dream in its entirety…when I nibble at your elastic hair, it seems to be that I am eating memories”).


confront the reader with something foreign and vaguely inhuman, and may lead to a insightful re-evaluation of norms concerning the human body.
Gallic Hair Culture

Like many communities before them, the Franks associated long hair with respect and strength. Without attempting to present an ethnography in this section, several anecdotes will help shed light on the attitudes surrounding hair in their culture. Dating back to at least the times of Clovis, the Frankish king who reigned from circa 481 to 511, hair was considered to be an integral part of a king’s identity. According to legend, his people chose their kings from the hairiest of warriors, and if a king failed in courage, he lost not only his strength, but also his hair.25

Clovis’s wife, Clothide, was similarly obsessed with the royal associations with hair. After her son, the king Clodomir, died, the throne of the Franks was meant to go to one of his three sons. Yet Clotaire and Childebert, the uncles of the young boys, conspired to get power, and kidnapped two of the child princes. They then sent an envoy bearing a sword and a pair of shears to Clothide. The envoy threatened to either cut the boys’ hair, or to kill them. Since cutting their hair would disinherit the grandsons from the throne, their grandmother decided it would be best if they died. Such was the importance of hair to Frankish royalty.26

Later on, the Gallic people still held a grand veneration for hair. The essentially deified emperor Charlemagne, who was often described as virile and powerful, was also known to have “beautiful, well-combed, flowing hair, often scented if the moment called for it.”27 Even the entry for hair in Diderot and

26 ibid., 195.
27 ibid., 62.
D’Almbert’s *Encyclopédie* testifies to this, asserting that “among the first Franks, and in the beginning of [the French] monarchy, [long hair] was a characteristic of princes of the blood.”28

Thus there were very similar overtones regarding hair, power, and sexuality in Gallic culture as have existed and exist in other societies. This intersection of politics and hair will be, as hinted at earlier, one of the main analytical focal points that we will employ.

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Naturally, due in part to the symbolic importance of hair, occupations—or at least specializations—involving it cropped up much earlier than in seventeenth-century Europe. The occupations of the barber, the wigmaker, and the hairstylist have been historically documented since before the Common Era, and often proved integral to the social and self-conceptions of people of various cultures.

Barbers existed in most ancient civilizations, from Mesopotamia to the Roman Empire. While, undoubtedly, many of these barbers were not necessarily part of ‘the market’ in that they were slaves who worked for free and out of compulsion, there were also those who performed the labor in exchange for money. Thus at the very least we can speak of the barber as a specialized worker in some sense, albeit not yet as a true commercial entity. Specialized labor and the production of commercial items may seem to be part of the same world. Yet, a commercial item is much more than the product of specialized labor; commercial items involve advertising and competition. While Roman barbers competed with each other, it was not on a large scale, and advertising had a negligible, if not extant, presence.

After the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century C.E. there were few remaining records of barbering as a profession in Europe until the early fourteenth century.

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century.\(^{30}\) It was finally in medieval France that anthropological evidence of the professional barber arose again. The first known public register of “barber-surgeons” was drawn up in France in 1301, when 26 of the professionals banded together.\(^{31}\) Similar guilds sprung up in the German states, and throughout the next few hundred years these journeymen and their apprentices not only practiced cutting hair, but also pulling teeth, bloodletting, and surgery.\(^{32}\) Thus, well outside the time and space of Bourbon France, that there was a type of commercialization of hair care, although it was not an entirely widespread phenomenon.

Hairstyling as a profession of sorts certainly existed in Antiquity. During the Roman Empire there were hairdressers and specialist slaves who “understood the art of tinting and bleaching,” as well as basic hairdressing.\(^{33}\) More pivotal for the topic at hand is the fact that among the Frankish tribes that lived during this time, unmarried girls were supposed to “remanet in capilo,” which translates to “she remains in her hair.” This was a description of the importance of maintaining long, 

\(^{30}\) Yet we do know that after a papal decree was issued in 1092, which required the clergy to be clean-shaven, the barber became a familiar presence in monasteries. Furthermore, one source—Ann Heinrichs’s text—asserts that by the 1100s barbers were performing minor surgery. Wendy Cooper, Hair: Sex, Society, and Symbolism (New York: Stein & Day, 1971), 156. Ann Heinrichs, The Barber (New York: Benchmark Books, 2010), 6-7.


undecorated hair that signified virginity and chastity. Once they were married, Frankish women were expected to braid their hair and adorn it with garlands or little fillets. This type of hairstyling could only be considered professionalized to the extent that a servant or slave might perform the labor for someone of high stature. While there are records of hairstyles worn during the Middle Ages in Europe, most coiffures were simple and could easily be created by oneself or by a family member.

Unlike the occupations of seamstresses or tailors, male and female hairdressing in the early medieval ages was a non-guild, free trade enterprise. Men, if they wished to have their hair cut short, would go to a barber, and women would likely have a female friend, family member, or servant cut or style their locks. In medieval France, women of means employed *chambrières* (chambermaids), or, on special occasions, *atournesses* (a type of hairstylist), to style their hair. Despite the existence of this occupation, women—especially in England and France—tended to keep their hair covered. They used bonnets or “gable-shaped” hoods, which were known as *coiffes* until the mid-sixteenth century. In general, then, there was not much of a market for hairdressers at least until the more elaborate styles of the late sixteenth century came along.

As for wigs, ancient Egyptian men and women were the first to don faux hairpieces. This trend started around 3000 B.C.E. The historian Margaret Murray

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34 ibid., 144.
argues that wearing wigs was “at first a royal prerogative.”\textsuperscript{37} She speculates that the pharaoh, unwilling to have his subjects see his bare and sacred head, turned to the wig to express his absolute and divine power. Wigs were also not unknown in the Mesopotamian, Ancient Roman, and Ancient Greek civilizations, in which their uses varied from theatrical costuming to looking fashionably blonde.\textsuperscript{38}

Yet towards the end of the Roman Empire, during the rise of Christianity, wigs began to have a bad reputation. In the eyes of most of the clergy, such hairpieces were “the badge of the devil.”\textsuperscript{39} As early as the third century C.E., religious leaders like Tertullian proclaimed that “all perukes, paint, and powder are…disguises and inventions of the devil.” He warned that purchased hair “may have come not only from a criminal, but from a very dirty head, perhaps from the head of one already damned.” Some clergymen believed that one could not receive a benediction while wearing a wig, for the priest’s hand would not touch the receiver’s real body.\textsuperscript{40} There was a palpable tension between more spiritual conceptions of corporeality and the artificiality of bodily costume. While the Church continued to oppose wigs for over a thousand years since the time of Tertullian, they eventually came to be somewhat accepted, but only once they became more fashionable in the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{37} ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{38} The ancient Greeks often used wigs for costume during plays. ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{40} We have already mentioned the conception of the unnaturalness of the wig, but it is an integral part in its discussion. ibid., 101.
\textsuperscript{41} To give an idea of the rise in popularity of the wig, the first guild of hairdressers and wigmakers, however, was not created until 1659 in France. Furthermore, John
As an Anglican, however, England’s Queen Elizabeth I (reigned from 1558 to 1603) apparently had few qualms about concealing her thinning hair with a wig. According to lore, she owned over 80 wigs, one of which can be seen in Figure 1. She started a trend that for some time was mainly restricted to English ladies, who hastened to copy the queen’s neatly curled false hair. Yet other royals, such as Catherine d’Medici, wife of Henri II and Queen Consort of France and Navarre (born in 1575, died in 1642), eventually adopted the wig. Yet this fashion was largely exclusive to upper-class women—generally the aristocracy—until the early-to-mid-seventeenth century. Beyond such a fact, the trend was only experiencing its conception and did not spread to most royal European women until decades late. Consequently, wigmaking in both France and England was at most a very limited profession.

Figure 1: “Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I,” known as “The Ditchley Portrait,” by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, c.1592, courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London.
Interestingly enough, it was a Catholic king and the son of the aforementioned Catherine d’Medici, Henri III of France (reigned 1574 to 1589), who spearheaded the trend of men wearing ‘false’ hair in the courts of France, and of Europe in general. According several sources, early in life, he grew his hair long, but lost it at a rather young age due to his dyeing it with untested and dangerous chemicals. In order to conceal his baldness, he wore a sort of turban or velvet cap with tufts of hair sewn just beneath the brim.⁴³

Most of his courtiers naturally followed his style, and for the remainder of his reign, at least, either long, flowing locks or wig-caps were the mode. While there is a lack of sources indicating whether or not Henri III’s successor, Henri IV—who reigned as King of Navarre from 1572 until 1610, and as King of France from 1589 to 1610—ever wore a type of perruque, existing portraiture of him indicates that he retained his hair until his death, or at least wore very natural-looking wigs.⁴⁴ Figure 2, which portrays the king in his final years, is an example of such portraiture.

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⁴³ ibid., p.14.
Despite this gap in documentation, primary sources and well-researched modern historical literature suggest that by the mid-seventeenth century at the latest, men wore full-bottomed wigs or grew out their own hair to great lengths, at least
while they were at court.\textsuperscript{45} This occurred during the reign of the second Bourbon king, Louis XIII.

Stories of how Louis XIII first took to wearing a wig vary. Popular history and certain scholars claim that the king had male pattern baldness, or suffered from an illness that robbed him of his hair fairly early on in life.\textsuperscript{46} Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert, however, wrote that in 1620, the Abbé de la Rivière appeared at court adorned with a wig of full blond hair, prompting the king to begin wearing the accessory four years later, apparently due to envy and a desire for more attention.\textsuperscript{47} Regardless of how the sovereign began wearing his wig, the trend of the long, voluminous, full-bottomed perruque soon spread through his royal court. In Figure 3, we view such a style as worn by Louis XIII himself.

It is entirely possible that this look was mostly a progression from the preexisting predilection among earlier royals for long locks. While this predilection might be a plausible explanation for the continuation of the trend, there is little

\textsuperscript{45} Historians Jacques Ruppert, Madeleine Delpierre, Renée Davary- Piékolek, and Pascale Gourget-Ballesteros tell us that “le costume de temps de la maturité de Louis XIII cristallisera des acquis dont certains subsisteront jusqu’à la Révolution: [comme des] cheveux masculins plus longs” (Certain costumes from the time of the maturity of Louis XIII’s reign, such as longer male hair, would subsist up until the Revolution).

\textsuperscript{46} Historian Wendy Cooper writes that Louis XIII started wearing a wig in 1624, after going bald at the age of 23.

evidence to support any specific reason why the full-bottomed wig became so de rigueur after only about two decades.

Figure 3: “Portrait of Louis XIII,” by Phillipe de Champagne, c. 1670, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.
Regardless, we did not witness a widespread dissemination of the wig trend, or a pervasive craze for extravagant female styles, until the reign of the Sun King, Louis XIV (reigned from 1643 to 1715). And it is here that our story blossoms…

Before discussing the juncture of hair and Louis XIV’s royal authority, we must take into account the nature of absolutism, the manner in which Louis XIV ruled, and the intersection of the political and the personal that he embodied.

While absolutism has many definitions, one might view it as characterizing a régime in which “the king derived his power from God, and could exercise it without other constituted bodies having the right to challenge him.” Modern-day conceptions of absolutism generally paint it as a despotic and tyrannical manner of government mixed with undertones of grandeur and pomp. Yet most political and social theorists who wrote during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries simply understood absolutism as the concentration of sovereignty in the person of the crown. To clarify this distinction, the French absolutist king was not a totalitarian dictator. The absolutist state never progressed to the point of attempting to control the daily lives of its citizens. Furthermore, the king still had responsibilities to his courtiers, his ministers, the commoners, and the Catholic Church, although these responsibilities were not treated equally. The intersection of demands coming from these sources led to problems for Louis XIV.

The Sun King successfully solidified his absolutist inheritance after roughly a decade of turmoil. Like his father, he was crowned at a young age, being only five when Louis XIII died. After a scarring rebellion known as the *Fronde* and the death of his mother’s favorite minister, Jules Mazarin in 1661, Louis at last fully came into

his own right as sovereign of the French realm, as he was finally the main figure of authority.\textsuperscript{50} While, like his father, he had to cope with, and also instigated, internal religious conflict and international war, he earned a respect that was almost unprecedented in France.\textsuperscript{51}

As the epithet ‘the Sun King’ might suggest, Louis’s courtiers, subjects, and countrymen were awed by their apparently robust and gallant monarch, who seemed to radiate power. Even foreigners respected him immensely; one court reporter, the Italian Jean-Baptiste Primi Visconti, wrote that the monarch “had a grand, majestic air, and by his stature and demeanor you could tell that if he hadn’t already been a king, he would have deserved to be one in the eyes of the beholders.”\textsuperscript{52} Louis not only emanated—but also sought out ways to represent—his absolutist power. As hinted at before, the monarch showed his strength in a number


\textsuperscript{51} It should be noted here that there are striking similarities and differences between the stories of consolidation of power of Louis XIII and of Louis XIV. The intensive power struggles of Louis XIII’s reign started when he was only nine years old, when his father, Henri IV, was assassinated in 1610. Between tussles with his mother, Marie d’Médici, scheming princes, and religious conflict, Louis encountered challenges throughout nearly his whole life. The king was “driven by the contrary impulses of personal insecurity and determination to rule.” Some historians assert that he lacked the kingly demeanor that would characterize his son, while others describe his as possessing a “strong sense of his royal position.” Regardless, he managed to assert himself via two wars against his own mother and a victory against the Huguenots. Thus despite the myriad challenges he had to face, Louis and his minister, Armand-Jean du Plessis, Cardinal Richelieu, set the foundations for French dominance and the ultimate absolutist reign of his son, Louis XIV.


of manners, from waging wars, to expelling the Huguenots, to even building his own palace and moving the court to Versailles. On smaller, less politically significant levels, he also displayed his power, be it through patronizing the arts, instituting strict dress codes at Versailles, and yes, styling his hair.
Courtly Styles

The stories of Louis XIV’s own hairstyles are fascinating, but are also multiple and confused. He was known for his beautiful natural hair as a youth. One fawning aristocrat wrote that the king had “the most beautiful hair in the world both in color and in the way it was curled…all in all he [was] the handsomest and best built man in the kingdom, and probably in all other kingdoms.” Yet by his twenties, Louis had opted to cover his head with a flowing, round-bottomed wig, as we view in Figure 4. Some speculate that he wore the accessory because of an illness that he experienced in 1658, which left him bereft of hair. Robin Bryer instead offers an alternative explanation, that the king “found himself increasingly outshone by his courtiers, who wore ever more sumptuous wigs,” so that in 1662 he consented to have his head shaved and to wear a wig. Interestingly, these stories about how Louis XIV began wearing a perruque mirror those concerning Louis XIII.

Whatever the king’s reasoning for donning a wig, he perpetuated the trend in junction with his with courtiers, who alternately wore perruques in order to pay homage to their sovereign and in turn, donned the hairpieces in order to gain attention. In William Hogarth’s 1753 Analysis of Beauty, the writer compares the popular full-bottomed wig to a “lion’s mane,” which “hath something noble in it,

54 Peter Burke, The Fabrication of Louis XIV (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 12, 45.
and adds not only dignity, but sagacity to the countenance.”

As the wigs progressed in extravagance and size, they soon became a badge of wealth as well as of power—those two things so dear to the aristocracy. It has been documented that, due to his image as the Sun King, all of Louis’s courtiers wore yellow wigs in order to honor their monarch. Although, as is frequently the case in historical texts, the scholar Morag Martin alternatively argues that “yellow,” which is often synonymous with “blond” hair did not become popular until the time of Marie-Antoinette.

Later on in his life, when Louis started to wear a large wig sprinkled with white powder, nearly all the court, including the youth, followed suit. Louis’s hairstyles were so revered that Binette, the king’s wigmaker, asserted that he would

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57 An excerpt from a letter that Princess Elisabeth Charlotte wrote in 1698 illustrates the preciousness of power and wealth at Versailles: “Except for my son and Madame de Chateauthiers, I do not know a single soul in France who is absolutely free of selfishness and greed. All the others, without exception, are greedy to the point of making fools of themselves, especially the princes and princesses of the Blood; they have gotten into brawls with the clerks at the bank, and into all kinds of other ignomious scrapes. Money rules the world, that is true enough, but I do not believe that there is a place in the world where it rules people more strictly than here.” Another illuminating anecdote concerns two duchesses who resided at Versailles and were rumored to have kidnapped their favorite dressmaker, simply to guarantee that they would get the best clothes for the wedding of the Duc of Bourgogne. Elisabeth Charlotte d’Orléans, “To Sophie,” in *Letters from Liselotte*, trans. Elborg Forster (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1984), 82-83.
“pluck the heads of all the king’s subjects to cover that of the king.” The monarch himself seems to have become so invested in the perruque as a symbol of honor and wealth that apparently by the time he was completely bald, he never allowed anyone but Binette to see him without the hairpiece. While shortly after Louis’s death the trend of the full-bottomed wig died out, it clearly had a power deeply entwined with the Sun King.

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61 It is said that When Louis retired in the evening, he would had his wig out to a servant through his drawn bed curtains; in the morning, it was again passed through the curtains. Another anecdote says that Louis caught a cold one morning in 1704 because he spent too long picking out which wig to wear. Louis also had a “wig room” just off his bedroom at Versailles. Within it were more than a dozen busts on pillars, which were used to display wigs for occasions from hunting to formal receptions.


The king’s favorite women also wielded immense influence over hairstyles at court. For example, one of Louis’s favorite mistresses, Angélique de Scorcaillle, the Duchesse de Fontanges, gave her name to one of the most popular court hairstyles of her time. It was a look created by accident in about 1680, when the king and his
mistress were out hunting and the duchesse lost her hat. She decided to tie up her curls with a lace-edged garter, and the effect—at least in the king’s eyes—was so becoming that a new fashion was launched. Initially, this look was simple and whimsical, as the Duchesse’s curls spilled onto her forehead. Yet the so-called *Fontange* developed into a “high tower of lace and ribbons stretched on wire.”

During the 1700s, the coiffure changed in shape and style, and sometimes reached a height of eight inches or more above the skull. The Duc de Saint-Simon, Louis de Rouvroy, vividly described the look as “a structure of brass-wire, ribbons, hair, and baubles of all sorts, about two feet high, which made a woman’s face look as if it was in the middle of her body.” He claimed that “at the slightest movement the edifice trembled and seemed ready to come down.” The popularity of the hairstyle, which caused doorways to be heightened and carriage beds to be lowered all over Europe due to its tremendous height, only ended in 1714 or 1715. This may have been due to a court visit from England’s Duchess of Shrewsbury, who in that year wore a much simpler, dressed-down, and, apparently, more alluring look.

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65 Despite the demise of the *fontange*, we will see that other female hairstyles during the eighteenth century were, in comparison, even more extravagant.
66 Speaking of the interaction between the British and the French concerning fashion and consumption, an English visitor in Paris described the city as containing a “whirlpool of luxury goods.” Furthermore, a guidebook for English tourists warned that, “When you’re in Paris, you tend to buy things you have never heard of before.”

With this anecdote, we see that while the king's preferred courtiers had much power over trends, others also wielded great influence, and the market, commoners, and the aristocracy interacted with each other in significant ways. Beyond the likes of foreign notables, hairdressers who sometimes arose from the lower classes held sway in terms of the direction, and consequently consumption, of hair-related products and services.\textsuperscript{67}

The stories of the first great hairdressers are useful in demonstrating the back-and-forth consumption habits between prominent commoners and the nobility. Tales of these stylists illustrate the influence that employees could wield over their employers, and how—at least in certain cases—workers of differing classes and genders were able to intimately know and aid in constructing the identities of some of the most prominent royals in Europe. The existence and multiplicity of these sorts of hairdressers during the reign of Louis XIV are proof not only of a growing marketplace, but also of a linkage between classes.68

The first famed hairdresser of France—and the first person to be called a *coiffeur*—rose to fame in the late seventeenth century and was known simply by the name Champagne.69 His story is quite curious, for he was born a peasant and began his career as a boy by dressing the hair of a shepherdess who had injured her arm and consequently could not style her own locks. The hairstyle he created for the girl caught the eye of a comtesse, who hired the boy and took him to Paris. There he opened a salon for ladies’ hair—something daring for the time, as it was considered

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68 However, there are at least several historians who argue convincingly that as the hairdressing profession expanded, nepotism became an increased factor, and that the most popular hairstylists in the late eighteenth century were largely from the nobility or haute bourgeoisie. Even in the late seventeenth century, this was common.
69 As a somewhat obvious note, the word *coiffeur* translates to *hairdresser* and entails a codification of the professionalized concept of the worker.
ibid., 11.
taboo for men to dress women’s hair. Although the Church used pamphlets and public speeches to condemn Champagne for his audacity to work on ladies’ hair, as the saying goes, any publicity is good publicity. His fame took him far, even to the point of dressing the hair of Queen Christina of Sweden. Clearly, in this case, attention and commercial urges overtook many moral arguments voiced by the clergy. However, Champagne had a reputation for being so temperamental as to be intimidating and impudent. The contemporary historian Gédéon Tallement des Réaux wrote of him:

> “This prig Champagne, by his cleverness in dressing the hair, and by his pushing ways, was run after and caressed by all the ladies. Their weakness for him rendered him so important as to address to them a hundred insolences every day. Some he left with their hair half dressed; with others he dressed their hair on one side, and then threatened to leave the other side undone unless they kissed him.”

The story of Champagne, then, shows that top-down trend dissemination is not always the case. Someone of lower standing—a peasant boy, at that—was able to work his way into the highest ranks of European society with the styles that he

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71 “Ce faquin, par son adresse à coiffer et à se faire valoir, se faisoit rechercher et caresser de toutes les femmes. Leur foiblesses le rendit si insupportable qu’il leur disoit tous les jours cent insolences : il en a laissé telles à demi coiffées ; à d’autres, après avoir fait un coté, il disoit qu’il n’achèveroit pas si elles ne le baisoient.” Gédéon Tallement des Réaux, “Champagne,” in *Histoirettes* (Paris: Mercure de France), 1906, 232-233.
created, and was then able to spread his talents and visions throughout the court, all while manipulating ladies into giving him favors and bending them to his will.  

While one may not respect Champagne’s presumptuous comportment, it is of note that he broke a barrier in being the first prominent man to style ladies’ hair in the public eye. Other coiffeurs like him started to open up hair salons, and it was consequently in his era that certain gender barriers were first broken down. By the end of the seventeenth century, while stylists still did make house calls, women were starting to come out into the marketplace in order to obtain a service that was formerly private.

Furthermore, public female coiffeuses were prevalent. The *Livre commode des addresses de Paris de 1692* mentions Mademoiselle Camilliat working near the Palais-Royal, Mlle Poitier by Quinze-Vingts, Mlle Le Brun at the Palais, Mlle de Gomberville on rue Bons-Enfants, and Mlle D’Angerville behind the Palais-Royal. By 1700, more than 500 women were working as hairdressers in Paris.  

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72 In terms of Champagne’s artistic capabilities, Joan DeJean writes, somewhat hyperbolically, that the hair stylist “instilled new beliefs in his clients: the right hairdresser could work miracles; hair could be styled in more ways than anyone had ever thought possible; a fashionable woman simply had to change her style to follow current trends.” Joan DeJean, *The Essence of Style: How the French Invented High Fashion, Fine Food, Chic Cafés, Style, Sophistication, and Glamour* (New York: Free Press, 2005), 11.

73 Aside from hair salon, new shops arose in this period. Before the reign of Louis XIV, merchants would visit richer clients in their homes, and when people did go out to make purchases, they were to “mere storehouses for merchandise.” ibid., 12.

74 Despite the title Mlle, which is short for mademoiselle or mesdemoiselle, historian M. Augustin Challamel asserts that these women were wives of wigmakers. Jennifer M Jones, *Sexing La Mode: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France* (New York: Berg, 2004), 89.

phenomenon of the publicization of female consumption and production in this time is closely tied in with the demand for false hair and wigs. Wigs for women became the vogue in about 1670, but even before that, extra hair was necessary to achieve the most desirable hairstyles. Consequently, during the later years of Louis XIV’s reign, a pound of good brown hair could be sold for 4 livres, or roughly $200, while a pound of ash blond hair fetched up to 150 livres, or about $7,500.75

Men also embraced the wig. The perruquiers of Paris created no less than eight distinct styles of perruques in the seventeenth century.76 The formal occupation of wigmaker-coiffeur was created by royal edict in 1659—thus separating once and for all the medieval surgeon-barber from the modern wigmaker and hairstylist.77 The newly reformed guild had roughly 200 members in 1673, and would only grow until the Revolution.78

Various French historians have written that the wig was “perfected” around 1660, which led to a frenzy for them among men.79 Perruques soon became the rage

75 Blond hair was so much more expensive due to its relative rarity in France. Conversely, in England, dark brown hair was more desired.
76 The aforementioned styles were the following: the “allonge,” the “barrister’s,” the “brown George” (also known as the “Cloudesley shovel”), the “cadanette,” the “duvillier” (also known as the “furbelow”), the “full-bottom,” the “Gregorian,” the “military,” and the “puff.”
79 “Le prefectionnement des perruques, vers 1660, amena leur vogue chez les hommes; elles étaient fabriquées par les barbiers-perruquiers qui rivalisèrent d’ingéniosité.”
beyond Paris, reaching out to other French cities and even villages. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, most small towns would have a barber with at least a modicum of knowledge of wigmaking, and some men even tried to make their own hair look like a wig.\textsuperscript{80}

And yet, emulation of the aristocracy and attention to the latest fashions were not always the reasons for donning a wig. The perruque bestowed options and a freedom of choice upon the consumer. And if long hair was to be the style—especially in an age in which there were frequent scalp problems with fleas, lice, ticks, other pests, and all kinds of disease—then the periwig was convenient.\textsuperscript{81} The English writer Samuel Pepys wrote, for example, that he had “no stomach” for wearing a perruque, “but that the pains of keeping…[his] hair [lice-free]…[were] so great” that he was compelled to don one.\textsuperscript{82} Pepys also wrote of his syphilitic brother, who lost his hair to the disease, commenting, “If he lives he will not be able to show his head, which will be a very great shame to me.”\textsuperscript{83} Clearly, then, physical concerns were intimately entwined with the societal reasons for wearing a perruque, and the arguments for donning a wig range widely.

\textsuperscript{80} Sources concerning exactly how one may make his hair look more like a perruque are scarce, but one may make an educated guess that the effort involved growing the hair out and using some sort of pomade in order to give it a less natural shape. John Woodforde, \textit{The Strange Story of False Hair} (New York: Drake, 1972), 27.

\textsuperscript{81} Kwass writes that in “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.” Michael Kwass, “Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in Eighteenth Century France,” \textit{The American Historical Review} 111 (2006): 645.

\textsuperscript{82} The \textit{Diary of Samuel Pepys}, Vol. 4, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1970–84), 130

\textsuperscript{83} Samuel Pepys, \textit{The Diary of Samuel Pepys} (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1904), 70.
The Dissemination of Trends Through Texts

Popular texts about fashion made an important contribution to the spread of consumer culture and trends. The most outstanding example of such literature was *Le Mercure Galant*, which was first published by Jean Donneau de Visé in 1672. The newspaper covered a range of topics concerning trends among the court and the haute bourgeoisie, from arts and letters to society gossip. What made it remarkable for the purposes of hair and consumer culture is that it was one of the first publications that truly emphasized *la mode*. By January 1678, *Le Mercure Galant* had a special supplement called an *extraordinaire* that was fully devoted to fashion. *Le Mercure Gallant* was one of the first newspapers to target a female audience. Notably, it was designed for more provincial readers who could not directly absorb the trends that were so popular among chic Parisian women and the ladies of Versailles.

An interesting note about *Le Mercure Gallant* and its novel concentration on fashion is that—at least in the historical literature—it was one of the first texts to popularize or to comment on the idea of seasonal trends. For example, the *extraordinaires* discussed the most desirable sleeve lengths for the summer of a certain year, or the most stylish shades of fabric for winter. Hairstyles, of course, were mentioned, but the more vital point at hand is that *Le Mercure Gallant* sheds light on...

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the beginnings of a cycle of consumerism in the fashion trade, and thus a heightening of material fetishism. The increased pace of turnover among trends once again echoes Schumpeter’s idea of creative destruction in that one look that was once deemed fashionable must become passé in order for a “better” trend to emerge.
Concluding Remarks on Part II

The reign of Louis XIV, the so-called ‘consumer king,’ witnessed an important change in socio-economic life. While the royal treasuries were depleted by the costs of war and extravagant courtly expenditures during his long rule, resulting in what would become one of the major catalysts of the Revolution, the fashion industry experienced a huge growth, which would only continue during the rest of the eighteenth century.

Although the question of the relationship of hair trends—most considerably the wig—to the body remains, the evidence presented above elucidates the growth in consumer demand for the perruque. In a contradictory manner, the increase in modes of expression and convenience coexisted with the demand for people of a certain class to adhere to courtly styles, which clearly limited their choices. The era saw more women enter the marketplace and interact with men in new ways, and there was a type of evolution in intellectual respect for affluent ladies. While these newfound interactions between women and public life remained essentially domestic and constrained to fashion, they constituted a subtle evolution in gender relations.
Part III: Louis XV, Hair, and Waning Power

Louis XV, who ruled from 1715 to 1774, was a somewhat controversial monarch, and comments on his leadership style can be made with much less certainty than those regarding Louis XIV. As a man who lived much closer to the time of the Revolution, his reputation has been marred by republicans and gilded by royalists, so we must be cautious when assessing not only his character, but also the decisions that were made that affected our topic.

Historian David Schalk, for example, highlights the “tremendous vitality” and abilities of “endurance” of Louis le Bien Aimé (the well-loved). He was beloved, apparently, despite a reported sense of coldness. For example, the Comte Dufort de Cheverny wrote of an instance in which a man suddenly died of apoplexy in front of the King, losing his wig as he fell. The king simply remarked that the man “vient de quitter sa perruque.”

Conversely, G.P. Gooch paints Louis as a coward who suffered from “paralysis of the will.” In a vituperative tirade against the monarch, he writes, “No

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94 In English, “he just left his wig.”
modern ruler has been less respected, less loved, less feared or less mourned. His insufficiency as a ruler was matched by his unworthiness as a man.”

Whether or not historians take a favorable view of Louis XV, even Gooch remarks that the financial situation of France slowly improved over the duration of his reign. After Louis XIV plundered the treasury with costly foreign campaigns and the luxuries of Versailles, Louis XV’s regent, the Duc d’Orléans, began to slowly build up the economy by issuing notes of credit and promoting circulation. These financial benefits generally only benefitted the professions, however.

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96 ibid., VIII.


98 Most peasants were only a part of the market to the extent that they sold their produce. Lines of credit could be extended to them in order to buy more land, but economic imbalances through taxation and the artificial restriction of grain generally only worsened the financial situation of the lower classes. However, of course, if there was more time and space to elaborate upon this topic, and if Louis XV’s financial policies were the heart of this thesis, we would come across many nuances in and counterpoints to the above statements. Alexis de Tocqueville, The Old Regime and the French Revolution, trans. Alan S. Kahan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 112.
Courtly Styles

It is hardly surprising that along with the aforementioned increased commercial activity came a significant surge in the amount of both hairstyles and hairstylists. The king himself followed the existing trends by wearing a wig his whole life, but styles certainly changed during his long rule.\(^99\)

However one might view the power, or lack thereof, of the king, Louis’s stylistic influence was effective enough that he had a perruque named after him. It was a hairpiece that was placed in the back of the natural hair, with the goal of blending the two parts into a long coiffure.\(^100\) Figure 5 is an illustration of this look. With such a perruque, the king could still display his pleasing, natural hair while augmenting it to look longer and even more luxurious.

Additionally, Louis had a whole ritual concerning his perruque. When he awoke, the Lord Chamberlain or the First Lord of the Bedchamber would remove the monarch’s nightcap, and then a barber would comb the king’s hair. After his hair was sufficiently combed, others were allowed in the chamber, and Monsieur Quentin, the king’s chief barber, would hand him the wig he would use while

\(^{99}\) Anecdotally, the king seemed to have had a dislike for wigs, or at least a penchant for pranks, during his youth. The journalist Edmond Jean François Barbier wrote that between 1720 and 1725 the then-dauphin enjoyed tearing the wigs off the heads of his courtiers. John Woodforde, *The Strange Story of False Hair* (New York: Drake, 1972), 52-53.

dressing, which was shorter than the one he would use during the rest of the day.\textsuperscript{101}

Clearly, then, the King valued the aesthetic and ceremonial aspects of his hair.

Many others at Versailles did as well.

\textsuperscript{101} John Woodforde, \textit{The Strange Story of False Hair} (New York: Drake, 1972), 16.
The court favorites wielded about as much influence over trends during the reign over Louis XV as they did under his predecessor. Just as one of Louis XIV’s
mistresses, the Duchesse de Fontanges, inspired a hairstyle, so did a mistress of Louis XV. The famous and powerful Marquise de Pompadour, née Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson—Louis XV’s mistress from roughly 1745 to 1765—had her hand not only in creating the Place de la Concorde and the Petit Trianon, but also her own renowned hairstyle.102

A contemporary wrote of the Marquise: “A hundred entrancing ways did she arrange her hair—now powdered, now in all its own silken glory, now brushed straight back, ears showing, now in curls on her neck—till the court nearly went mad attempting to imitate her inimitable coiffures.”103

The most popular style, though, of the woman who was called the king’s “first minister,” was characterized by a tall hairdo worn around a wire frame.104 The hair was swept high off the face, while the frame was stuffed with straw or fabric. Hair ornaments, from flowers to faux birds, were common among ladies of the court. Naturally, the Marquise de Pompadour did not style her own hair, so much of the credit for the famed coiffure must go to the court hairdresser, Legros de Rumigny, who was simply known as Legros.105 Figure 6 shows the Marquise de

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105 Legros also styled the hair of the Queen Marie Thérèse Leczinska, Louis XV’s wife. Furthermore, as with Champagne, we witness in Legros’s career a continuing transgression of boundaries between men and women in terms of bodily interaction outside of romantic relationships. While Champagne certainly established the precedent, the continuing popularity of male hairdressers working on women speaks to a shift of sorts in gender relations in the public (or semi-public) sphere. Elizabeth Broman, “L’art de la coiffure des dames françaises,” The Smithsonian Libraries, 2009, accessed January 7 2013,
Pompadour in her trademark style. The term *pompadour* and various iterations of the style it exist to this date, unlike, for example, the *Fontanges*. The popularity and persistence of the *Pompadour* look may be attributed to an aesthetic affection for it, but should not discount the influence of a longtime and powerful mistress of the king.¹⁰⁶

http://smithsonianlibraries.si.edu smithsonianlibraries/2009/08/l-art-de-la-coiffure-des-dames-fran%C3%A7aises.html.

¹⁰⁶ In terms of the longevity of the pompadour style, one may point to different versions of the pompadour that have been worn even in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Famous wearers of the look include musicians Elvis Presley and (at times) David Bowie, and actress Bette Davis. Victoria Sherrow, *Encyclopedia of Hair: A Cultural History* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006), 309, 312.
A similarly popular coiffure was of the era created in 1772, just towards the end of Louis XV’s rule. The *loge d’opéra* was named after box seating at the grandiose
French opera houses to which the nobility from Versailles sometimes escaped.

Despite having reportedly been created for the then-dauphine Marie-Antoinette, its name pays homage to an artistic, upper-class practice rather than to a sexualized and somewhat objectified woman (e.g. the Duchesse de Fontanges or Madame de Pompadour). 107 Historian Augustine Racinet writes that the style measured roughly three feet from the bottom of a woman’s chin to the top of her hair, which would be adorned with ribbons or plumes and normally powdered white. The hairstyle was so complex and “monumental”, in his opinion, that he even called the hairstylist an “académicien de la coiffure.” 108

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107 Perhaps this was due to the fact that as future queen of France, all assumed that Marie-Antoinette would be setting so many styles that it would be useless to name any after her. While that is mere speculation, we will see this trend of female hairstyles being seen as more artistic and worldly, and less associated with the sexual partners of the King, continue during the reign of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette.

108 The full quote from Racinet is as follows: “La coiffure d’apparal, dite loge d’opéra (1772), donnait à la figure d’une femme soixante-douze pouces de hauteur depuis le bas du menton jusqu’au sommet de la coiffure. Il entrait toutes sortes de choses dans ce genre d’édifice; les cheveux en étaient relevés, crêpés, tordus, pommadés, frisés, poudrés à blanc, avec un art pompeux; sur ce fond monumental qui créait, disait-on, la physionomie, l’académicien de la coiffure posait un bonnet orné de rubans ou de plumes, tantôt seuls, tantôt combinés…”

During the reign of Louis XV, there was a remarkable expansion of commercial activity in the realm of hairdressing, which corresponds to a greater level of economic interaction across France. Historian Cissie Fairchilds’s statistical work on eighteenth century Paris illuminates this striking increase in commercial exchanges and accumulation of consumer goods.

An excellent measure of these transformations is the rise in inventories of so-called ‘populuxe’ goods. These are fairly durable luxury products that the middle classes can buy in order to signify status. Unlike a fancy dress that can only be worn occasionally, these goods are generally smaller and can be flaunted daily. Falling into category of populuxe objects are items such as jewelry, gold watches, umbrellas, fans, snuffboxes, tea and coffee accessories, and books, in addition to wigs and hair accessories. Fairchilds studied registered possession of some of these goods between the years 1725 and 1785. Jewelry was found in 49.2% of the inventaires après décès (in English, “inventories after death”) in the beginning year of the study, while in 1785, its share among the populace had climbed to 78.1%. Obviously, the year 1785 is

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109 Similar increases in “furniture novelties” (e.g. dressers, bookcases, and tea-cases) were found. These goods were found in 20% of the inventaires après décès in 1725, whereas 79.7% of these inventories included them in 1785. Meanwhile, the percentages of fans went from 5.1% to 34.4%, snuffboxes went from 6.8% to 32.8%, and gold watches went from 5.1% to a stunning 54.7%. One caveat, though, is that in the early eighteenth century, inventaires après décès were normally only carried out for people above a certain level of economic standing, who possessed enough goods and wealth that it seemed worthwhile to bother cataloging the estate. Yet in the later decades of the century, inventaires of poorer people’s possessions became more common.

Collin Jones and Rebecca Spang “Sans-culottes, Sans Café, Sans Tabac: Shifting Realms of Necessity and Luxury in Eighteenth-Century France,” in Consumers and
about a decade past the death of Louis XV—which, as noted, occurred in 1774—but these statistics speak to the fact that there existed a general rise in consumer activity in Paris during his reign. While a fairly small amount of data concerning wigs and hairdressers exists outside of the non-digitized versions of the French National Archives, it is clear from primary and contemporary sources that a true proliferation of French hairstyles occurred in this era.

More than 108 different styles of perruque were documented in the eighteenth century, compared to the aforementioned nine styles that historian John Woodforde found during the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV.110 There were no less than 850 master wigmakers in Paris by 1760, and there certainly existed at least dozens, if not hundreds, more unregistered professionals.111 Beyond masters and the unregistered, historian Morag Martin estimates that there were twelve thousand hairdressers and wigmakers in Paris in 1769.112 Indeed, by 1776, a French almanac stated that it would be a waste of time to list the contact information of the most renowned wigmakers in Paris, for there was “no neighborhood where one [could] not find many of them.”113 Even the wealthy children of Paris wore wigs.114 As a mere example of the multitude of wigs, one can look at Figure 7, in which we find

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111 ibid., 16.
an illustration of the various kinds of perruques existing during the end of Louis XV’s reign.\textsuperscript{115}

Furthermore, Lynn Festa comments that wigs were so commercially lucrative that their theft was common. She cites John Gay’s 1727 warning, "Nor is thy flaxen wigg with safety worn; / High on the shoulder, in a basket born, / Lurks the sly boy; whose hand to rapine bred, / Plucks off the curling honours of thy head."\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{115} Yet despite the multitude of long and full-bottomed wigs in the image, historian Doreen Yarwood contests that shorter wigs or natural hair, as seen in the top row of the image, were the most common, even in the court. Doreen Yarwood, \textit{Fashion in the Western World: 1500-1900} (New York: Drama Book Publishers, 1992), 62-64.

Figure 7: “The Five Orders of Periwigs,” William Hogarth, 1761, courtesy of Harvard University’s Houghton Library.
The multiplicity of wigs at the time coincided with a massive surge in the use of hair powder. While Louis XIV only powdered his perruque during his later years, Louis XV wore powder even during his childhood. The litterateur Louis-Sébastien Mercier, who wrote between the 1770s and the early 1800s, noted that after about 1714—the year before Louis XIV died—it became fashionable to fully powder one’s wig. The operation of powdering, which has bestowed its name to the ‘powder room,’ was a complex process. Usually an attendant or servant would use bellows or a large puff to coat the client’s hair with powder. The man being powdered would normally protect his face with a mask, and wear a powdering jacket.

There are several explanations behind the popularity of hair powder. For example, many note that it was used mainly to mask unsavory smells and to contribute to personal hygiene. Evidence supporting this reason for using powder appears in Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*. The entry on hair powder notes that in terms of guilds, hair powder was under the domain of hair powder.

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117 Powdering, however, was not an entirely new trend. At least several of Louis XIV’s courtiers powdered their hair. John Woodforde, *The Strange Story of False Hair* (New York: Drake, 1972), 54.
119 Mercier, according to John Woodforde, painted this trend in an extremely negative light, arguing that “monkeys dancing on cords were not more ridiculous” than the prevalence of hair powder. John Woodforde, *The Strange Story of False Hair* (New York: Drake, 1972), 54.
120 Interestingly enough, the male bow tie originated from this practice. In the later part of the eighteenth century, the man being powdered would wear a small bag under his ponytail (also called a queue) to keep the powder off of his jacket. The bag was secured with a ribbon, which was tied around the neck in a bow. Apparently, men found the bow look desirable, and it continued to exist past the days of powdering ones hair. Robin Bryer, *The History of Hair: Fashion and Fantasy Down the Ages* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2000), 83.
perfumers (and strangely, their guild-mates, the glove-makers), and it is generally agreed upon among most historians that powder—at least for those who could afford it—was scented.\(^{121}\)

Furthermore, there were visually aesthetic reasons for the powdering of one’s hair. One source from 1870 states that the French started powdering their hair as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century, during the later years of Henri IV’s life. This apparently occurred when his hair started to turn grey. The trend fell out of fashion when the young Louis XIII took over, but as we have seen, hair powder made a strong comeback about a century later.\(^{122}\) Aside from desires to emulate and please the king, many found hair powder quite becoming. Writing in 1882, Augustin Challamel declared that there was “no doubt [that] the softness…[that powder] conferred on the features, and the brilliancy [that] it lent to the eyes…made it pleasing to everybody.”\(^{123}\)

That “everybody” included women. However, it was generally more common during the early- to mid-eighteenth century for ladies to use white, light blonde, or even pink or lavender, powders instead of the apparently more masculine


grey. It is possible that this differentiation in color trends among the sexes was due to
greater societal pressures for women to look younger, while grey male hair has
frequently been considered a mark of wisdom and experience.\textsuperscript{124}

The utilization of hair powder did not go without political and economic
consequences. The starches used for powder came from the wheat industries, so
therefore there was tension concerning the use of precious grain. In fact, there were
riots regarding the upper-class use of hair power as early as, if not before, 1715.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{124} That said, however, there is an intriguing juxtaposition between the Greek
goddess of wisdom, Athena, who is commonly being described as having grey eyes
and having immense power, with the fragility and unattractiveness that is often
associated with grey-haired women.
Laura Hurd Clarke and Meredith Griffin, “Visible and invisible ageing: beauty work

\textsuperscript{125} To quote Morag Matin at length, he writes, “Both during the Old Régime and
the Revolution, critics accused starch users of exacerbating bread shortages. As early
as 1731, a priest was shocked to find that the ‘stores of wigmakers were more
sprinkled with flour than mills.’…The elite’s fashion was literally taking food out of
the mouths of hungry citizens…Amid a 1740 food shortage, the Paris Parlement
issued a moratorium on selling barley and grain to starch makers, as well as more
stringent laws limiting baking white bread. Even in the prosperous harvest year of
1760, a tax was proposed to diminish the purchase of hair powder and to increase
the amount of coarse wheat (\textit{blé} grossier) in food stuffs…That starch was fabricated
from substances seemingly edible only in times of great famine did not stop
revolutionary officials from discouraging the production of powder. In 1790, \textit{La
Société des Amis de la Constitution} of Nice (the local clubs of the Parisian Jacobins) and
\textit{La Société Républicaine de Nice} proposed that ‘curling powder is only a luxury need,
Republicans should not know this vice, especially when it diminishes the quality of
bread and increases its price.’ They further proposed a ban on hair powder, starch,
and all establishments serving beer from hops.” This proposal was not implemented,
but in 1792, the department of Calvados banned the production of beer and starch
because of a bad wheat harvest.
Morag Martin, \textit{Selling Beauty: Cosmetics, Commerce, and French Society, 1750-1830}
Louise A. Tilly, “The Food Riot as a Form of Political Conflict in France,” \textit{The
Les Archives Nationales,”Lettre à la Commission du Commerce (14 Aug. 1790)” in
This disjuncture between the life necessities of some and the aesthetic desires of others gives us insight not only into the boiling discontent that would contribute to the Revolution, but also into the more basic interactions between varying socio-economic classes. These issues are clearly related to the manners in which texts and other methods of spreading economic information played into the development of a culture of consumption not only in the court, but also throughout French society.

During the reign of Louis XV, there was a significant increase in the amount of literature concerning hairstyles that became available to the public. Essays, books, and pamphlets that discussed fashion trends and hair clearly existed in the seventeenth century. This literature ranges from Le Mercure Galant, to Eusèbe Castaginés 1613 Discours nouveau sur la mode, to Jean-Baptiste Thiers’s 1690 Histoire des perruques. Yet until about 1750 little literature, save for the previously discussed Mercure Galant, existed that actually described the different coiffures and how to create them.

It is only during the mid-eighteenth century that one of the first known early modern European hairstyle manuals was written. L’art de la coiffure des dames françaises (also known as L’art de la coiffure des dames françaises, in more antiquated spelling) was penned by the aforementioned court hairdresser Legros, who was also one of the first coiffeurs to open up a school for hair stylists, known as an Académie de Coiffure. L’art de la coiffure des dames françaises was published in 1766 and went through four editions. The text explains how to create between at least 25 different female hairstyles, and includes detailed descriptions of implements such as measuring tools and curling irons. One of Legros’s hair designs, taken directly from his book, is depicted in Figure 8.

The number of books or pamphlets addressing the styling of hair only increased since this period. For example, in 1782, the writer James Stewart...
published an immense work entitled “Plocacosmos, or The whole art of hair
dressing; wherein is contained ample rules for the young artizan [sic], more
particularly for ladies women, valets, &c. &c. as well as directions for persons to
dress their own hair…” The work is composed of 435 pages (not all of which address
hair) and, by its very existence speaks to the incredible upsurge in consumer-directed
texts that concerned hair, and thus reflected the importance of hair commerce. And
today, obviously, there are myriad magazines and manuals that are devoted to
different cuts and coiffures.

Beyond the printed word and image, styles were also spread through the use
of dolls, or *poupées*. These objects were primarily used to convey fashion information
through long distance. Legros himself mentioned that in 1765, he sent out 100 dolls
completely coiffed. Yet he was certainly not the first to use the *poupée* to
communicate trends in clothing, accessories, and hair. Fashion dolls had been in
existence in France since at least the fourteenth century, according to the research of
historian and critic Max von Boehn. He writes: “At the time when the press was
non-existent, long before the invention of such mechanical means of reproduction as
the woodcut and copperplate, to the doll was given the task of popularizing French
fashions abroad.” By the sixteenth century, the exportation of French dolls was
fairly centralized; in other European countries the exportation of dolls was more

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128 “…en 1765, j’ai étalé cent poupées toute coiffées…”
Legros de Rumigny, *L’art de la coiffure des dames françaises*, accessed January 7, 2013,
http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b86157476/f23.image.
unorganized and occurred comparatively later. In terms of dolls deliberately communicating hair trends, we know that before Legros, the Marquise de Sévigné sent a poupée to her daughter to show her a hairstyle in the early 1670s.

A striking feature of the poupée was its greater likeness to the actual, corporeal consumer, as compared to text or picture. In print, like in Figure 8, the viewer often sees just the head of the model and can leave the rest of her body and clothing up to the imagination, perhaps allowing herself greater freedom in self-expression and in expectations of what she can wear. Yet with a doll, the viewer is forced to see the whole, three-dimensional body and thus the suggestions—from head to toe—of the tastemakers. The poupée is quite literally an objectification of the female body, and provides stricter guidance about what is fashionably acceptable.

Furthermore, the existence of the poupée as a material object entails a more tangible and perhaps direct exchange between producer and consumer. Rather than being a stamp from a woodcut or metal plate, the fashion doll required greater, or at least more personalized, craftsmanship and consequently had a heightened sense of corporeality and labor value. While such an argument may seem tenuous, there is an inherent difference between holding and interacting with a fleshed-out product and looking at something that merely came off the printing press.

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To sum up the remarks and arguments made during this chapter, it is relevant to note that there seemed to be a correlation between the waning power of the monarchy and the rather unabated rise in the commercial culture surrounding hair. While Louis XV and the Duc d’Orléans still wielded influence in many ways, most historians and contemporary writers noticed a general diminished authority on the king’s part. These fluctuations in authority, of course, were dependent on dozens of different variables, from wars to ministerial advice, which were bound to change. That stated, there was a clear upkeep in terms of most economic activity. This does not seem to be strange, especially in an era of diminishing mercantilist and absolutist policies, as lessened central control over economic activity generally seems to lead to a proliferation of consumer and producer interactions, at least when guild restraints or inventions of new products come to mind.

Perhaps perplexingly, as noted, there was similar (albeit more nascent) growth during the reign of Louis XIV, who was renowned for his centralized control and promotion of commerce. It seems, though, that Louis XV’s more laissez-faire approach—including his distribution of bank notes—had the effect of simply letting things run their course. This apparently meant that producers produced more and consumers consumed more. Such growth appears to play into the previously mentioned increase in texts and other objects related to consumption and sales. Transitioning to the stories related to the reign of Louis XVI, a similar pattern will appear—one that consists of weakened royal authority, increased activity in the hair
industry and in commerce in general, despite a depleted royal treasury and income-related riots across the country.
Part IV: Commercial and Economic Frenzy Under Louis XVI

In 1774, Louis XVI inherited not only the throne from his grandfather, but also—despite a growth in national economic activity—an infamously large royal debt. Unfortunately, to add to that burden, according to most sources the king lacked both character and a true interest in ruling. While he was apparently a bright young man when he took the crown, he had no passion for politics and relied on the advice of his ministers for nearly all decisions. Madame Campan, a close friend of Marie Antoinette and the author of one of her pieced-together ‘memoirs,’ recalled a servant named Duret give the following assessment of his master, which seems to agree with the most popular points of view:

“There were two men in Louis XVI, the man of knowledge and the man of will. The king knew the history of his own family and of the first houses of France perfectly. He composed the instructions for M. de la Peyrouse’s voyage around the world…his memory retained an infinite number of names and situations…but in important affairs of state the man of will was not to be found. Louis XVI was upon the throne exactly what those weak temperaments whom nature has rendered incapable of an opinion are in society. In his pusillanimity, he gave his confidence to a minister; and although amidst various counsels he often knew which was the best, he never had
the resolution to say, ‘I prefer the opinion of such an one.’ Herein originated the
misfortunes of the State.”

While one cannot entirely blame Louis XIV for the fall of the monarchy or
“the misfortunes of the State,” this and other accounts show a faultiness on the part
of the king to balance the royal budget and a lack of enough charisma to placate the
citizens. While these are issues to discuss in other places, the point stands that Louis
XVI was usually not considered to be truly the master of his realm.

132 Jeanne-Louise-Henriette Campan and François Barrière Maigne, “The Private
Life of Marie Antoinette, Queen of France and Navarre,” in Autobiographical Memoirs
of Madame Campan…With Some Records of Her Life and Conversations (London: Scribner
and Welford), 164.
Louis XVI had little influence on the hairstyles of his court—not that he would even have any interest in such a matter, as he tended to eschew the pomp of the court. On the other hand, his wife, Marie-Antoinette, was a renowned tastemaker, and had a hand in creating some of the most opulent and political coiffures ever seen. Furthermore Louis’s council, and even the less privileged masses, had a considerable impact upon the economic, ideological, and social changes concerning hair.

Consequently, the reign of Louis XVI was witness to a notable divergence between women’s and men’s coiffures. While some of the most elaborate women’s hairstyles in French history appeared in the 1770s and 1780s, men’s looks generally became more subdued. Both genders’ coiffures, however, seemed to have political undertones.

Men began to reject the long, flowing hairstyles of the era of Louis XIV and instead adopted a more natural look. Historian Michael Kwass writes that the new perruques “were more convenient, more portable.” Wigs such as *la perruque à queue, la perruque à bourse, la perruque à financière, la perruque à l’Espagnole*, and others became popular, all of them being shorter and less suggestive of the splendor of *le Roi Soleil*. While it may seem surprising that this more simplistic trend developed in only a decade or so, it is less shocking when one considers the character of Louis XVI himself. As noted before, the king was a rather reticent man who harbored a

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general distaste for court ceremony and the aesthetic displays of royal power that were imbedded within it.¹³⁴

Yet while, broadly, there was a decreased flamboyance among male hairstyles, there were notable exceptions, namely the _macaroni or maccaroni_ wig. This perruque was a popular look among young men who took the ‘Grand Tour’ around Europe as they came of age. While the look certainly appeared in France, the macaronis were more ubiquitous in England. Consisting of a tall, peaked coiffure, the macaroni look—which was most popular during the first years of Louis XVI’s reign in the mid-1770s—came to be associated with ‘dandyism.’¹³⁵ Figure 9 presents a caricature of the macaroni style in all its finery and panache.

¹³⁴ Historian John Hardman writes that Louis XVI was “a man of simple tastes, he attached little importance to representation or public display.” John Hardman, _Louis XVI_ (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 39.
Figure 9: “The Macaroni: A Real Character at a Late Masquerade,” by Philip Dawe, 1773, courtesy of Yale University’s Walpole Library
Most men did not subscribe to the macaroni look, yet nearly all in the court still powdered their hair and took tender care of their wigs. An illustrative example of *la mode* for men at Versailles is Figure 10, a portrait of Louis XVI.

*Figure 10: “Portrait of Louis XVI, King of France and Navarre,” by Antoine-François Callet, c. 1774-1782, courtesy of the Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon and ArtStor.*
As for the ladies of the court, hairstyles varied from more simplistic looks inspired by pastoral, Rousseauian ideals, to the famous (or infamous), towering, and flamboyant hairstyles for which Marie-Antoinette was so known. Female coiffures in this era seemed to contain a more ideological and abstractly political essence than the most popular styles that existed in earlier Bourbon France.

The coiffure à la Belle Poule, also known as the coiffure à l’indépendance, referenced a victory in a naval battle between the French and the British. In 1778, the French frigate La Belle Poule engaged with the British ship Arethusa in one of France’s first military interactions in the War for American Independence. As a testament to nationalist sentiments, certain ladies had miniature ships planted into their elaborate hairstyles. Most historical accounts credit Marie-Antoinette, one of her hairdressers, Léonard Alexis Autier (often known as just Léonard), and her favorite modiste (or dressmaker) Rose Bertin for the creation of the look. Figure 11 depicts a caricature of the politically allegorical style, which was actually only one of many looks inspired by the rapidly changing events of the time.

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Another notably au courant female hairstyle during the reign of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette was the coiffure au ballon. It was inspired by the recent innovations in aviation technology that resulted in the first successful manned flight of a hot air balloon in 1783. As commemorative porcelain and balloon-inspired cocktails followed the successful experiment, so did coiffures among the women of
the court. Hairstyles of great height incorporated miniature balloons or balloon shapes, and had apt titles, such as coiffures à la Montgolfier and à la Blanchard, which were named after several of the pioneers of ballooning. Alternate terms for these looks included “le coiffure au globe volant,” “le coiffure au demi-ballon,” and “le coiffure à l’air inflammable.”

Beyond these two examples, we may look to a coiffure allegorique that held a cornucopia on one side and a miniature cypress tree on the other, signifying hope for the newly crowned Louis XVI despite mourning for his grandfather’s death. Another trend was the pouf à la victoire, which included laurel branches in celebration of a military victory during the war of American Independence.

Aside from such socio-politically relevant hairstyles, the coiffures of the most privileged French ladies were, as one may guess, utterly complex and opulent on many occasions. A typical hairstyle for a woman of the highest class in the 1770s could reach a height of two feet and six inches, aided by pomade and false hair. One of the queen’s aforementioned hairdressers, Léonard, wrote that he created a

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138 I, for one, have no idea as to what constitutes a balloon-inspired cocktail.
141 The Empress Maria Theresa wrote in 1775 to her daughter Marie Antoinette, wife of Louis XVI: “They say your coiffure rises 36 inches…and is decorated with a mass of feathers and ribbons, which make it even higher…I was always of the opinion that one should follow the fashions with restraint but never exaggerate them.” ibid., 187.
John Woodforde, The Strange Story of False Hair (New York: Drake, 1972), 64.
coiffure that made her head measure roughly 72 inches from her chin to the “pyramidal” top of her hair.\textsuperscript{142}

For an example of the lengths to which ladies and their stylists went for the sake of ornamentation, the Madame d’Oberkirch, Comtesse de Montbrison, wrote in her Memoirs that she wore small vases of water in her hair in order to keep the flowers contained within them fresh.\textsuperscript{143} With such involved processes of hairstyling, many women did not undo their coiffures for perhaps a week, and often slept upright in order to preserve their hard-won glamour.\textsuperscript{144}

However, around 1780 women’s coiffures tended to decrease in height but increase in width. This change often had only a small effect on the extent of hair embellishment among the high aristocracy, as seen with the example of the coiffure au ballon. Yet while these grandiose coiffures still persisted, women turned more frequently to rather pastoral and relaxed hairstyles, with locks out of place and wisps of hair peeking out coyly from under bonnets.

The dualistic nature of Marie-Antoinette in terms of her loyalties to her former, much more relaxed Austrian court and to the strict etiquette of Versailles

\textsuperscript{142} Autier wrote: “La dauphine…a soixante-douze pouces de tête depuis le bas du menton jusqu’au sommet de sa frisure…la coiffure pyramidaire de Marie-Antoinette avait fait fureur à l’Opéra. On s’était écrasé au parterre pour voir ce chef-d’œuvre de savante audace.”

\textsuperscript{143} On another occasion, she mentioned having diamonds and “a plume of feathers” in her hair, which she had done “according to fashion.”

\textsuperscript{144} Woodforde suggests that, in addition to the struggles with entrances and exits, there was a palpable danger of hair being set on fire by candles and chandeliers.
can perhaps speak to this evolution. The queen was known for her disdain for much of Versailles’s court decorum, and changed some of its etiquette. While a noted lover of opulence, she often preferred more easy-going attitudes, and along with that, occasionally provincial charm. While one should not ignore the continuing popularity of extravagant hair accessories, nor even the fact that ladies still spent at least several hours with their coiffeurs at a time, the shift to a slightly more relaxed look may represent a growing change in attitudes towards court decorum.

We should be terribly cautious about reading into this stylistic shift to a more provincial look, but there certainly are possible linkages between the rise of Rousseauian pastoral ideals, an augmenting dissatisfaction with Versailles, and the desire to return to a more simplistic and less regimented time. Figures 12 and 13, which alternately show Marie-Antoinette in 1778 and 1783 exhibit this possible stylistic manifestation of the political changes at hand. While this transformation is obviously not clear-cut, and Marie-Antoinette would never have worn a straw hat to a fête, it is notable that no images of her with such a pastoral ambiance appeared during her time as the dauphine or during the earlier years of her reign.

145 A fantastic example of Marie-Antoinette’s affinity for the bucolic is her love for the Petit Trianon, one of the smaller and more quaint (if such a word can be used when we write of Versailles) buildings on the property. In the words of the official Versailles website: “Sweeping away the old court and its traditions, she [Marie-Antoinette] insisted on living as she wished. In her Trianon domain, which Louis XVI gave her in 1774, she found the heaven of privacy that enabled her to escape from the rigors of court etiquette. Nobody could come there without her invitation.” “Marie-Antoinette’s Estate,” The Château de Versailles, accessed March 22, 2013, http://en.chateauversailles.fr/marie-antoinettes-estate.

Figure 12: “Archduchess Marie-Antoinette, Queen of France,” by Louise Élisabeth Vigée le Brun, 1778, courtesy of ArtStor.
Figure 13: “Marie Antoinette in Muslin Dress,” by Louise Élisabeth Vigée le Brun, 1783, courtesy of WikiMedia Commons.
The Importance of Court Hairdressers

The role of royal hairdressers had become so vital by the mid-eighteenth century that one coiffeur who went by the name Larneseur may have had a hand in cementing the marriage between Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette. As appearances—be they political, social, economic, or simply aesthetic—were so crucial to intra-royal alliances at the time, the portraiture and presentation of Marie-Antoinette with regard to her betrothal were paramount. While economically and politically, there were usually few objections to a monarch marrying a well-qualified heiress even if she was somewhat homely, there were always (and especially in France, a country so wedded to the idea of beauty and etiquette) concerns about decorum and aesthetic appeal.

Accordingly, when the insightful Empress Maria Theresa of Austria—the mother of Marie-Antoinette—engaged in talks with the Bourbon court concerning marrying her daughter off to the French dauphin, depictions of Marie-Antoinette played a significant, albeit perhaps not crucial, role. According to Desmond Hosford, a scholar of the Bourbon era, during negotiations concerning the marriage, Louis XV outright requested a portrait of the soon-to-be dauphine due to his dissatisfaction with her miniatures. Consequently, Maria Theresa and Louis commissioned the painter Joseph Ducreux to provide a larger image of the young princess.

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While the Empress rejected his first portrait, his second one won approval and fame, partly in thanks to the coiffeur Larneseur’s styling. The two men worked together in order to modify the girl’s ‘Habsburg forehead,’ which was considered to have too high a hairline for the tastes of Versailles, in order to present her as someone fit for the fully Gallicized role of dauphine. Larneseur modified the current Austrian hairstyle, which was relatively unkempt compared to Bourbon preference, to reveal a perfectly groomed and coiffed lady who seemed worthy of the future French throne, as evidenced in Figure 14.148 This, Hosford writes, was a “corporeal manifestation of her submission to France.”149

148 Indeed, the Empress wrote to her chancellor, Prince von Kaunitz, on 11 November 1768, “I would also like to have a hairdresser, if one may be sent.” ibid., 185.
149 ibid., 186.
While Larneser grew out of favor with Marie-Antoinette after she became queen, she retained him out of pity while employing the services of her new,
previously mentioned coiffeur, Léonard. Aside from being in charge of one of the most important aesthetic aspects of the queen, he also became a confidant to her majesty and one of the most popular stylists at court. Indeed, according to an aristocrat at Versailles, Madame de Genlis, when “Léonard arrived…all the women hairdressers fell into disdain and oblivion.”

During the royal family’s sensational attempt to flee from Paris in June 1791, Marie-Antoinette entrusted her beloved Léonard to forward a chest of jewels to Brussels and to help prepare a set of horses to aid the escape. Although it is well-known that the king and his immediate family were caught in Varennes, it is significant nonetheless that the queen placed her faith and, partially, her family’s well-being and wealth, in the hands of a man who was only supposed to style her hair. This fact speaks to the immense amount of time that the stylist and client spent together, and how much she trusted him not just with her appearance, but also with other objects of vital political and economic importance.

And indeed, just as much as Marie-Antoinette and the other ladies of the court looked to their coiffeurs for profound support, the bourgeois ladies and gentlemen of France found a correlating necessity for their wigmakers and stylists beyond the concerns of appearances. While few relationships between coiffeur and

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150 Desmond Hartford quotes Léonard as saying that "La dauphine ... a soixante-douze pouces de tête depuis le bas du menton jusqu'au sommet de sa frisure ... Mes heureux sentiments se réalisent: la coiffure pyramidale de Marie-Antoinette avait fait fureur à l'Opéra. On s'était écrasé au parterre ... pour voir ce chef d'œuvre de savante audace." [The dauphine ... has a head seventy-two pouces tall from the bottom of her chin to the summit of her coiffure ... My happy ideas were realized: the pyramidal coiffure of Marie-Antoinette created a sensation at the Opéra. People crushed each other in the parterre ... to see this masterpiece of learned audacity.] ibid., 186.

client could seem as profound or dramatic as the one between Marie-Antoinette and Léonard, the sheer amount of time that coiffeurs spent powdering, fixing wigs, and creating impressive hairstyles often entailed the creation of solid friendships between them and their clients.

We thus have observed a further expansion in the power of hairstylists among the court, which is undoubtedly linked to the increasing royal deficit. Undoubtedly, though, these expenditures were trivial in comparison to the budgetary concerns linked to the upkeep of Versailles, the cost of engagements in the American Revolution, and other monetary issues.
Perhaps the most telling sign of the national and economic strength of those who worked with hair during the reign of Louis XVI is told by the story of Louis’s finance minister, Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, and his battle with the guilds. In 1776, Turgot and the king decided to begin to abolish the ancient trade guilds in the name of economic liberalism. While most guilds succumbed to the pressures of the state, and were alternately abolished and then reinstated between 1776 until 1791 (during the Revolution), the guild of the perruquiers-coiffeurs successfully resisted all attempts at dissolution. This may have only due to the mere fact that the national exchequer was unable to pay the enormous amount of money needed to buy back the positions, but clearly elucidates the economic importance of the hair trade.  

While upon this subject, it is helpful to recall Fairchild’s statistics concerning the rising purchase of ‘populuxe’ goods among Parisian households, and the anecdotal evidence that paints Paris as the capital of shopping in the late eighteenth century. For example, an English guidebook warned tourists, “When you’re in Paris, you tend to buy things you had never heard of before.” Such was the

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153 To remind the reader, Fairchild studied registers of some of these populuxe goods between the years 1725 and 1785. For example, fans were found in 5.1% of the inventaires après décès in the beginning year of the study, while in 1785, 34.4% of the inventories listed fans.
inventiveness, power, and prestige of the consumer culture that surrounded French hairstyling.

The enduring fame of coiffeurs and coiffures, and the mere fact that we are able to delve into the histories of hair in such detail speaks to the profundity of this dead, objectified body part. Naturally, styles change and régimes come and go, but hair has always shed some light on the political, economic, and social views of a culture…
Unsurprisingly, the Revolution brought about not only political changes, but also transformations in fashion. As the sans-culottes and then Napoléon I took charge of the country, many people eschewed looks that had ancien régime connotations.

The psychoanalyst John Flügel addresses the newly subdued appearances of males in an intriguing manner by linking this transformation to the Revolution. In 1930, he termed this change “the great masculine renunciation.” He writes, “Men may be said to have suffered a great defeat in the sudden reduction of male sartorial decorativeness which took place at the end of the eighteenth century.” He puts forth the idea that such somber, sober clothing was solely aimed at being “useful.” 155 This development in aesthetic self-representation directly connects with the overwhelming rejection of the aristocracy and of religion that characterized the radical facets of the French Revolution. 156

With Flügel’s theory and an examination of the tumult of the Revolution, it is easy to compare the hairstyles and comportment of French leaders who temporally existed in close proximity. Compare, for example, the portraiture of the Bourbon kings, or the even common depictions of Maximilien de Robespierre, to imagery of Napoléon I. Robespierre, who is often considered to be one of the main leaders of

156 Indeed, Flügel writes, “it is not surprising, therefore, that the magnificence and elaboration of costume, which so well expressed the ideals of the ancien régime should have been distasteful to the new social tendencies and aspirations that found expression in the Revolution. ibid., 104.
the Revolution, was executed in 1794, just five years before Napoléon began to truly consolidate his power.\textsuperscript{157} While changes in men’s fashion were obviously not entirely unambiguous, by inspecting the portraits in Figures 15 and 16, we can find a remarkable difference between Robespierre’s powdered wig and Napoléon’s short, natural hair.\textsuperscript{158}


\textsuperscript{158} The fact that Napoléon was a general can partially explain away his short hair, for a hairstyle that did not impede his movement or eyesight was an obvious advantage on the battlefield. Yet among the French troops, hair powder was actually part of the government-issued ration kit. As of October 1786, recruits received “a powder sack, its puff, and a hair comb.” Pulled-back shoulder-length hair, real or faux, went along with the look. One may also bring up Napoléon’s Corsican upbringing, far removed from Versailles or Paris, as a reason for his short hair. If his background is a valid explanation, it can easily reinforce the point that Napoléon was often seen as a man of the people, and someone who brought about great change.

Figure 15: “Maximilien Robespierre, 1758-1794,” by Louis Léopold Boilly, c.1791, courtesy of the Musée des Beaux Arts de Lille and ArtStor.com
Figure 16: “Napoléon as First Consul,” by Antoine-Jean Gros, 1802, courtesy of the Musée National de la Légion d’Honneur and Artstor.com.
The powdered perruques of revolutionaries like Robespierre may be tied to the internal messiness of the state and the strange, confused progression of governmental and societal decisions that occurred during the Revolution. Consequently, in this analysis, these men retained their ancien régime hairstyles while identifying as sans-culottes as part of an arguably vague manifestation of the transition at hand. Meanwhile, with Napoléon’s essentially singular leadership, centralization of the nation, and institution of the Code Napoléon, the time in which he ruled seemed to be much more consolidated and stable in the domestic sphere.\textsuperscript{159} This more solidified—albeit short-lived—government, in addition to Napoléon’s 1804 declaration of France as an empire, presented more socio-political reasons for changes in hairstyle to be appropriate.

In particular, the idea of \textit{empire} harked back to conceptions of Greco-Roman Antiquity, when regular men’s hairstyles were simplistic, short cuts. While women also subscribed to the more subdued coiffures evoked by the concept of empire, the story of their hair between the Revolution and the reign of Napoléon is considerably more complicated.

There were substantial transformations in women’s coiffures and their gendered connotations between the beginning of the Revolution and the reign of Napoléon. Most of these styles were political much in the same way of the most

\textsuperscript{159} Note that we refer specifically to his domestic ruling style, and not the chaos that occurred with many of his international battles. As for those unfamiliar with the Code Napoléon, it recognized equality of all before the law, the right of the individual to choose a profession, honored religious toleration, abolished serfdom/feudalism, protected property rights, and outlawed trade unions and strikes. This civil code, evidently, sought to bring a new sense of order to ravaged France. Jackson J. Spielvogel, \textit{Western Civilization} (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2006), 367-368.
popular looks that existed in the pre-revolutionary period under Marie-Antoinette. Yet these looks varied from masculine-influenced cuts during the era of the Jacobins and Montagnards to romantic, gentle coiffures in the Napoleonic era.

At the height of the Revolution, it was not uncommon to witness women of various classes to don the coiffure à la Titus or à la Brutus. This style consisted of a layered and cropped hairstyle that had multiple political undertones. The names of the coiffure echoed two famous men of the Roman Empire, the first being the Emperor Titus, the son of Vespian, and the second being Brutus, one of the most famous murderers of Julius Caesar. This nomenclature spoke to the conception of an ideal republic and to the downfall of tyrants. The idea of short hair also possibly reflected an increasing urge for women to appear more equal to men, which was undoubtedly related to the republican and egalitarian overtones of the Revolution.

In a different display of solidarity, women’s short haircuts could refer to the guillotine—that infamous tool used to execute thousands during the Revolution.

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160 Who’s Who in the Roman World writes of Titus: “His brief reign was marked by good government, respect for the Senate, and the rejection of informers of accusations of treason…He worked hard to alleviate the suffering caused by the eruption of Vesuvius in August 79 and the plague and fire at Rome in 80.” Such a legacy makes him an emperor with fairly republican qualities—the opposite of what French rebels saw in Louis XVI. As for Brutus, he is remembered as the man who spearheaded the successful plot to assassinate Julius Caesar, who was increasingly considered tyrannical and power-hungry. The slaying of tyrants was a clear theme throughout the Revolution, especially during the Reign of Terror. Who’s Who in the Roman World, Routledge, s.v. “Titus (AD 39-81),” accessed March 31, 2013, http://www.credoreference.com.ezproxy.wesleyan.edu/entry/routwwromwor/titus _ad_39_81.

The coiffure à la victime not only entailed a short haircut, but also frequently the wearing of a red ribbon around the neck or a red shawl around the shoulders to signify the guillotine’s mark of death. The women who adopted this hairstyle were paying tribute to their decapitated sisters, who had their hair chopped off in order for their executions to take place in the most efficient manner.\textsuperscript{162}

The coexistence of two categories of short hairstyles—ones that were meant to emphasize equality and republicanism, and ones that were intended to mourn the demise of the ancient régime—creates an interesting juxtaposition. The appearances of these cropped coiffures can be nearly identical while having opposite meanings. Much like Robespierre and others’ retention of the perruque, women’s short hair can then be seen as a manifestation of the confusion and tension of the times. Regardless, such truncated female hairstyles were a novel appearance for women during an evolving yet short-lived attempt for democracy.

Yet, most frequently, revolutionary women were viewed in terms of what they could offer society, rather than as possessing any inherent equality to men. During this time, and even more so during Napoléon’s reign, women were still cast in a fairly domestic, and even helpless, role.\textsuperscript{163} This idea has evident linkages,

\textsuperscript{162} The red ribbons or shawls were most frequently worn at \textit{bals des victimes}, which were occasions for relatives and friends of those executed to congregate and share their emotions.

\textsuperscript{163} Females surely made important contributions to the Republican effort. They were supposed to care for soldiers, sew uniforms, cook food for armies, raise good republican citizens, contribute to the morality of the nation, and generally aid the
particularly in a Veblenesque manner, to their continued flamboyance and ornamentation (despite the *Titus* and *la Victime*) in comparison to men’s looks. Yet, obviously, hairstyles changed before, during, and after this era, just as politics and social expectations mutate and shift.

“defenders of the *patrie.*” Yes, there was the celebrated women’s march on Versailles, but even that concerned bread—a domestic good. Bonnie G. Smith, *Changing Lives: Women in European History Since 1700*, (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1989), 94.


Indeed, Napoléon seemed to value traditional marriage and gender roles as being integral to the stability of the nation, and thus annulled many of the rights women had gained, especially in the administrative and judicial spheres. Men regained all the power in matters of divorce and adultery, and even women’s relations to the state itself became indirect, as they acquired the nationality of their husbands. Bonnie G. Smith, *Changing Lives: Women in European History Since 1700*, (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1989), 115.
As we have seen, the history of hairstyles in and outside of Bourbon France provides a thought-provoking lens through which to study consumer culture, the influence of the court, and conceptions of gender. While such a specific angle could never possibly tell us everything we need or care to know about the era, the combination of documented trends, statistics, and anecdotes helps to elucidate not just how French consumption evolved, but perhaps, more importantly, how the French viewed themselves and their bodies in relation to objects and to each other.

The hairdressing, wigmaking, and hair powder trades generally grew in size over the roughly two centuries that we discuss in detail, constituting not only a commercial expansion in themselves, but also acting in correlation of sorts with the increase in the fashion and ‘populuxe’ goods markets. These market augmentations were gradual as we examine them year by year, but become rather sizable when looked at over the span of 50 or 100 years. However, when one talks about any of these ‘populuxe’ markets, one ends up addressing the idea of self-ornamentation and the motives behind it.

While it has seemed throughout this thesis that the kings and their favorite women had the greatest effect on trends, how can we really draw a line between emulation and actual aesthetic appreciation when one adopts a fashionable look? While the aforementioned Baronne d’Oberkirch probably found wearing flowers in her hair to be pleasing in itself, she also likely found that the look garnered attention and social favor. To what percentage did each motivation play into her decisions regarding her locks? Does it even matter? These are questions that have gone largely
unasked throughout this text, solely because it is impossible to give a definitive answer. If her own aesthetic preference outweighed social concerns, then the Baronne would be an agent, an active human. If the social dictates utterly overshadowed her own desires, she would be objectified—merely a cog in a machine of human obligations. These distinctions may be the only response as to why “this” matters at all. In the end, though, when we discuss hair, we are all objectified to a certain degree.

If we think of Baronne d’Oberkirch dressing flowers into her dead hair, or Louis XIV placing someone else’s locks on his living, shorn scalp, we see that hairdressing occupies a space of bodily interchange and a sort of morbidity. Whether we turn our heads towards the one-on-one exchange between a woman who sells her own hair and the wigmaker who buys it, or ponder the grains that can provide subsistence but are instead used for hair powder, or reference Schumpeter’s ideas of capitalism being inherently linked to a dialogue of destruction and creation, we are confronted by the fact that studying the professionalization and commercialization of hair is useful not just for examining our bodily relationships, but also our more philosophical and economic ties with death and life. The barely defined space that hair occupies between corporeality and commodity enlightens us to this fact. Truly, this liminality works right alongside a deep connection between the living and the dead, the conscious and the unconscious, and the head and the hair.
Appendix

*Appendix*

*A Brief Timeline of Bourbon France, Generally Concerning Domestic Affairs*

1610-1643: Reign of Louis XIII

1643: Louis XIV ascends the throne

1648-1653: The Fronde

1652: Louis XIV signs the Edict of Nantes

1682: Versailles becomes the seat of government

1685: Louis XIV revokes the Edict of Nantes

1702-1709: Food riots spread throughout France

1715: Louis XIV dies, Louis XV ascends the throne

1758: Physiocratic economist François Quesnay publishes his *Tableau économique*, which argues that one pay greater attention to industry

1762: Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Social Contract* and *Émile* published

1774: Louis XV dies, Louis XVI ascends the throne

1775: The Flour War, which consisted of violent food riots in Paris and surrounding areas

1789: Storming of the Bastille

1792: Execution of Louis XVI

1799: Napoléon I stages a coup d’état

1804: Napoléon I declared emperor