The Trouble with Hairdressers

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"IT IS A FACT NOT TO BE DENIED, however much to be deplored, that the art and mystery of barbery has, without any assignable reason, sunk exceedingly from that high estimation in which it was ancienly held; and that though all the world continues still as much obliged to it as ever, it has become the object of nearly all the world's contumely."1 Or so claimed one breezy 1824 guide to London. But just what was worrisome about barbers?

It won't suffice to invoke some off-the-shelf observations about social status and emotion: for example, that since hairdressers are lowly figures, servants, they can always serve dutifully as objects of contempt. In one novel, also from 1824, cranky but endearing Mr. Ramsay spurns the strawberries brought by a niece he loathes, and recommends that she deliver them to "a barber's bairn two doors aft." "'Pon my word, uncle,' said Miss Bell in great indignation, 'I have something else to do than to pick strawberries for barber's brats, indeed.'"2 It might seem that, Scottish accent and vocabulary aside, the exchange could be placed anywhere, any time. But the guide to London does not claim that hairdressers are always lowly and therefore contemptible. It notices a change in their status. Nor is the London guide idiosyncratic. In Walter Scott's Antiquary, set in the 1790s, old Caxon the barber "sighed over the disrespect into which his art had so universally fallen."3 We can also canvass earlier examples of affection and esteem for barbers, hairdressers, shavers, perruquiers, les friseurs, and other practitioners of the tonsorial arts. So we have to explain a change in the status of hairdressers, and that change needs to be understood as contingent and historical.

Figaro, to clutch one obvious straw, was well known on the English stage. The operas by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Gioacchino Rossini as well as dramatic adaptations of the Beaumarchais plays were popular. "Who is there," demanded Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine in 1823, "whose heart does not beat joyously to the very sound of the Barber of Seville?"4 But Gustave Flaubert's crack that Figaro was one of the causes of the French Revolution isn't immediately on point. As far as I know, the English Figaro, unlike his French progenitor, launches into no denunciations of the aristocracy. He doesn't instruct them that they've merely taken the trouble to be born; he doesn't make any pointed jests about public opinion; nor does he even applaud freedom of the press. His credentials as bourgeois radical are scanty. Even in the hands of a translator as radical as playwright and novelist Thomas Holcroft, he is just another cunning rogue.5 So Figaro isn't our man.
At the risk of rounding up a usual historiographical suspect, though, I do want to suggest that the French Revolution is central to explaining the newly degraded status of hairdressers. British hairdressers embodied some classic anxieties about equality, anxieties sharpened and made more ominous by those dastardly events across the Channel. Quirky or idiosyncratic though they seem, hairdressers enable us to bring sharply into focus the notoriously difficult concept of equality, to help figure out what egalitarians are demanding and what their conservative opponents are unhappy about.

Why hairdressers? That is, why should hairdressers, of all unlikely candidates, have come to exemplify equality, to be a cultural obsession of sorts? The question, natural enough in its way, raises some knotty issues about contingency and explanation that I haven’t the space to explore. Suffice it to say that hairdressers happened to occupy a social position that made it possible to demonize them. Others could have occupied such a position (and perhaps some did); even given the facts of the matter, hairdressers needn’t have been demonized. But it so happens that they were, and that we can learn from their daffy appearance on the sordid stage of cultural politics.

Friz, Friz, Friz

In 1766 and 1820, we find French hairdressers advertising that they could make one look young again.6 In Charlotte Smith’s Old Manor House of 1793, the vain old general attempts to look young by “putting on toupees and curls,” making himself ridiculous instead of attractive to the young woman he’s smitten with.7 And in Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s Trip to Scarborough, Young Fashion sighs that women fall in love on the basis of mere appearance, and Lory responds, “Sir, Taylors and Hair-dressers are now become the bawds of the nation—’tis they that debauch all the women.”8 But hair does far more elaborate symbolic work than serving as a marker of youth and good looks. George Rose was worried about the decline of the use of hair powder not just because of government revenues (in 1795 William Pitt’s government had passed a tax on hair powder)9 but “to avoid other mischief which I am very sure is not enough attended to, the distinction of dress and external appearance. The inattention to that has been a great support of Jacobinism.”10 If social status isn’t going to be perilously evanescent, it has to be prominently displayed: Rose didn’t need to read Marx to understand the daily reproduction of social life. Decisions about what to wear and how to do one’s hair aren’t innocent matters of mere personal preference. They are politically charged. Similarly, it spoke volumes when Lord Bathurst cut off his pigtail after the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832.11

In 1786, Fanny Burney’s hairdresser spent two hours one evening working on her hair; he still wasn’t finished when she had to jump up and serve the
Queen.¹² This might seem extraordinary, but Charles Knight, reminiscing on the early 1800s, reported that “those who had to preserve a genteel appearance spent an hour each day under the hands of the hair-dresser.”¹³ For those of the higher orders, hairdressing was elaborate business. Hair was plastered, powdered (up to two pounds of powder per head),¹⁴ curled, and lubricated with pomatum or bear grease or Macassar oil. This mass of stuff had to be combed out and reapplied daily—it must have gotten horribly messy while sleeping, and anyway it must have supported an imposing population of flora and fauna—which made for lively demand for hairdressers, the more expert the better. One manual for hairdressers reports that in 1745 hair styles became newly elaborate:¹⁵ I suppose the final defeat of Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Jacobites encouraged a new round of devotion to the pageantries of legitimate monarchy. And what better advertisement of one’s identity and convictions than a careening tower of powdered curls on top of one’s head?

By around 1830, hair styles were simpler; the Bristol Job Nott reported: “Nor is the hair-dresser any longer the important personage he used to be, when ladies and gentlemen thought it necessary to sit under his hands for an hour at a time, to have their hair frizzled, and made a sort of dust-bag of powder and pomatum.”¹⁶ But of course that isn’t the replacement of a symbolic or expressive language with something purely functional or instrumental; rather it’s a change in the reigning codes. Someone whose hair style is simple doesn’t somehow escape making symbolic claims even if he wants to. Instead, he claims—depending on whatever the local code is—to be classically austere, athletically disciplined, vigorously masculine, hardnosed, efficiency-minded, blithely unconcerned with the fussy niceties of presentation of self, or whatever else. And he will be read, effortlessly, as pressing those claims even if he doesn’t intend to, even if he is oblivious to the code. Or, in fact, like the Puritan Roundheads of the seventeenth century, the day’s “crops,” with their short hair, claimed a fierce devotion to republican virtue. But these are expressive claims, every bit as much as those of the dandy or fop. So Charles Dibdin’s popular song, “Miss Muz, the Milliner, and Bob, the Barber,” inveighed against the introduction of effete high fashion to a respectable small town, with mannered haircuts standing in for corruption, “ringlets careless flowing” for virtue.¹⁷ So the young William Gladstone fretted that his contemporaries’ haircuts did “not betoken a manly age or character,” as presumably other hair styles would have.¹⁸ The language of hair can be manipulated quite crassly, too. In 1829, the Glasgow police began shaving the heads of drunks found unconscious in the streets, using nakedness as a badge of dishonor—and perhaps creating problems for the bald.¹⁹

So hair, every bit as much as clothes, made the man—and the woman. Here’s Jeremy Bentham, the innocent abroad, intent on visiting a Polish court in 1787: “My respect for Justice determined me to call in the assistance of a hairdresser.” But he had trouble finding someone properly equipped and knowledgeable, and

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ended up with a man ready to use a tallow candle for pomatum and to apply the powder with “a pair of dirty hands.”20 Traveling in France in 1769, Horace Walpole was amused by the appearance of neatly manicured trees picking up dust from the chalky roads: “I assure you it is very difficult, powdered as both are all over, to distinguish a tree from a hairdresser.”21

A couple of decades later, things French and hirsute became less amusing. English observers paid fretful attention to rapidly changing French hair styles, to shaggy sans culotte hair and well-pomaded muscadin hair, trying desperately to discern the deep meaning and vicissitudes of the Revolution by deciphering the language of hair. In 1790, the Earl of Mornington dourly reported to William Grenville that petits maîtres in Paris “have sacrificed their curls, touffées, and queues; some of them go about with cropped locks like English farmers without any powder, and others wear little black scratch wigs; both these fashions are called Têtes a la Romaine, which is a comical name for such folly”: a nice attempt, this, at snubbing a studied piece of republican symbolism.22 Less cool was Henry Fuseli’s 1802 condemnation of the new appearance of French soldiers, exemplary or even constitutive of the frightful decadence of revolutionary politics: “the disuse of powder,—the cropped heads,—the Chin shaved & the throat unshaved, which is a beastly custom making a Man like an Animal, that makes up all the alteration that the French have undergone.”23 All the alteration: not that only hair styles had changed in France (for who could be passionately exercised by that alone?), but that the French destruction of civilization itself was made manifest not just in the eradication of monarchy and aristocracy, not just in the swarms of angry women out in the streets, not just in the public campaigns against Christianity, but in the very hair styles adopted by the French.

Who performed these hairdressing services? Once London, and small towns until the early nineteenth century, had a flying barber armed with shaving cream and a basin of boiling hot water, going door to door to shave his clients.24 Boasting in 1805 about his pristine Botley, “the most delightful village in the world,” William Cobbett was proud to report that it still had no barber of its own: “The barber comes three miles once a week to shave and cut hair!”25 Professionals also opened up storefronts. Even large households might have no servant specifically denominated a hairdresser,26 but servants were routinely expected to master such arts as part of their responsibility. Patrick, the servant accompanying William Combe’s whimsical Dr. Syntax on tour, knows how to shave and how to tend to wigs.27 Similarly, John Cam Hobhouse fired one servant in less than two years; “he cannot shave well & is too expensive,” Hobhouse noted in his diary.28 Then again, some households valued hairdressers enough to retain someone specializing in the art. When Richard Cumberland took his family to Spain in 1780 to pursue secret diplomatic negotiations for the British government, he had only three English servants, one “a London hair-dresser . . . whom I took for the convenience of my wife and daughters.”29
Hairdressers, I should note, were overwhelmingly male (and so I shall relentlessly stick with the masculine pronoun).\textsuperscript{30} This fact gave rise to some unease about gender that I won't be pursuing here, but do want briefly to note. In 1789, crusty traditionalist John Bennett, infamous as an opponent of woman's rights, complained: “Ladies are certainly injudicious in employing so many male friseurs about their persons. The custom is indelicate. . . .”\textsuperscript{31} In 1798, avant-garde feminist Mary Hays, unjustly neglected as a sidekick of Mary Wollstonecraft, wondered why “women of the inferior classes” didn’t serve as hairdressers and why upper-class women “admit without scruple—men hair-dressers.”\textsuperscript{32} That Bennett and Hays echo one another is a reminder of the scope of the day’s feminism and its deliberate regard for the purity of women of a certain status. The concern is for the tense economies of anonymity, body space, and sexuality, a recurrent refrain in the sources: so we learn from one colloquial dictionary that a prostitute might be labelled “as common as a barber’s chair, in which a whole parish sit to be trimmed”; so the male genitals might be referred to as a barber’s sign, defined not quite innocently enough as “a standing pole and two wash-balls.”\textsuperscript{35}

Anyway, hair mattered, at least to the higher orders. (Actually, to the lower orders, too. Peter Pindar’s droll epic,\textit{ The Lousiad,}\textsuperscript{34} relates George III’s aghast discovery of a louse on his plate and his ensuing order that the entire kitchen staff receive haircuts and wear wigs. But the staff, doughty freeborn Englishmen, will have none of it, and assert that only “in France, where men like spaniels lick the Throne,” could such an order be issued or followed.)\textsuperscript{35} Raised eyebrows must have greeted the \textit{Morning Post’s} 1789 report that the Earl of Scarborough kept “six French frizeurs, who have nothing else to do than dress his hair.”\textsuperscript{35} Outsiders were struck by the time-consuming complexity of it all. Asked by George III how she liked London, one newly arrived duchess replied: “Not at all, your majesty, for it is knock, knock, knock, all day; and friz, friz, friz, all night.”\textsuperscript{36}

All that frizzing might have been annoying; still, the \textit{friseurs} were entitled to a kind of respect, the respect due to an inferior or menial or underling who has an allotted role and performs it ably. The background understandings here were banally familiar, largely implicit but easily recalled from medieval and Early Modern social theory. Whether conceived of as body politic or patriarchal family or great chain of being, society depended on hierarchy and subordination, on place and degree, rank and station. Overmighty subjects were a threat, but dutiful aristocrats were entitled to respect. So, too, lowly hairdressers were absurd or pernicious if they swaggered with pretensions and put on airs, but entirely amiable and respectable figures if they minded their manners and knew their place. With a studiously nostalgic glow, Mary Russell Mitford summoned up the view in the 1820s, recalling “William Skinner, wig-maker, hair-dresser, and barber” from “the little primitive town of Cranley, where I spent the first few years of my life”: “Although, doubtless, the he-people find it more convenient to shave themselves, and to dispense with wigs and powder, yet I cannot help regretting, the more for

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his sake, the decline and extinction of a race which . . . formed so genial a link
between the higher and lower orders of society.”397 There were black hairdress-
ers,38 but that isn’t why Mitford says “race.” Hairdressers might be an altogether
different order of beings from their betters, but again they have their role to play
in knitting together social order.

That means the hairdresser’s job is a paradoxical one. He gives the higher
orders the kind of hair that identifies them as high. So his job is, in part, the
reproduction of social status. But it is a system of social status that assigns him a
lowly position. Perhaps hairdressers consoled themselves—or gnashed their
teeth—in reflecting that their august customers were helpless without them. Per-
haps they took secret or illicit pleasure in tinkering with their own hair or making
their customers’ hair just a bit too extravagant. Like any other social actors, they
had some room for maneuvering within the confines of their role. But if they
stepped too far outside it, if they were not in the end dutiful and deferential
certifiers of status, there would be trouble.

If overweening lords and saucy subjects are a threat to (this account of) social
order, so much the worse for freewheeling talk of equality. On its face, equality
threatens hierarchy and subordination; but that just means that it threatens the
very possibility of social order, if anything like the patriarchal family or body
politic or great chain of being is the most cogent account we can muster. Conser-
vatives, clinging to this older model of social order, are then appropriately aghast
at the demand for equality. It’s not fundamentally a matter of maintaining the
power and privileges of the better off, the triumph of sinister interests come what
may, though I don’t doubt that that helps. It’s a matter of safeguarding order, of
preventing the crazed and bloody chaos that had erupted in France from peene-
trating Britain, and I see no reason whatever to doubt the sincerity of conservative
anguish in this realm.

Dignity of Labor

“The occupation of a hair-dresser, or of a working tallow-chandler,
cannot be a matter of honor to any person,—to say nothing of a number of other
more servile employments.”399 So decreed Edmund Burke in the Reflections on the
Revolution in France. Characteristically blunt, Burke echoed ancien régime wise-
dom: there is no dignity in labor.40 Honor or dignity here is a positional good:
some (aristocrats, MPs, maybe lawyers) can have it only if others (hairdressers,
tallow-chandler, maybe farmers) don’t. If we observe the workforce through the
conceptual lenses of those familiar premodern models of social order, hairdress-
ers and the rest can’t have dignity. Harriet Arbuthnot, the staunch Tory, sneered
at William Knighton, keeper of the privy purse under George IV, by referring to
him not just as “the greatest rogue in England” but also as a barber.41 James Law-

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rence protested against the pretensions of hairdressers who dared to call themselves gentlemen: “The word gentlemen re-echoes from one end of the kingdom to the other. We have gentlemen of the whip, gentlemen of the quill, gentlemen of the scissars, gentlemen of the razor, gentlemen of the comb.”

But this linguistic excess makes nonsense of the very possibility of being a gentleman, which requires that others be not so genteel. Or, in Pierce Egan’s scathingly sarcastic words, it requires that we recognize “bawds, milliners, hair-dressers, tallywomen, and many other reptiles of the same class.” Those who pine away for aristocrats and gentlemen should remember that their very existence requires the existence of loathsome inferiors.

The young William Wordsworth, still fired with revolutionary zeal, complained that nobility “has a necessary tendency to dishonour labour.” One of Burke’s critics chided him. “More is said,” protested Capel Lofft, “than, in this age, an ingenious and enlightened mind might have been expected to utter, on the degrading ignorance attendant on certain occupations”; Lofft thought it better “to expand the gates and enlarge the avenues to the Temple of Honour.” Radicals underlined the frightful anomalies. Charles Pigott wondered why labor “is held in the utmost contempt by the useless great, though at the same time they derive all their luxury and exclusive advantages from the exertions of the industrious poor.”

In *The Box-Lobby Challenge*, Richard Cumberland permitted his audience some nasty chuckles—and maybe some nagging apprehensions—by exploring what would be at stake in conceiving hairdressers and others as dignified workers, not menial servants. Provincial Sir Toby and his manservant Joe have arrived in London, and Joe salutes a waiter:

**Joe:** Harkye, you boy! skip-jack! tapster!

**Waiter:** What do you want, Clodpole? is that your way of speaking to a waiter? I fancy you have been more accustomed to alehouses than hotels.

**Joe:** Oho! you call your house an hotel, and yourself a waiter—very well! then pray Mr. Waiter of an hotel, send me hither one of your barbers to comb out Sir Toby Grampus’s periwig.—Do you understand that?

**Waiter:** I’ll send you a hair-dresser, we don’t call ’em barbers, unless we mean to affront ’em. Where the plague have you lived. [exit]

**Joe:** So, ho! here’s a new language to learn; a man’s mother-tongue I perceive is of no use in this place.

The long-suffering mother tongue is, as always, a political battlefield. If “barber” has too much obloquy built into it, choose a new name. Anyway, the passage is unstable, maybe deliberately so. The waiter and his still invisible ally, the hairdresser, want to upgrade their own status. But the waiter moves to do so by berating Joe. Is it that, as the traveling servant of a provincial squire, Joe is irretrievably low? Or is it rather that his putatively rude behavior, failing to address the waiter with due respect, means that he deserves a scathing riposte?
The hairdresser’s arrival doesn’t produce any celebrations of fraternity, dignity, or respect. He and Joe don’t treat one another as comrades in arms against some oppressive upper crust. Indeed, the hairdresser is supremely confident that he is Joe’s superior, Sir Toby’s too. He looks at Sir Toby’s wig with unmitigated scorn, seeing it as hopelessly antique, presumably not up to chic London standards: “Dam’mee! if I wouldn’t as soon comb out the tower lyons, as this rum gig of a caxen.” While he’s at it, he manages to insult Sir Toby’s coat:

HAIR-DRESSER: . . . which now is of the longest standing in the family, you, or that damn’d old quiz of a coat you are dusting?

JOE: Damn’d old quiz of a coat! what a graceless reprobate you are! Damme, how you barbers swear! where do you expect to go?

We jaded secular humanists might miss the force of this question: swearing, the thought is, sends one to hell. That Joe himself swears in the very act of denouncing swearing is surely another bit of heavy-handed humor. The hairdresser, we are to presume, knows full well what Joe is suggesting, but coolly dodges: “Half the town over before night, then to my girl and my bottle. As for your wig, comb it those that like, I’ll not touch a bristle of it.” When Sir Toby learns what happened, he exclaims, “Oh, that I had the knave in Monmouthshire, I’d make him sing another tune!” Country bumpkin meets city slicker; affable gentry confronts impudent underling; pious Christian is rebuffed by worldly cynic; country virtue is foiled by courtly corruption.

It’s clear that Cumberland invites his audience to sympathize with Sir Toby and Joe, but not entirely clear why. Suppose that waiter and hairdresser had been furnished another script, one making them genial and self-deprecating, like Walter Scott’s Caxon. Caxon’s master tells him: “You are a goose”; “‘It’s very like it may be sae,’ replied the acquiescent barber,—‘I am sure your honour kens best.’” Then, surely, Sir Toby and Joe would have had their footing, would have restrained any growls about newfangled London, would have found their mother tongue and social repertoires quite under control. But how would their audience have reacted? And how would Cumberland have wanted them to react? Would they have seen the entire exchange as unremarkable? Or would some of them—radical artisans in the pit, say—have been hissing, complaining about Toby’s easy arrogance, marvelling that Joe has the stupidity to believe that Toby’s higher status casts its glow on him, or just condemning Cumberland for being so hopelessly out of touch with the ways of actual workers? Would they have thought that waiter and hairdresser were commendably acting in character? Or would they have scorned them as hopelessly inauthentic? Or would they have heard the entire exchange as dripping with arch irony, assuming that no self-respecting waiter or hairdresser could actually be so deferential? Would they have noticed—and reviled—the possibility that the underlings gain their self-respect precisely by being deft and artful in the laborious arts of deference and submission, in identifying
with their allotted role and impeccably performing its duties? that, not at all paradoxically, underlings take pride in being inferior?

More intractably yet: suppose waiter and hairdresser were genuinely self-deprecating, pleased to have the opportunity to be a bit craven in assisting Sir Toby, but Joe and Sir Toby themselves prized the dignity of labor and tried to impart to waiter and hairdresser a more dignified sense of self. Imagine how embarrassing, how excruciating, the ensuing conversation would be for all parties. Notice, too, that Joe and Sir Toby might wonder if their own commitments to the dignity of labor were just another way of being patronizing, something like the leftist version of noblesse oblige. Or they might be so complacently fond of their position that they would fail to notice that waiter and hairdresser were baffled—or held them in cheerfully seething contempt for failing to acquit themselves competently in their own higher social position. (In Memos of Modern Philosophers, an antic sendup of the English Jacobins, Elizabeth Hamilton has Bridgetina Botherim, a blithering idiot who quotes William Godwin at every turn, try to commiserate with what she sees as the degraded and unjust lot of some rustic haymakers. They will have none of it and spurn her caustically—and Mrs. Martha assures her that the poor are happy.)51

The iterations are endless, increasingly misanthropic too, and I leave them aside for now. Instead, consider this 1778 conversation between Samuel Johnson, Fanny Burney, Hester Thrale, and Lady Ladd. “The subject was given by Lady Ladd; it was the respect due from the lower class of the people.” She complains that Mrs. Thrale doesn’t bother with the niggling rituals of deference: “I remember, when you were at my house, how the hair-dresser flung down the comb as soon as you were dressed, and went out of the room without making a bow.” Mrs. Thrale responds: “All the better, for if he had made me one, ten thousand to one if I had seen it. I was in as great haste to have done with him, as he could be to have done with me. I was glad enough to get him out of the room; I did not want him to stand bowing and cringing.”

“If any man had behaved so insolently to me,” answers Lady Ladd, “I would never again have suffered him in my house.” “Well,” scoffs Mrs. Thrale, “your ladyship has a great deal more dignity than I have!” Dr. Johnson chimes in with one of his trademark sententious maxims: “Subordination is always necessary to the preservation of order and decorum.” Lady Ladd adds: “I have no notion of submitting to any kind of impertinence; and I never will bear to have any person nod to me, or enter a room where I am, without bowing.” Then Dr. Johnson is wry: “But, madam, what if they will nod, and what if they won’t bow?—how then?” “Why, I always tell them of it.”

Mrs. Thrale’s rejoinder: “Oh, commend me to that! I’d sooner never see another bow in my life, than turn dancing-master to hair-dressers.”52 I haven’t the space (or ample enough evidence) to pursue the story here, but in the earlier eighteenth century the dancing master is as much an exemplary figure of con-

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tempt as the hairdresser is after the French Revolution. So Mrs. Thrale is not just witty and brash, but subtle, even brilliant. It is the province of a lowly dancing-master to teach people how to bow gracefully. She won't dream of lowering herself by playing dancing-master to her own servant. As long as the man combs her hair competently, let him flounce out of the room without the appointed ceremonies. Who cares?

Well, Lady Ladd and Dr. Johnson do; and so did thousands of others. In a properly functioning household, they would insist, Mrs. Thrale never would have been subjected to such impudence in the first place. Only her own prior derogation of duty has made her servants so pert that they dare omit the bows and curtsies that certify their lowly status. (Not the mere fact of bowing and curtsying, but the asymmetric routines built up around them. They are to bow to her; she, of course, need not bow back. She may address them by first or last name, as she pleases; they must always address her with an honorific. And so on.) Nor, they would insist, are the stakes trivial, and we must reprove Mrs. Thrale's breezy dismissal of the matter. Her retort to Lady Ladd, "your ladyship has a great deal more dignity than I have!" is biting, even acidulous: she means that Lady Ladd is altogether too stiff and surly about her status, that she should loosen up and be more casual. But, they would insist, the higher orders must resist such unbecoming temptations, for the domestic household is no less than a microcosm of society itself. Mrs. Thrale does her servants no favors in omitting the delicate, almost invisible, marks of formality and distance that must regulate their relationship. Not only does she leave them at sea, unsure of how to execute their role, of what is permitted, what forbidden; she also forfeits the consecration of hierarchy so essential to order. For Mrs. Thrale to be negligent of her duties is to license disorder in her house and at large. Note that the very same actions and omissions that some might describe as dignified others would describe as saucy.

Lofft's proposal, that the avenues to public honor be enlarged, can't in the end furnish a fully democratic conception of the dignity of labor. For honor must remain positional, so some occupations must remain low. That is why one pamphleteer's 1791 complaints aren't what one might expect. The government, he declares, "have reduced us to the hard condition of daily labourers.... They have made us a people of pedlars, of tailors, of weavers, of barbers, of brokers, of lackeys, of gamblers, of man-milliners, and if ought can derogate still more from the dignity of man."55 Other workers—I suppose smallholding farmers—may have dignity or honor, but not barbers or man-milliners. That is why radical orator Henry Hunt's gibe about the Sheriff of Westminster, formerly the King's printer—"I found this Mr. George Eyre just such a Jack-in-office as I should have expected a King's printer, or a King's lacquey, or a King's hair-dresser to be"—might draw today's readers up short.54

Here, as elsewhere, critics seized on the thought that equality is not pernicious, but impossible, that the demand for equality is always in vain. Blackwood's
Edinburgh Magazine gives us a reductio of the campaign for the dignity of labor: “The Confessions of a Footman” by Thomas Ticklepitcher. Ticklepitcher is a stupid oaf seeking sympathy, perhaps redress, for “the grievances of footmen; a set of men, I do believe, more universally persecuted than any other body of artists within his Majesty's dominions.” Ticklepitcher proudly launches into a narrative that, of course, doesn’t begin to vindicate his complaints; instead it caustically exposes the nonsensical, even hilarious, nature of his brief. It turns out that he had been a barber’s apprentice, incompetent to the core. At the implausible climax of his labors, he managed accidentally to cut off three quarters of a prestigious client’s hair.55 Thus the need for a new line of work; thus too a pointed challenge as to whether such buffoons and their asinine work could ever warrant dignity. Burke is unflinching in summoning up “the innumerable servile, degrading, unseemly, unmannerly, and often most unworthy and pestiferous occupations to which by the social economy so many wretches are inevitably doomed.”56 Some will find here what’s centrally offensive in Burke, his blatant contempt for ordinary men and women. Others will suspect that, even if our flatulent pieties demand that we not talk this way in public, even if his comment is unbearably ugly, it’s irresistibly true.

Putting on Airs

So, too, a seemingly dignified hairdresser could always be exposed as a buffoon putting on airs. Blackwood’s also gives us a soliloquy by Frizzle:

So! This is a most delicate piece of workmanship! Confoundedly clever. The hairs are woven better by half than they grow in the skin—more regular like—and the curl it takes! and the fine oily gloss! and the colour!—It’s a pleasure to put such a wig out of hand—a wig, as the poet says, “beating nature.” Zounds! I wonder people are such fools as to wear their own hair! That curl a little more to the left, to give a sort of carelessness—so. To be sure, though I say it that should not say it, there is not an artist of more genius in my line in the whole West End. It must be confessed, though, that few men have had my advantages. Prenticed in Piccadilly—placed for improvement in Regent Street—a foreign tour—two days at Calais—hang this straggling lock! It won’t sit becoming! I’ve a great mind to clip it. No; that’ll do. That’s quite comy fo, as the French say.57

The pretensions are hopeless. It isn’t hairdressers as such who are dignified, but Frizzle himself happens to be especially admirable because of his distinctive advantages. But he’s fatuous in preening himself on his advantages, which amount to happening to live in fashionable neighborhoods and taking a pathetic version of a young gentleman’s grand tour. Yet aristocracy on the cheap isn’t dignity, and any complacent Tory reading Blackwood’s is permitted a patronizing grin at Frizzle’s gross mispronunciation of comme il faut.

The pressures of market competition could themselves give rise to ludicrous

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affectation. (Here economic rationality yields absurd folly.) John Bull reported that “Within one hundred miles of Drury-lane the passengers can find ‘the original shaving shop;’ ‘the old original shaving shop’ and ‘the real original shaving shop.’” They also found an 1828 advertisement worth reproducing at length:

J. LEAVER, ARTIST IN DECORATIVE HAIR,—In disseminating his Gratitude for experienced favours, assumes the honour of announcing to the Ladies, Gentlemen, and adjacent residents of Chelsea, that he has removed from Bond-street, to those eligible premises, No. 13, Adam’ s Place, near the Six Bells, King’ s Road, a commodious Shop, elegantly adapted for a characteristic display of all the various modernized devices of ornamental hair. And desires to insinuate that providing acknowledged ability, enthusiastic regard, accompanied with commodities which are both vilis et bonum, be the superinducements or avenues leading to Business.—J. L. unhesitatingly asserts that he possesses all these even to perfection. . . .

As Hair Cutter, J. L. is incontestibly declared by amateurs of his profession to be the ne plus ultra of the present Era.

As Hair Dresser, he soars lofty in the estimation of some of the first circles of courtiers at the west end.

As Peruke and Scalp Maker, his name has become proverbial, both in the Metropolis, and on the Continent, he will deceive the sapient connoisseur, he is the best sembler of nature extant. . . .

Once again, inadvertently hilarious mistakes; once again, a putative bid for dignity still caught up in the logic of positional goods: Leaver’s standing is purchased at the price of his competitors’ ignominy. Then again, he can’t buy this kind of standing anyway. John Bull clearly expects their readers to react with disdain—the ad appears in an ongoing series snottily entitled “The March of Intellect” and designed to show that no such march is in progress—and we can make our own conjectures about the reactions of Leaver’s potential clients. Perhaps John Bull embellished the advertisement, the stuff of slapstick and buffoonery; it’s hard to imagine Leaver proudly writing the text (or hiring a consultant to do it for him?), harder still to imagine it attracting new customers. But they almost surely didn’t invent it from whole cloth, and indeed I suspect any embellishments were quite minor: the Age, another scurrilous conservative paper, ran a strikingly similar advertisement in 1825 in the midst of the regular advertisements, and I don’t think the day’s papers were playing these kinds of games with the boundaries of fact and fiction.

Subjects and Citizens

Let’s return to the hairdresser’s shop: someone in the chair, the hairdresser busily tending to him, maybe a few clients waiting. They don’t sit silently. The “chattering dexterity of a friseur” was notorious. In 1774, Richard Graves furnished a barber who, “with a voluble tongue, as he was preparing his razor, ran over the heat of the weather, dustiness of the rods, and other general topics,
which those artists have ready at hand, for the entertainment of their customers, and to divert their attention from the pain which often attends the operation under the most skillful performer.”62 In 1818, Charles Lamb saluted his barber: “I can truly say, that I never spent a quarter of an hour under his hands without deriving some profit from the agreeable discussions, which are always going on there.”63 In a more sullen vein, when Scott’s Lord Nigel Glenvarloch finally rises from the chair and staggers away from the barber, his “ears, so long tormented with his continued babble, tingled when it had ceased, as if a bell had been rung close to them for the same space of time.”64 In Robert Bage’s Hermsprong, one character importantly warns another not to make his son a barber: “Barbers’ shops, you know, are receptacles of scandal.”65

Scandal and malicious gossip aside, this small talk might seem unexceptional and unexceptionable. As Graves notes, it helps distract one's attention from the pain of shaving. Or, as we might suspect, it helps solve a classic problem of social discomfort: the hairdresser is a stranger whose job requires him to violate all the norms of body space. But on that list of general topics ready at hand was politics. In 1773, Walpole lamented, “What is England now?—A sink of Indian wealth, filled by nabobs and emptied Maccaronis! A senate sold and despised! A country overrun by horse-races! A gaming, robbing, wrangling, razing nation, without principles, genius, character or allies; the overgrown shadow of what it was!—Lord bless me, I run on like a political barber—”66 In 1783, William Cowper thought that the barber at Olney was one of the best sources of political news in town.67 Travelling in 1794, John Byng was pleased to encounter “a good inn, where there was good cream and a political barber—as barbers should be—”68

At least since Jürgen Habermas’s study of the public sphere, the coffee-house has occupied our attention as the site of political discussion.69 That’s fine as far as it goes, but it also invites skepticism. How much time did people spend in coffee-houses, anyway? and didn’t they talk politics in other settings? I want to propose that we think of the hairdresser’s shop as itself an exemplary site of political discussion: and recall the estimate that genteel contemporaries spent as much as an hour a day with a hairdresser. A June 1791 issue of the Liverpool General Advertiser affirmed that “without Newspapers, our coffee-houses, ale-houses and barbers’ shops would undergo a change next to depopulation.”70 One 1799 Rowlandson etching portrays a man in the barber’s chair, reading the London Gazette. Hungry for political news, the barber leans over and reads aloud, obliviously driving his straight razor into the nose of the hapless man, who screams in protest.71

In the aftermath of the French Revolution, political discussion had unsavory ties to atheism. Bad enough that some hairdressers chose to stay open on Sunday, to the dismay of upright Christians. A facetious 1809 poem recounted the purportedly true story of an inglorious fight between a barber and a preacher about such Sunday openings: the barber tried to shave the preacher’s rear end, the preacher bashed him on the head with Edward Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, and finally

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the barber prevailed by ramming his shaving brush into the preacher's mouth and slamming him on the head with his pewter basin.79 (Then again, some Leeds hairdressers organized to prevent anyone from doing Sabbath business.73 And Methodist hairdressers suffered financially for refusing to do business on the Sabbath.) Worse, some of them hawked and sold Sunday newspapers, a recent innovation.75 Thomas Hood's wily 1825 etching, “The Progress of Cant,” a veritable exhaustive catalogue of the day's worries and inanities, noticed this one, too: a banner hangs from the barber's shop saying, "NOBODY IS TO BE SHAVED DURING DIVINE SERVICE BY COMMAND OF THE MAGISTRACY"; but the banner is ripped, so the h in SHAVED is missing.76

Worse yet, all this political chatter seemed newly ominous after the French Revolution, for it endangered the crucial distinction between subjects and citizens central to the hierarchical vision of social order. The highly restrictive franchise demarcated the boundaries of the tiny political nation. Those under the franchise were subjects, not citizens. Their job was to offer unflagging loyalty and political deference, not to form their own views, still less to act on them. They could petition for redress of their grievances, but the petitions had to be offered as humble suits. Imagine, then, Benjamin Robert Haydon, forced to wonder what his political commitments finally amounted to when confronted with a republican barber who commented, while cutting his children's hair in 1831: “Sir, we don't want a King. We want a cheap government like America, & we will have it.”77 This is a cool and outrageously radical demand.

Edmund Burke had an incisive retort to abstract talk of the rights of man. Lingering in viciously loving detail over particular invidious characters who could become citizens, Burke spat out: "I can never be convinced that the scheme of placing the highest powers of the state in church-wardens and constables and other such officers, guided by the prudence of litigious attorneys and Jew brokers, and set in action by shameless women of the lowest condition, by keepers of hotels, taverns, and brothels, by pert apprentices, by clerks, shop-boys, hair-dressers, fiddlers, and dancers on the stage . . . can ever be put into any shape that must not be both disgraceful and destructive."78 Merely naming these contemptible characters, puncturing the Jacobins' glittering generalities and unmasking the concrete realities of democracy, is enough to show that citizenship is a noisome, even noxious, ideal.

But radical Joseph Gerrald indignantly demanded: “What have I to do with politics? Nothing. From this important question, my countrymen, so weakly and wickedly answered, have arisen all the evils which have afflicted England through a long succession of ages.”79 Like other radicals, he steadfastly addressed his readers as “Fellow Citizens.”80 So the hairdresser, still prattling away about politics after the French Revolution, could no longer be so innocent a figure. He looked too much like a bold citizen, voicing independent views and ready to act on them. One 1792 allegory on the French National Assembly, a cautionary tale, empha-
sized that citizenship meant that “not a day passed without petitions from Schoolmasters, Journalists, Artists, Barbers, Fishwomen, &c. &c.”81 And again, France was making perilously clear how sanguinary the world of citizenship might be.

Consider a story making the rounds in London clubs in the 1820s. I should note that the story is apocryphal at best: it’s about Henry Dundas’s service as Home Secretary, a role he held from 1791 to 1794, so it’s being told decades after the putative event; but for my purposes it doesn’t matter if it’s true. Anyway, the story: Dundas had to return to Edinburgh after being hassled by a mob there unhappy with his repressive policies. Waking up in his hotel, he sent for a barber. “The Torsor, who happened to be a wag,” greeted Dundas and prepared to shave him. “At length, flourishing his razor, he said in a sharp and stern voice,—‘We are much obliged to you, Mr. Dundas, for the part you lately took in London.’ ‘What!’ replied the Secretary, ‘you are a politician, I find?—I sent for a barber.’” (And what might this contrast amount to?) After shaving half of Dundas’s face, “the knight of the pewter basin” drew his razor across Dundas’s throat and rushed off into the street. Convinced he was being murdered, Dundas clutched his apron to his throat and made “a loud gugging noise.” The doctors came, hovered around, and finally persuaded him to remove the apron so they could tend to him. But his throat was intact: the hairdresser had used the back end of the razor.82

The Reform Bill of 1832 only made matters worse, further jeopardizing time-honored wisdom about faceless subjects by promoting what conservatives saw as democratic frenzies. Now, as conservatives thought, the infectious plague from across the Channel finally had erupted in full and lethal force. Warned Fraser’s: “In these perilous times, when you submit your chin to a barber never talk about politics till you ascertain his principles on these matters. It is dangerous to put one’s throat in the mercy of a man armed with a razor, especially if he be a red-hot politician; which all shavers are, without exception.”83 ‘Think about the conditions in which it never occurs to one to worry that the hairdresser, maybe a complete stranger, is holding a lethal weapon to one’s throat, and how one might learn instead to notice and fret about such matters. (Think too about why we might not applaud those who notice as paragons of prudence.) Or perhaps Fraser’s warning is hyperbole. Perhaps it’s not that one might literally have one’s throat slit, not even in the phony way Dundas did; it’s rather that a world in which a lowly hairdresser presumes to offer political views is lethal. Working on the Westminster election of 1807, Francis Place and others were taunted as “nobody, common tailors, and Barbers.... We were laughed at for our folly, and condemned for our impudence.”84 John Binns reported that Scottish lawyer Thomas Muir was sentenced to fourteen years’ transportation to Botany Bay for daring to lend Tom Paine’s Rights of Man to his hairdresser.85

In Quentin Durward, Walter Scott exhibited Louis XI with a “wily tonsor” doubling as a political adviser. Not the type to cringe before royalty, the man glared at Louis “with an expression of sarcastic contempt, which he scarce attempted to
Scott was doggedly faithful, as ever, to the historical record: Olivier le Daim in fact rose under Louis XI from barber to minister; the *parlement* would later duly reward his audacious success by executing him. Anyway, here history would repeat itself, first as farce, then as tragedy: Lord Althorp, Chancellor of the Exchequer, *John Bull* reported “in serious sober sadness,” “actually writes letters—confidential letters—to a barber at Northampton, one *sharp*—which confidential letters are read as publicly in Northampton as the confidential communications of a barber’s shop usually are.” Worse, moaned the paper, Althorp had written, “*Pray, watch my conduct, and let me know when I am wrong.*” For *John Bull*, this isn’t a commendable contact between elected official and citizen. It’s a grotesque travesty, with Althorp stupidly abasing himself—and threatening social order—by stooping to conversation on equal terms, if not to subservient pleading, with a lowly barber who ought to be a submissive subject. Not for subjects to tell ministers when they are wrong; at most, the subjects can report a perceived grievance; but it must remain up to the minister to decide what, if anything, to do about it.

I want to suggest again that we shouldn’t restrict our understanding of democracy to the soporific technical requirements of the franchise, the various schedules of the Reform Bill, the mathematical intricacies of voting schemes, and other legal rules, important though they are. The social and cultural transformations enabling a barber to advise a minister (not to mention the continuities making that noteworthy, even abhorrent) are every bit as crucial. At stake here are what we might call norms of standing and credibility: Who counts as a participant in public dialogue? Or, more generally, whom ought we listen to—and believe—and why? Equality here is a matter of epistemic authority. Take Brooke Boothby’s 1792 condemnation of Paine’s *Rights of Man*, “written with the logic of shoemakers and the metaphysics of barbers.” The sneer is supposed to be utterly devastating, to dramatize not just Paine’s idiocies but his obvious lack of standing and credibility. Or again: disgusted by Anna Barbauld’s failure, to appreciate Sir Philip Sidney, Robert Southey sputtered: “The remark of Mrs. Barbauld upon the works of such a man can be compared to nothing but the blasphemies of a Jew dealer in old clothes, or the criticisms of a French barber upon Shakspeare.” Precisely because such characters are contemptible, we need not listen to what they have to say.

Returning the compliment, Thomas Love Peacock has the virtuous Mr. Forrester reprove Mr. Feathernest (Southey, so dubbed for the money he pocketed as poet laureate) by urging the merits of the life of a barber. Feathernest is appalled: “A barber, Sir!—a man of genius turn barber!” But Forrester is adamant: “The poorest barber in the poorest borough in England, who will not sell his vote, is a much more honourable character in the estimate of moral comparison than the most self-satisfied dealer in courtly poetry, whose well-paid eulogiums of licentiousness and corruption were ever re-echoed by the ‘most sweet
voices' of hireling gazetteers and pensioned reviewers."90 Typically the poorest barber wouldn't have had the vote anyway; still, if the world of periodical reviews was as deeply corrupt as Forrester claims (and many agreed with him), the barber's views were more trustworthy.

Anyway, all that political talk drove some hairdressers into action, into radical action at that: a development easily enlisted as evidence that political talk was every bit as intoxicating for the lower orders as conservatives feared. The lists of leading radicals of the day are peppered liberally with their names; but so, too, are the lists of spies employed by the Home Office; here again hairdressers are alarmingly unpredictable shape-shifters. One of those ubiquitous spies attending meetings of the London Corresponding Society (LCS) and other radical groups told the government in 1794 that one Stiff, a hairdresser, claimed to be capable of teaching a "manual and platoon exercise" for revolutionary armed clubs.91 Another hairdresser, George Widdison, testified at the trial of Thomas Hardy that he made pikes for the Constitutional Society of Sheffield.92 Edward Gosling testified at the same trial, turning out to be not just a hairdresser but also a spy.93 John Lovett, a London hairdresser, chaired the infamous Chalk Farm meeting of 14 April 1794.94 Robert Robinson, a social climber who began as a hairdresser's apprentice and finished a Baptist minister, founded the Cambridge Society for Constitutional Information.95 Robert Lodge, part-time hairdresser, was implicated in membership in the United Britons.96 E.J. Blandford, a Spencean revolutionary, was another part-time hairdresser.97 One Lomax, a Manchester barber, was taken into custody after the insurrectionary blanket march of 1817, but was immediately released: journalist and Jacobin sympathizer Archibald Prentice was sure that he too was a spy.98

Coda: The Hairdresser Speaks

What did hairdressers themselves have to say? I want to close by examining one pamphlet. In literary terms, it's abrupt and disjointed, moving haphazardly from one theme to another, with no sustained focus or momentum; and one would need finer eyesight than I have to detect any genuine working-class eloquence in its pages. It's by the radical hairdresser we've already encountered, John Lovett. Publishing in 1793 in London, Lovett astutely adds "H.D." to his name on the title page. This semiprivate joke is a way of thumbing his nose at the conventions that led scholars to festoon their title pages with all their degrees, a move democrats saw as an illicit bid for authority: arguments, they often held, had to stand on their own merits, not on the status of the speaker. Readers might defer to John Lovett, H.D., in ignorance that his apparent degree was that of hairdresser. They'd do better to learn to ignore all those obscure abbreviations.

Lovett is a biting prophet of enlightenment and he offers a searing jeremiad:
The people have been long in ignorance, but that is beginning to disappear... learning is become more general than in former times, and the people assemble more into large towns, and by conversation diffuse knowledge through each other: by this means the rich, if they do not mend their manners, morals, and behaviour towards mankind, will be looked on at some future period with as much contempt as they now look on those in a lower sphere of life.99

Lovett reports that he had to leave the countryside, much as he loved farming, because, like many others, he was becoming desperately poor.100 Heading to the big city, he became a hairdresser. (An economist would note that the occupation has low entry costs.) And, ironically, hairdressing itself invites his condemnation:

What can be said in favour of hair-dressing? which is one of the most destructive fashions that ever was invented. By it a vast number of people are rendered useless to society, a great deal of the necessaries of life are destroyed, and cloathes in abundance.

There is many poor men that absolutely rob their families of the supports of nature through this mistaken and ridiculous pride. They will go and pay sixpence to have their head filled with flour and lard, to make it ten times more uncomfortable than it would be combed through like a farmer's, when at the same time their children are at home crying for bread.

The utility of hair-dressing is completely done away: it was invented to shew a distinction in rank, and was in use only by the higher orders of people, but now it is so far degenerated, that by taking a walk in the Park, you would not be enabled to distinguish the apprentice boy from his grace.101

No dignity in hairdressing here: the point of the enterprise is just to make pernicious status distinctions, and thanks to those apprentices, like the beardless ones noticed by the Times, the currency of hair has become counterfeit anyway. So hairdressers labor in vain toward a bad end.

Perhaps there was no dignity for Lovett, either, whose life affords one last ironic twist. We have reason to believe that he, too, was a government spy, lurking on the shadowy payroll of the Home Office under Dundas's administration. (It's tempting to surmise that Dundas himself knew of Lovett, even that he remembered him when confronting that straigtedge razor in Edinburgh; but this is probably hoping for too much.) Though he was arrested along with other LCS leaders after the Chalk Farm meeting, unlike them he wasn't indicted. He quickly disappeared, apparently moving to New York with enough money first to set up shop as a grocer and then to purchase two hotels.102 Undignified, even inglorious: but another case of successful social climbing, more testimony to the corrosive power of equality, courtesy of the Home Office.
Notes

Thanks to many friends for not quite willingly not quite suspending disbelief.

9. 35 Geo. III, c. 49. For the debate on the tax, see especially Parliamentary Register 41:68–72 (23 March 1795), 41:155–56 (30 March 1795, third reading and passage of the bill).
14. Mary Frampton, journal entry of 1791, The Journal of Mary Frampton from the Year 1779 Until the Year 1846, ed. Harriot Georgiana Mundy (London, 1885), 36.
15. James Stewart, Plocacosmos: or the Whole Art of Hair Dressing (London, 1782), 242.

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21. Horace Walpole to Earl of Strafford, 8 September 1769, Walpole's Correspondence, 35:336.
26. Samuel and Sarah Adams, The Complete Servant, Being a Practical Guide to the Peculiar Duties and Business of All Descriptions of Servants (London, 1825), 5–7 has rosters of servants for even lavish estates; none includes a hairdresser. But various recipes they offer (162–64, 168, 170–71, 247) make it clear that servants are tending to hair, and they attribute some of the responsibilities involved to the valet (362–65).
28. Byron's Bulldog: The Letters of John Cam Hobhouse to Lord Byron, ed. Peter W. Graham (Columbus, Ohio, 1984), 149 n. 2.
30. Smith, Topography, 38, mentions (and so finds noteworthy) three women hairdressers.

40 Representations


42. James Lawrence, On the Nobility of the British Gentry, or the Political Ranks and Dignities of the British Empire, Compared with Those on the Continent, in The Pamphleteer 23 (1824): 159–205, esp. 200. Lawrence reports “a similar abuse in Germany, that every barber there receives his letters addressed to him, to the noble-born” (202).


48. Ibid., act 1, 9. 49. Ibid., act 1, 11.

50. Scott, Antiquary, Waverley Novels, 6:203.


52. Burney, 3 September 1788, Diary, 1:145–46.


57. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine 20 (July 1826): 42.


59. John Bull 8 (23 March 1828): 94; italics here are added by the newspaper to single out passages for particular scorn. For more examples of pretentious advertising by hairdressers, see John Bull 8 (13 July 1828): 223; Egan, Real Life, 1:79 n.; for mockery of similar scenes from France, see Isaac D'Israeli, Domestic Anecdotes of the French Nation, during the Last Thirty Years (London, 1794), 273–74.

60. Age no. 29 (27 November 1825): 232.

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62. Richard Graves, The Spiritual Quixote; or, the Summer's Ramble of Mr. Geoffrey Wildgoose, 2d ed. (London, 1774), 1:122.
64. Scott, Fortunes of Nigel [1822], Waverley Novels, 27:178.
65. Robert Bage, Horncastle: or, Man As He Is Not, 2d ed. (London, 1799), 1:11. Note too how the malicious gossip of a “prattling hairdresser” backfires in Maria Edgeworth's “Manoeuvring” [1809], in her Tales and Novels (London, 1848), 5:80.
66. Walpole to Horace Mann, 13 July 1773, Walpole's Correspondence, 23:499.
70. Liverpool General Advertiser, 9 June 1791, quoted in Frank O'Gorman, Voters, Patrons, and Parties: The Unreformed Electoral System of Hanoverian England, 1734–1832 (Oxford, 1989), 286; note too Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine 24 (November 1828): 615. But compare: “About eighty years back, when the newspapers were only a penny a-piece, they were taken in by the Barbers for their customers to read during their waiting time” (Smith, Topography, 38); I can’t explain why Smith took this custom to be obsolete, but I suspect practices were changing (what else is new?) and there was regional variation. Compare Mitford, Our Village, 1:282 (“the shoemaker’s in a country village is now what . . . the barber’s used to be, the resort of all the male newsmongers”) with Encyclopedia Britannica, 3d ed. (Edinburgh, 1797), 3:6 s.v. “barber” (“a newspaper, with which at this day those who wait for their turn at the barber’s amuse themselves”).
73. John Bull 6 (29 October 1826): 351.
77. Haydon, 30 October 1831, Diary of . . . Haydon, 3:573. The barber’s language is evidence that Paine’s arguments from the 1790s still lingered in popular culture.
78. Edmund Burke, Letter to a Member of the National Assembly [1791], in Burke, Works, 4:4–5, silently correcting “ever” for “never.”

81. Memoirs of Hildebrand Freeman, Esq. or a Sketch of “The Rights of Man” (London, 1792), 35.


83. Fraser's 6 (December 1832): 715.


85. Recollections of the Life of John Binns: Twenty-nine Years in Europe and Fifty-three in the United States (Philadelphia, 1854), 47; for a more complete account of Muir's trial, see An Account of the Trial of Thomas Muir . . . before the High Court of Justiciary, at Edinburgh, on the 30th and 31st days of August, 1793, for Sedition, ed. James Robertson (Edinburgh, 1793).

86. Scott, Quentin Durward (1823), Waverley Novels, 31:227, 240.


88. Sir Brooke Boothby, Observations on the Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs, and on Mr Paine's Rights of Man (London, 1792), 98.


93. Trial of Hardy, 2:352–70.


100. Ibid., 5.  101. Ibid., 29–30.


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