

Chapter 2
Taste *à-la-Mode*: Consuming Foreignness, Picturing Gender
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A series of four engravings dating from 1769 constitutes one of the most blatant recapitulations of motifs from Hogarth's 'modern moral progresses' in mid-late eighteenth-century British satire.¹ Known collectively as the '*High Life*' series, the anonymous prints depict the mores of 'elite' society at different points of the day. Entitled *High Life at Noon* (Figure 2.1); *High Life in the Evening, Or, Quality Dinner Hour* (Figure 2.2); *High Life at Midnight* (Figure 2.3); and *High Life at Five in the Morning* (Figure 2.4), each rehearsing a panoply of Hogarthian devices in a highly unoriginal mélange, recycling symbolic and narrative devices alike. As in many of Hogarth's works, the prints signal the moral degeneracy of their protagonists through a series of foreign encroachments, whether through the couple's adoption of certain rituals, such as the *levée*, or their consumption of luxuries imported from abroad. Of the many foreign commodities that litter the scenes, among the most significant inclusions are the typically Hogarthian motifs of the monkey, the black pageboy, and the coffee or tea service, which appear in visual and literary representations of consumerism throughout the century.

[Insert Fig. 2.1 here – portrait]

2.1 Anonymous, *High Life at Noon* (1769). Etching with engraving on laid paper, 23 x 33 cm. Lewis Walpole Library, Connecticut.

[Insert Fig. 2.2 here – portrait]

2.2 Anonymous, *High Life in the evening, or, Quality dinner hour*, (1769). Etching with engraving on laid paper, 23 x 33 cm. Lewis Walpole Library, Connecticut.

[Insert Fig. 2.3 here – portrait]

2.3 Anonymous, *High Life at Midnight*, (1769). Etching with engraving on laid paper, 23 x 33 cm. The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[Insert Fig. 2.4 here – portrait]

2.4 Anonymous, *High Life at Five in the Morning* (1769). Etching with engraving on laid paper, 23 x 33 cm. The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

This chapter will examine the Hogarthian inheritance of such representations, specifically, the black pageboy, in relation to the explicitly gendered understanding of consumerism of eighteenth-century Britain.² Apart from being generically redolent of the “world of goods,” the black pageboy was a recurrent motif in commentary on the consumer revolution for several reasons.³ Primarily, he exemplified the idea of the “culture object,” a categorisation that refers to the objectification of animate beings such as chattel slaves, domesticated animals and even children who were both treated and depicted as a sort of living accessory.⁴ Furthermore, the conflation of the black pageboy’s African origins and his orientalisising livery suggested his nascent exoticism, or his Otherness. This quality was particularly relevant when considering the typical owner of the page as appeared in contemporary satire, whether hyper-sexualised, Jewish, female, or just generically non-normative. Whilst the manner in which Hogarth’s progresses stage such “relations of difference” has been the subject of much scholarly enquiry, the fact that his followers used

the same narrative and symbolic devices, arguably to the same end, has more often been dismissed as a form of cultural parasitism, divested of any deeper meaning.⁵

Whilst the repetitive nature of Hogarth's copyists has been much maligned, such tropes, conventions, and recurrent patterns that appear within print culture, can in fact be viewed as highly indicative of the currency that certain ideas and objects held during this period. In his 2004 article "Literature as a Historical Archive," Allan Pasco identifies the importance of "elements that are repeated, sometimes obsessively, in the same and different works by the same and different artists", which he argues "are all useful to reveal the social realities of the period."⁶ Pasco's article is particularly relevant in light of a spate of criticisms recently levelled at cultural history, labelling its methodologies as akin to "surfing through the web of representations, sampling it ad lib, and interpreting it ditto."⁷ Nevertheless, this cumulative approach to processing frequently occurring forms of representation has been staunchly defended by historians such as Pasco and Dror Wahrman, the former of whom argues that "iteration increases the likelihood that numerous writers, and by extension, readers had actually held the views, dreamed the dreams, and perceived the realities that they describe."⁸ Following this model, the black servant's cultural consequence as a forum for the discussion of contemporary consumer behaviours is clearly manifest in the frequency with which he was cited in contemporary visual and literary culture. In a recent article, Patrik Steorn has described the productive possibilities of such "migrating motifs", consistently repeated tropes that appeared throughout various genres, for the discussion of eighteenth-century print culture.⁹ Arguing that "images were not static", but in fact stimulated "a number of creative responses" as they migrated across genres, Steorn's analysis of print culture in Sweden provides interesting parallels with the movement of ideas and images that

occurred in eighteenth-century Britain.¹⁰ Taking his model from historians of print culture who have promoted the notion of “textual fluidity”, Steorn suggests that instability was also a central characteristic of eighteenth-century visuality, a culture defined by “productive acts of reception and appropriation”.¹¹ Symptomatic of the “productive instabilities” described by Steorn, the polysemic nature of the black pageboy and his representations root him firmly within the context of a repetitive cultural and visual “grammar”, characteristic of print culture during this period. The intervisuality found in images of the black pageboy can therefore be seen as manifestations of this open character of eighteenth-century representation, a context of reuse and repetition that productively situates print culture within the methodologies advocated by cultural historians.

The reuse of Hogarthian motifs is not only reflective of the artist’s legacy in eighteenth-century visual culture, but the persistent role that the global, and importantly, colonial, “world of goods” played in the criticism of consumerism. Whilst each of these three culture objects: the monkey, black page and tea or coffee service, had been imported into Britain since at least the seventeenth century, from the Americas, Africa or the Caribbean, and India respectively, their representation was subject to particular intensification after the inauguration of the so-called “consumer revolution” of the late eighteenth century.¹² Thanks to their exotic origins, these eloquently symbolic objects lend themselves particularly well to representations of female consumerism, because, like Britishness, femininity was also “closely dependent on the proximity, real or imagined, of the Other”.¹³

Adhering to John Styles and Amanda Vickery’s identification of the study of material culture as “a commitment to thinking about the social and cultural work performed by artefacts,” this chapter will examine this work through its visual mediation, primarily

through satirical prints.¹⁴ Much of the research examining gender and material culture has done so through the physical object, or consumable itself, yet satirical articulations of acquisitive patterns were essential to the construction of gendered social identity, in which a contextualising approach can offer a fruitful means of mapping gender and its construction in relation to visual representations of consumerism.¹⁵ Accordingly, the consumption of foreignness as manifest through visual tropes may be viewed not as “a fixed, historical “reality,” but an ideological process...not “the history of women and their things,” but rather a history of the *representation* of women and their things.”¹⁶ Viewing such representations not as historical reality but as a form of “fictile process,” instead enables the historian to reconcile the material history of consumption, with its cultural manifestations and legacy. Focusing on the “fictile process” of consumption thereby allows for the coexistence of often mutually exclusive accounts of female consumption during the period under discussion, in which representations of consumerism do not necessarily accord with the more artefactual evidence produced by sources such as probate inventories.¹⁷ Whether or not members of the fashionable elite were actually attempting to demonstrate their respectability through such consumerism by this point, the consistency of their imagery within the “fictile process” as constructed around consumption, suggests their sustained relevance to contemporary viewers. Consequently, the representation of an object and its translation into visual or literary satire must be viewed among the central processes in the way material culture was understood and given meaning. Emblematic of the consumption of foreignness, these objects formed a particularly apposite symbolic language by which to satirise the consumable and the consumer alike.

Like all of the prints in the series, the first, entitled *High Life at Noon*, measures 23.0 cm x 33.0 cm, and is a combination of etching with engraving on laid paper. Comprising a rectangular vignette and an accompanying poetical inscription, the prints can seem somewhat cruder than those progresses of Hogarth, which they so clearly seek to emulate.¹⁸ Lacking the virtuosity of his skill and the witticism of his narratives, they instead rely on coarse cross-hatching and the repetition of popular cultural tropes and stereotypes in order to convey an apparently simplistic comment upon the profligate lives of the elite. As the first image of the series, *High Life at Noon* firmly establishes a narrative of denigration that will build and eventually culminate throughout the remaining images of the series. Here, we are introduced to Lord and Lady Rakish, who are depicted whilst hosting an afternoon levée. Attended by servants, visitors and lovers, and ensconced within rich furnishings, these commodious settings provide the backdrop for a tale of vapid aristocracy and sexual promiscuity. In the centre of the image, Lord Rakish fondles the chest of their servant girl, who approaches him with a plate of sweet fancies. At his right, his wife entertains her own lover, the clergyman, all the while receiving a letter from yet another unseen paramour from her young black pageboy.

The next plate of the series, *High Life in the Evening, or Quality Dinner Hour*, embroils Lord and Lady Rakish in yet another narrative of illicit conquest, this time in the setting of a formal-seeming occasion, the “quality dinner hour.” Once again the couple’s extra-marital assignations are contrasted with the genteel appearance of their settings. Both Lord and Lady Rakish appear in the centre of the print, but neither gives any heed to the other. Instead, Lady Rakish’s attention is drawn to the fop who bows in front of her, his head noticeably inclined towards her exposed breast, a visual that is highly reminiscent of

Hogarth's Harlot, Moll Hackabout. Similarly, Lord Rakish clutches the arm of his latest fancy, who tellingly holds a petite primate in the crook of her arm. Central to the compositional arrangement of the image is the distinction between the titular "High Life" and the servants who surround them, many of whom process up the staircase that forms the print's background, leaving their genteel masters below. The motif of "high life below stairs" was used throughout the century to provide ironic commentary upon contemporary elite behaviour, often asserting that master was no better than servant.¹⁹

The third image of the series, *High Life at Midnight*, is another riff on a standard Hogarthian trope, presenting Lord Rakish in the role of the dissipated rake, drunken and brawling in the city. Here the central theme is the unfulfilling nature of such a lifestyle, as iterated by the print's caption. Noting that for the "*Sons of Riot*", "*their Sports no real Comfort give*", their "*Nights consum'd in public Stews / Diseases, Quarrels, Death Ensues*", the caption prefigures the series' tragic ending, featured in the culminating print *High Life at Five in the Morning*. The final print depicts the dramatic conclusion of the evening's wanton entertainment, wherein the unscheduled arrival of Lord Rakish interrupts an encounter between his wife and her lover the clergyman, who flees from an open window after an apparent altercation. This narrative of unhappy, yet fashionable marriage and consequent adultery, conflates the identities of Lord and Lady Rakish with the profligate Earl and Countess Squanderfield, William Hogarth's stock characters from his most famous "modern moral progress," *Marriage-à-la-Mode* (1743).²⁰ Like Hogarth's aristocratic couple, Lord and Lady Rakish live luxuriant and modish yet ultimately empty lives, seeking pleasure – sexual and otherwise – outside of the confines of marriage. The couple pursue this licentious

lifestyle until, as in *Marriage-à-la-Mode*, it ends with the dramatic death of one of its participants.

Aside from their narrative similarities, the *High Life* series are rife with visual allusions to several of Hogarth's moralising progresses, and include references to *Marriage-à-la-Mode*, *A Harlot's Progress* (1732), and *A Rake's Progress* (1735), as well as to Hogarth's stand-alone moralising image, *Taste in High Life* (1745), to which the title of this series owes a clear debt. Perhaps the most compelling instance of this Hogarthian intervisuality, however, is the couple's use of imported commodities as a means by which to create and sustain a veil of respectability. The role played by the black page in this first scene from *High Life* is eminently characteristic of Hogarth's active treatment of such culture-objects: presented here as Lady Rakish's fashionable attendant, dressed in orientalisering livery and acting as 'confidant' to his mistress.

It is telling that such commodities are employed in the images within the context of the pseudo-public ritual of the levée, and as such, work to highlight the couple's pretences towards cosmopolitanism. Whilst emblematic of the coercive relationship between the consumption of foreign goods and the establishment of a culture of respectability, as discussed by Woodruff D. Smith in his book, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability* (2002), the subsequent images demonstrate that such objects were also crucial to its satirical inversion.²¹ This duality is exemplified by the reappearance of two of these elements in the dramatic dénouement of the series, *High Life at Five in the Morning*, in which a monkey and a laden tea table are upset in the scene's commotion. Arguably there would be no need for the inclusion of these objects in the latter scene, as their role in the couple's evocation of respectability has been established in the first plate. Their function here, however, is

iconographically different from that of the first: the upturned tea table and fleeing monkey represent not the establishment of respectability, but its consequent loss.²² In this ironic use of the trappings of respectability – a crucial narratological arc employed in many of the modern moral progresses – the artist’s theoretical debt to Hogarth is never more present.

Examining such satirical representations therefore betrays a consistent, yet pliant, visual language, in which these objects are central. As emblems of cosmopolitan consumption, the tea equipage, the monkey and the black pageboy are remarkable for their inherent malleability, or capacity to hold multiple layers of meaning. Whether simply represented, or actively satirised, it is clear that these symbolic objects constituted a potent cultural dialectic, capable at once of portraying the consumption of foreignness, and forming an active commentary on the very same.

As Ruth Salvaggio has written, “fluidity...has come to be associated with the threat of woman as other – the danger of a potentially controlled dispersion that cannot be fixed in place, that seeps through the cracks in the overall system.”²³ Woman’s “fluid instability” may, as Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace has demonstrated, be implicitly read in cultural manifestations of female consumerism in which binaries of control and its loss, may be mapped against the seemingly concordant narratives of uncontrolled consumerism and transgressive sexual practice.²⁴ In their role as designators of respectability, the fashionable luxury occupied a similarly paradoxical position, at once highlighting and disguising contraventions of status, sexuality and gender; rendering them an appropriate means by which to signal the “fluid instability” of the female consumer.

Beyond satirical renderings of such objects, whose contrasting properties of mutability and permanency give them symbolic meaning, fluidity is also fundamental to the

concept of luxury, and consequently, the debates that surrounded it. Luxury is by nature a fluid and changing concept, redefined periodically depending on the relative balance between needs and desires. Historically, this mutability has contributed to the view of luxury as a morally problematic concept, as these changing standards have led to questions of need, overindulgence, and ultimately, the corrupting influence of luxury. This duplicity, and its projection into visual satire, allowed the black pageboy, the monkey, and the tea equipage, to function on the one hand as the proclamation of elite status, and on the other, an appropriate means to ridicule the apparent respectability of such classes. Hence, it is the paradoxical nature of these objects and their representations that imbues them with significance; on the one hand their reuse is emblematic of constancy, whilst their adaptability is suggestive of the fluidity that characterised the very nature of consumerism itself. This reading of the images, in which socio-sexual transgression is signalled by the “fluid instability” of both luxury and its female consumer, is supported reference by to Sterne in *High Life at Noon*, which attests to the various disturbances in the proper order of things that the print presents. An anthropomorphised monkey reads a sheet entitled “A Dissertation on Winding up the Clock by Tristram Shandy.” As a reference to the titular character’s unfortunate beginnings, the disruption of which set his life on a course of unfortunate events, the sheet functions as an apt textual signal for the moralising tale that is to follow.

An early example of the monkey-page-tea service device, and one characterised by the transgressive behaviour of a female consumer, is *The ladies visiting-day. A Comedy*, published by William Burnaby 1701. The play’s narrative, which may be summarised in the following couplet from its prologue – “To what strange taste of Pleasure we are grown / All countries to Admire, except our own,” is a vivid and unsympathetic portrayal of the genteel

consumption of foreign luxuries, centring on the consumptive habits of the covetous Lady Lovetoy, whose very moniker indicates her seductive and deviant nature.²⁵ When discussed by two of the play's male characters, Courtine and Polidore, the association between women and material objects becomes clear:

Courtine: But do you reckon for nothing the Glitter and Magnificence about a fine Woman? A Velvet Couch and gilded Roof, make our Devotions the more Real; and Beauty so, like a Diamond well-set, receives new Lustre.

Polidore: I laugh at'em. They may serve to amuse an idle Lover; but I hate to be with a Woman when I can't be Company, as I do to be at a Feast when I lost my Stomach; and the rustling of a rich Gown or glitter of a thousand Jewels, are not half so prevailing to make me stay, as a white Neck and fresh Complexion ...²⁶

Courtine and Polidore's exchange is emblematic of what Sara Pennell has designated one of "the chief paradoxes within early modern consumerism" – that is, the centrality that 'consuming women' have played in the subsequent historiography of the consumer revolution, given the issues over their "access to power within consumption networks" such as patronage.²⁷ Identifying the relationship between women and material culture as essentially a process of objectification, the two male discussants remove what little agency the act of consumption allows, instead comparing woman's essential nature to that of the objects she consumes, thereby providing a vision of femininity that is inseparable from the objects with which she adorns herself. Accordingly, perhaps visual representations repeatedly adhered to the trope-like conjunction of female consumer and black pageboy because the processes of consumption similarly transformed the acquisitive woman into a culture object. In this instance then, the pageboy not only signals his own objectivity, but serves to flag that of his mistress.

Whilst Polidore presents ideal femininity not as the construct or result of material culture, but quite apart from that which she consumes, Courtine endorses the perception that

a woman could be judged, and indeed encouraged judgement, by her external accoutrements. The two protagonists therefore present contrasting viewpoints on the relation between a woman's role as consumer and her suitability as the object of male devotion. In both cases however, she remains fundamentally the object of the male judgement and gaze. Despite Polidore's belief that the consumption and possession of goods should be irrelevant to the formation of identity, many contemporary literary and visual articulations work to suggest that it was indivisible from the very same. Such satires therefore facilitate the creation of judgements of respectability based upon the conspicuous behaviour of the consumer. However, as the protagonists of images such as the *High Life* series allow the culture objects in which they have invested to betray their inadequacies, such images also work to question the veracity of that judgement and the associations upon which it was based.

From an early stage in Burnaby's play, Lady Lovetoy is demonstrated to be covetous, vain, greedy, and immoral, each of which are articulated through her interactions with, and discussions of, the luxury goods with which she surrounds herself. Lady Lovetoy's exclamation that she spends "three Parts of my Revenue" upon such luxuries "and think it well bestow'd. I wonder how some People can muddle away their Money upon Houswifry, Children, Books, and Charities!" allows Burnaby to explicitly articulate the manner in which Lovetoy transgresses the tenets of her gender through her consumption.²⁸ She cares not to be a wife, nor or a mother; she is not interested in self-improvement via reading or charitable engagements, only in furnishing her obsessive acquisition. The inappropriate nature of this statement is emphasised by the response of her genteel conversant, Fulvia, who suggests that 'normal' women are only able to be so "without the Pleasure of being cheated with the Bawbles of other Countries!"²⁹ Fulvia's emphasis on the specifically exotic provenance of

Lady Lovetoy's "Bawbles" draws a direct parallel between her Ladyship's consumption of foreignness and her dubious moral outlook, providing an explicitly moralised interpretation of imported material culture and its consumption.³⁰ This process of reductive objectification, as exemplified by Courtine and Polidore's musings on women, is typical of satirical characterisations of the female consumer wherein, like Lady Lovetoy and Lady Rakish both, she becomes little more than a recyclable trope of socio-sexual transgression.

In juggling numerous suitors, both present and inferred, there is an implicit suggestion that Lady Rakish is similarly presented as calculating and decided in her betrayal. Comparatively, Lord Rakish's extra-marital affairs are presented as both amusing and opportunistic; the quick fondling of a becoming serving-wench whilst his wife's attention is elsewhere, in *High Life at Noon* is presented in a manner quite different from that of his wife's smug deception. Similarly, in *High Life in the Evening, or Quality Dinner Hour*, it is Lady Rakish's liaison with a frenchified and effeminate fop which are given centre stage, thanks to his performative bowing and her exposed breast, whilst Lord Rakish's own encounter is simply intimated at through his knowing glance and delicate touch. Even in the climatic denouement of the series, which features the inscription "*But if a DUKE must have his Punk, / And from the Bagnio ride Home Drunk, / What wonder if her wanton Grace, / Invites another in his Place?*", the prurient display of Lady Rakish's breasts, to which her husband tellingly points, assign her transgressive sexual conduct with the majority share of the blame.

In fact, Lady Rakish's 'wanton' sexuality is further stigmatized through its direct comparison with prostitution, which is alluded to via the book that lies directly beneath her, open to reveal the words "Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure". This reference to John

Cleland's *Fanny Hill, or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (c. 1749), further separates the sexual degeneracy of the series' two protagonists, in which Lord Rakish ultimately ends up the victim, whilst his wife, so fallen from her genteel social standing, is visually aligned with the sexual voracity of the common prostitute. Like the black page, the monkey and the coffee or tea service, the prostitute is a commonly recurring trope in representations of feminine consumer behaviour, yet another culture object, both consuming and consumable.³¹

Furthermore, in *High Life at Noon*, Lady Rakish is further associated with the figure of the prostitute through her visual alignment with Hogarth's famous demoiselle in the second plate of *A Harlot's Progress*. In a clear visual reference, Lady Rakish's black pageboy, designated her "Confidant" in the image's caption, approaches his mistress from the right, handing his mistress a sealed letter from a suitor. However, the look of horror that so animates the page in *A Harlot's Progress*, is replaced by one of complicity, suggesting his role in enabling this illicit encounter, with this compliance confirmed by the parrot's pronouncement that "Caesar and Pompey were both of them horned."³² As Lady Rakish's behaviour thrusts her in to the realm of improper femininity, so too does her cuckolding question the masculinity of her ignorant husband presenting him as weak, ignorant and unable to control his profligate wife.

By filling the physical frisson encouraged by the emblematically empty hands of Hogarth's slave with a suggestively placed letter, the black page (and thereby the couple's consumption of foreign commodities), is more evidently implicated in a specifically transgressive narrative of sexual conduct, one that threatens the veneer of respectability the couple has been so careful to craft. Like the broken porcelain tea service and déshabillé appearance of Moll, here the accoutrements of politeness are exploited to a subversive end, employed to highlight the loss of gentility rather than functioning towards its maintenance.

In her consumption of foreignness, Lady Rakish therefore constitutes a re-visioning of Hogarth's own Harlot, in which the rituals and objects which once stood for genteel respectability, are reduced to the creation of a mere semblance of the same. The Harlot's general use of these accoutrements reveals her desire to articulate her new found social status, yet it is the specific means by which she chooses to do this that is most revealing; with monkey, tea service and page boy alike assuming the cachet of the foreign, the exotic, and therefore, the elite. Whilst ultimately the Harlot would never acquire the respectability she desires, her adulterous behaviour seeing her relegated once more to the status of common prostitute, she can at least seek to emulate it via her consumption of these fashionable exotics. Ultimately, however, her adulterous encounter is betrayed by the very accoutrements that she employed to create her veneer of respectability; her tea-table overturns, her monkey recoils, her nipple slips tellingly from her elaborate silk gown; all the while her wide-eyed black servant boy gasps in horror when confronted by his mistress' socially dangerous encounter. In a further similarity between the works, each suggests that its male protagonist has been taken for a fool. Whilst both the Harlot's Jewish keeper and Lord Rakish are equally voracious consumers of luxury goods, they are not subjected to the same stinging critique as that faced by their female counterparts. In each case it is *her* actions that impact upon his masculinity, *her* cuckolding that renders him less than a man, and as such it is female sexual accountability that is paramount to the respective narratives.

As with the appearance of the black page in *High Life at Noon*, the anonymous print *One of the Tribe of Levi going to Breakfast with a young Christian* (Figure 2.5), published by Sayer & Bennett in 1778, presents a subversion of the slave's role in *A Harlot's Progress*. The print takes its heed from yet another Hogarthian derivation, a line in *The Harlot's*

Progress: Being the Life of the noted Moll Hackabout (1753), an anonymous companion poem written to accompany Hogarth's printed series, which depicts "The Son of Levi met'em ready."³³ Like the wealthy Jew who has become the Harlot's keeper, the Jewish suitor as depicted in this image, demonstrates his newly established respectability via his consumption of foreign and imported goods, including most prominently, his richly attired black servant. Yet his careful attempt at the construction of politeness is fractured by the arrival of a prostitute, who reveals that these same accoutrements in fact only mask his perversity. Neither the Jew's conspicuously consumed new wealth, nor the prostitute's illicit earnings, are worthy of the trappings in which they are displayed; and as such the combined effect of these commodities is that of a disconcerting sense of impropriety. Here, the black slave plays a central role in the facilitation of the encounter between the Jewish client and prostitute; he invitingly draws back the chair at his master's right hand, and his own expectant face mirrors the licentious visage of his keeper. Yet at the same time, he is explicitly identified as one of the consumables by which the Jew demonstrates his new found social status; at once maintaining the illusion of respectability, but whose engagement with such licentious behaviour threatens to tear it down.

[Insert Fig. 2.5 here – portrait]

2.5 Anonymous, *One of the Tribe of Levi going to Breakfast with a young Christian* (1778). Published by Sayer & Bennett, London. Mezzotint, 5.3 x 35.3 cm. British Museum, London.

Like the black page, representations of culture objects may be figured as the very embodiment of consumer revolution and the debates that surrounded it – functioning, to use Kowaleski-Wallace's phraseology, to reveal "what consumption means," particularly in relation to the female consumer, who was "constructed to carry the weight about the meaning

of consumption.”³⁴ The images discussed, whether visual or literary, centre on the trope of the female consumer whose consumptive practices allow her to transgress the boundaries of femininity, whether social or sexual. Whilst these accoutrements allow the consumer to construct her identity, it is always identifiable as exactly that: a construct. Whether through passive presence within the image, or an active participation in her transgressive behaviour, it is the commodity that belies her true nature as residing below a luxuriant veneer. In Timothy Lovell’s discussion of female consumption and its relation to domesticity, he notes that it was because “women were pivotal in the creation and transmission of culture that they were such anxious objects of regulation and surveillance.”³⁵ Hence, it was the intrinsic visibility of the female engagement with exotic luxuries, as demonstrated by their conspicuous consumption in sites of sociability such as the tea table or china cabinet, which rendered luxury and consumer alike the object of regulation. Nevertheless, the image of the rapacious female consumer, particularly its durability, is one that sits uncomfortably with the wider character of the Enlightenment. The antagonism that continued to face female consumerism is in fact remarkably anti-Enlightenment, rooted as it was in an ancient conception of luxury that even recent debate was not able to totally overcome. Though evocative of the female engagement with Britain’s burgeoning age of imperialism, these objects were in fact emblematic of the passivity of the female consumer, embroiled in an international world of goods that was facilitated by the masculine-dominated spheres of trade and exploration. As such, the representation of these objects is reflective of many of the paradoxes inherent to very notion of the consumer revolution itself: enlightened objects pictured in a decidedly anti-Enlightened manner.

The constant employment of a Hogarthian satirical mode in order to denounce the consumption of fashionable and foreign luxuries may be viewed as a continuation of many of the traditional ambivalences posed against luxury itself. In the eighteenth century, the traditional tenets of the luxury debate were subsumed into a specifically cosmopolitan language of transgressive behaviour, where the flouting of sexual and gendered norms could be specifically read against a protagonist's voracious and luxuriant consumerism. In accordance with this inherently moralised cultural conception of luxury, the manner by which satirists chose to articulate these concerns, similarly adopted an unchanging visual and symbolic language. It was wholly appropriate that these fears were expressed via the use of consciously ambiguous modes and symbolism – at once *both* and *neither* feminine nor masculine, neither respectable nor unrespectable exclusively. It is these problematic and amorphous qualities that made such objects as the monkey, page and tea service the perfect signifiers for representing culturally threatening or unstable concepts and figures. Given this malleability, this propensity for slippage, there could be no more appropriate visual language in which to articulate the implicit and explicit issues raised by the consumption of luxury – and specifically foreign luxury – than such objectifications. As luxury was in itself an inherently mutable concept it was totally apt that in visual satire, its signifying elements were accordingly fluid semantic carriers.

Though visual manifestations of the consumption of foreign goods and affectations have primarily been examined through Hogarth's original works, consideration of his legacy through this comparatively liminal and rarely discussed body of satirical work, reveals the persistence of attitudes towards elite consumerism that his work embodies. The anonymous engravings *High Life at Noon* and *High Life at Five in the Morning* present perfect

exemplars of the form and function of the symbolic device of page, monkey and tea or coffee equipage. By including these culture objects in two directly contrasting images, the series highlights the perfect capacity of each to represent two contrasting ideas: the making of respectability and its destruction. Despite a gap of nearly a half-century between the respective executions of the *High Life* series and Hogarth's own images, the later series proves that the material objects Hogarth chose to express his disdain for the false veneer of respectability were *still* the most powerful and evocative means by which to do so.

These images present a compelling case study not in spite of their fundamentally emulative nature, but because of it. Regardless of the derivative nature of their imagery, the value of the *High Life* series lies in its imitation of Hogarth's earlier works. As in their knowing reference to *Tristram Shandy*, itself a work accused of plagiarism, these images constitute witty recapitulations of Hogarth, as well as a knowing comment on the processes of translation and replication that constituted the contemporary print market.³⁶ As a material artefact that conveys widely held perceptions of other artefacts, these Hogarthian references stress the prints' own materiality as an object commenting on its own objecthood, a shrewd amalgamation of meaning and medium. These images are much more than passive representations of worn-out tropes of consumerism. In fact, both these prints and the objects portrayed in them actively participate in the fictile process that surrounded the consumer revolution, working to construct and problematize notions of luxury, sexuality and, ultimately, gender itself.

¹ For a discussion of graphic satire and contemporary print culture, see Mark Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference: Graphic Satire in the Age of Hogarth*, 1st edn. (Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1999). Also useful is Joseph Monteyne's recent publication, *From Still Life to Screen: Print Culture, Display, and the Materiality of the Image in Eighteenth-Century London*, 1st edn. (Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2013).

² Recent discussions of representations of slavery include Marcia Pointon's chapter 'Slavery and the Possibilities of Portraiture', *Portrayal: and the Search for Identity*, 1st edn. (Reaktion Books, London, 2013), 47-74; and Catherine Molineux's *Faces of Perfect Ebony: Encountering Slavery in Imperial Britain*, 1st edn. (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2012).

³ The phrase "world of goods" is taken from the co-edited volume by John Brewer and Roy Porter, *Consumption and the World of Goods*, 1st edn. (Routledge, Abingdon, 1993).

⁴ The phrase is taken from David Dabydeen's discussion of black chattel slavery in D. Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth-Century British Art*, 1st edn. (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1987), pp. 127-128. On the visual culture of the black page, see A. Rosenthal, 'Visceral Culture: Blushing and the Legibility of Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century British Portraiture', *Art History*, (September, 2004), pp. 563-592; and S. Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, 1st edn. (Princeton University Press, NJ, 2011).

⁵ B. Fort & A. Rosenthal, (eds.) *The Other Hogarth: Aesthetics of Difference*, 1st edn. (Princeton University Press, Princeton & Oxford, 2001), p. 4. On the supposedly parasitical nature of Hogarth's copyists, see R. Paulson, *Hogarth Vol. 1: 'The Modern Moral Subject' 1697-1732*, (The Lutterworth Press, Cambridge, 1991), 311-12.

⁶ A. H. Pasco, 'Literature as Historical Archive', *New Literary History*, 35:3, (Summer, 2004), 387.

⁷ P. Mandler, 'The Problem with Cultural History', *Cultural and Social History*, 1 (2004), 95.

⁸ Pasco, (2004), 387. For Wahrman's defence of cultural history, see D. Wahrman, 'Change and the Corporeal in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Gender History: Or, Can Cultural History be Rigorous?', *Gender & History*, 20:3, (November, 2008), 584-602.

⁹ P. Steorn, 'Migrating Motifs and Productive Instabilities: Images of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century Swedish Print Culture', *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History*, 82:3, (2013), 219-234.

¹⁰ Steorn, (2013), 219.

¹¹ Steorn, (2013), 220.

¹² For the ‘consumer revolution’ see N. McKendrick ‘Introduction’, in N. McKendrick, J. Brewer, & J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialisation of Eighteenth-Century England*, 1st edn. (Europa Publications Limited, London, 1982), 1. For a critique of the McKendrick’s notion, see J. Brewer, ‘The Error of our Ways: Historians and the Birth of Consumer Society’. Paper presented at the Cultures of Consumption programme, The Royal Society, London, 23 September 2003.

¹³ L. Colley, ‘Britishness and Otherness: An Argument’, *Journal of British Studies*, 31:4, (Oct., 1992), 327

¹⁴ J. Styles & A. Vickery, ‘Introduction’ in J. Styles & A. Vickery, *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830*, 1st edn. (Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2006), 21.

¹⁵ E. Kowaleski-Wallace, ‘Women, China and Consumer Culture in Eighteenth-Century England’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29:2, (1996), 154. For a more artefactual approach, see Lorna Weatherill’s work on gender and domestic consumer behaviour as reconstructed from probate inventories in L. Weatherill, ‘A possession of one’s own: women and consumer behaviour in England, 1660-1760’, *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1986), 131-56.

¹⁶ Kowaleski-Wallace, (1996), 154.

¹⁷ Kowaleski-Wallace, (1996), 154.

¹⁸ As noted by Cindy McCreery of *Marriage-à-la-Mode*, Hogarth’s progresses were consistently reprinted, copied and advertised throughout the eighteenth-century, giving the author of the *High Life* series ample opportunity to encounter his works. C. McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze: Prints of Women in Late Eighteenth-Century England*, 1st edn. (Oxford University Press, 2004), 153.

¹⁹ For example, see Isaac Cruikshank, *Loo in the kitchen, or, High life below stairs*, 1799, print on laid paper, etching, hand-coloured, 34.0 x 48.0 cm (Lewis Walpole Library, Connecticut); James Bretherton, *High life below stairs: as it was presented at Cushiobury, the seat of the Earl of Essex*, 1774, print on laid paper, etching and drypoint, 26.1 x 28.6 cm (Lewis Walpole Library, Connecticut); and William Humphrey, *High life below stairs, or, Mungo addressing him to my lady’s maid*, 1772, print on laid paper, mezzotint, 35.0 x 25.0 cm (Lewis Walpole Library, Connecticut). Significantly, each of these prints includes a black page as part of the satirical equipage that comprises the image, attesting to the semantic significance of this figure in contemporary print culture.

²⁰ For an introduction to Hogarth's 'modern moral progresses', see C. Riding, 'The Harlot and the Rake', in M. Hallett & C. Riding, *Hogarth*, 1st edn. (Tate Publishing, London, 2007), 73-80. For a more in-depth discussion of these series, see the essays in B. Fort & A. Rosenthal, eds. *The Other Hogarth: Aesthetics of Difference*, 1st edn. (Princeton University Press, Princeton & Oxford, 2001).

²¹ On the relationship between consumption and the demonstration of respectability, see Woodruff D. Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability 1600-1800*, 1st edn. (Routledge, Abingdon, 2002).

²² Ann Smart Martin has written at length on the significance of the tea table, noting that whilst 'it was considered sturdy and safe for harbouring expensive valuables', 'the tea table could tip and overturn to chaos'. A. Smart Martin, 'Tea Tables Overturned: Rituals of Power and Place in Colonial America', in D. Goodman & K. Norberg, eds. *Furnishing the Eighteenth Century: What Furniture can tell us about the European and American Past*, 1st edn. (Routledge, New York & Abingdon, 2007), 169.

²³ R. Salvaggio, *Enlightened Absences: Neoclassical Figurations of the Feminine*, 1st edn. (University of Illinois Press, Illinois, 1988), 14.

²⁴ E. Kowaleski-Wallace, (1996), 39.

²⁵ W. Burnaby, *The ladies visiting-day. A comedy*, 1st edn. (Peter Buck, London, 1701), 4.

²⁶ Burnaby, (1701), 7.

²⁷ S. Pennell, 'Consumption and Consumerism in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal*, 42, (1999), 554.

²⁸ Burnaby, (1701), 7.

²⁹ Burnaby's reference to Fulvia here is undoubtedly a nod to the Roman aristocrat Fulvia Flacca Bambula (c. 80-43 BC), who was infamous for her political ambitions and her three husbands, one of whom was Marc Anthony. In her austerity and reserve, Fulvia provides a provocative foil to Lady Lovetoy's reckless spending.

³⁰ Burnaby, (1701), 7.

³¹ For the visual culture of the prostitute, see S. Carter, *Purchasing Power: Representing Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century English Popular Print Culture*, 1st edn. (Ashgate, 2004).

³² Apart from its classical roots, this dictum is in fact a reference to the proliferate use of the name Pompey for black chattel slaves, which as Peter Fryer notes, 'by the 1750s had virtually become a generic terms for a black servant'. P. Fryer, *Staying power: the history of black people in Britain*, 1st edn. (Pluto Press, London, 1984),

23. Significantly, a black page is also present in *High life at five in the evening*, standing just to the left of his mistress's suitor. Once again, his presence signals if not his own complicity in the affair, at least his knowledge of its occurrence and his consequent association with such illicit encounters.

³³ Anon, *The Harlot's Progress: Being the Life of the noted Moll Hackabout*, 1st edn. (J. Dowson, London, 1753), 24.

³⁴ Kowaleski-Wallace, (1996), 165.

³⁵ T. Lovell, 'Subjective Powers? Consumption, the reading public, and domestic women in early eighteenth-century England', in A. Bermingham & J. Brewer, eds. *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text*, 32.

³⁶ For a contemporary discussion of plagiarism within *Tristram Shandy*, see J. Ferriar, *Illustrations of Sterne*, 1st edn. (London, 1798), 181.