

A SCHOLARLY CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ: GEORGE WILSON
AND THE ENGRAVED FAN LEAF DESIGN, 1795-1801

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ABSTRACT

This research thesis offers a small but comprehensive scholarly catalogue raisonné of the surviving unmounted fan leaves designed and printed by the late eighteenth-century English fan leaf engraver, George Wilson (active before 1795-after 1801). Wilson's extant output of nineteen fan leaf engravings published in London now exist in storage within the Prints and Drawing Department of the British Museum, after the receipt of two bequests from Lady Charlotte Schreiber (1812-1895) in the late nineteenth century. The individual fan leaf designs discussed in this catalogue raisonné include a number of reprinted fan leaves from the same engraving design.

There follows a chronological catalogue listing, and discussion of, all the different fan leaves designed by Wilson, collected by Lady Schreiber and subsequently bequeathed to the British Museum. The variety of subject matter depicted on these fan leaf designs underscore the differing types of themes Wilson engaged with in his engraved production. Analysis of the three main areas of Wilson's fan leaf design work, female 'advisory' fan leaves, overtly satirical, and nationalistic fan leaves, reveal that Wilson's fan leaf imagery engaged, to a great extent, with cultural concerns about the turbulences of late eighteenth-century life in London, as well as effectively modernising aesthetic precedents and contemporary graphic design. In particular, it becomes apparent that Wilson's fan leaves effectively engage with late eighteenth-century feminine pre-occupations of choosing the right moral path to happiness, moderation in daily life, marriage and bearing children, in addition to illustrating the perceived multitude of follies translated from contemporary literary and pictorial sources. One of the predominant concerns in his catalogue of work is revealed to be the age old theme of the cycle of birth, reproduction and death, alongside a sustained pictorial focus upon feminine concerns and pre-occupations.

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PREFACE

This research thesis has evolved out of ten years undergraduate and postgraduate research of, and interest in, the materiality and design of the eighteenth-century

British fan leaf. This interest primarily evolved when studying at Nottingham University for a first B.A degree in Art History, concentrating upon the art work produced by artists working in London and their relationship to the surrounding cultural and social milieu, further expanded upon in a second undergraduate degree in Illustration at Camberwell College of Art. Later, I focused more closely upon this particular issue when studying for a taught M.A in Art Gallery and Museum Studies at Manchester University and my growing interest in mid to late eighteenth-century British art and ephemera. In particular, I became very interested relationship between eighteenth-century cultural pre-occupations and concerns and particular novel ephemeral artwork produced in this era, especially in London and its surrounding vicinities. In the course of this research, I developed an interest in the late eighteenth-century fan leaf as a mobile site of both aesthetic innovation and cultural commentary whilst viewing various fan leaves at institutes such as The Fan Museum at Greenwich, as well as the large collection of fan leaves stored at the British Museum.

After beginning the process of filtering through a number of British eighteenth-century fan leaf designs and first contemplating producing a chronology of sorts of British fan leaves over the entirety of the eighteenth century I then settled upon the idea of analysing more closely the extraordinary and eye-catching examples of surviving fan leaf designs I viewed by the British fan leaf designer George Wilson (active before 1795-after 1801), stored in the Prints and Drawing department of the British Museum. All Wilson's fan leaves were bequeathed by the nineteenth-century collector, Lady Charlotte Schreiber, and illustrate an extraordinary level of engagement with, and extension of, aesthetic and literary developments that evolved in the specific cultural context of the last decade of the eighteenth century. I felt that the development of style and narrative subject matter demonstrated by Wilson's collective of fan leaves could best be shown by way of a scholarly catalogue that can begin to shine a small light on this unusually gifted fan maker and his development of fan leaf design into both beautiful work of arts and aesthetic snapshots of eighteenth-century cultural concerns, interests, printerly developments and feminine pre-occupations, which I hope is imparted within this research thesis.

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Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Mark Hallett, Head of the Art History department at the University of York, as well as the staff working in the Prints and Drawing Department at the British Museum whilst I was researching

George Wilson's fan leaf collection in storage, both for their help in providing information upon the fan leaves themselves and their collector Lady Charlotte Schreiber and also for their aid in retrieving the unmounted fan leaves from storage for me to view.

Secondary, I would like to thank Helene Alexander, Director of the Fan Museum in Greenwich, Greater London, whom I first interviewed when conducting research for my M.A in Art Gallery and Museum Studies and whose collection of fan leaf designs and interpretive display I have visited on numerous occasions over the past three years. This museum still amazes me with its uniqueness and scholarly approach to offering a historical context and narrative to the evolution of fan design and materiality over the centuries.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that I have not presented this body of research work before in any format and all work is my own unless indicated by citations in the text.

INTRODUCTION

GEORGE WILSON

The fans of the English fan leaf engraver and designer George Wilson (active before 1795-after 1801) were collected, along with many others, by Lady Charlotte Elizabeth Schreiber (1812-1895) who, during her life time, became the greatest collector of mounted and unmounted fan leaves in Britain. Having first married a Welshman called John Guest in 1833, Charlotte, after his death, married the Welsh academic and M.P Charles Schreiber. Together, the Schreibers started to amass a vast collection of ceramics and fans. This was a collection that another son, Montague Guest, observed was built up by Lady Schreiber while ‘searching high and low, through Europe and abroad; France, Holland, Germany, Spain, Italy, Turkey, all were ransacked; she left no stone unturned, no difficulty, discomfort, fatigue, or hardship of travel daunted her’.¹ Lady Schreiber continued to amass her collection well into her late seventies, and in 1885 her complete catalogue was presented to the British Museum, bound in fifty separate volumes. In 1887, she worked with Augustus Franks of the British Museum to publish her collection. A book on English fans, entitled *Fans and Fan Leaves: English*, appeared in 1888; this was followed two years later, in 1890, by a volume on European fans, *Fans and Fan Leaves: Foreign*.²

In 1893, Lionel Cust, a curatorial assistant in the Prints and Drawings Department of the British Museum produced the first professional catalogue of Lady Schreiber’s

¹ Marjorie Caygill, *Treasures of the British Museum*, London: British Museum Press: 2000: 4.

² Lady Charlotte Schreiber, *Lady Charlotte. Fans and Fan Leaves: English*, 1: London: British Museum Press: 1888-1890: 1-2.

collection, entitled the *Catalogue of the Collection of Fans and Fan Leaves presented to the Trustees of the British Museum by the Lady Charlotte Schreiber*. A glance through Cust's catalogue gives some indication of the variety of fan leaf subject matter Lady Schreiber collected during her life. The catalogue entries include fan leaves with titles such as *The Swing; Tarquin and the Sibyl; The Theft of Cupid's Bow; Mother and Children; Music; The School for Scandal; The Shepherdess and Her Lover; Scene from "Twelfth Night"*, and *Conundrums*.³ The eclectic and inventive nature of Wilson's own fan leafs can be seen to fit in very well with Lady Schreiber's own wide-ranging interests as a fan collector.

The variety of fan leaf print design carried out at Wilson's workshop, based in St. Martin's Lane, can be also seen to correlate with a broader topography of print culture and fan manufacture, mainly produced along London's Aldersgate Street and Golden Lane Estate, in the latter half of the eighteenth century. For instance, Wilson's medley fan leaf entitled *The World Grown Odd and Crazy or the Folly of Man* (see catalogue IX) expresses similar engraving techniques, playful aesthetic composition, and topical concerns, to that of the celebrated 'Conundrum' fan leaf design engraved by the London based fan maker John Cock in 1791 (examples of which were also collected by Lady Schreiber), used by the German Royalty to pass messages. Cock's career as a profitable, and well-known, fan maker, in the last few decades of the eighteenth century, can be said to represent somewhat of an archetypal career path for this particular kind of craftsman; seeming solely to focus upon engraving and publishing his own fan leaf designs and, in 1780, dually elected

³ Lionel Cust, *Catalogue of the collection of fans and fan-leaves presented to the British Museum by Lady Charlotte Schreiber*, London: Longman and Co.: 1893: 104-110.

a Master of the Worshipful Company of Fan Makers for eleven years, becoming one of its most prominent members. The London based Worshipful Company of Fan Makers was incorporated by the Royal Charter of Queen Anne in 1709, and, although Wilson is not noted among its members, lists several Huguenot fan leaf makers, such as Francis Chassereau jnr, who also ran his own stationer's business on Hanover Street in Long Acre, during the mid eighteenth century.

LATE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LONDON BASED PUBLISHERS OF FAN LEAVES

The engraved fan, and the industry that produced the 'little engines', discussed by authors like Soame Jenyns, constituted one small but fascinating element within London's visual and graphic cultures throughout the entirety of the eighteenth century.⁴ Even if we cast a cursory glance across street maps of central London from the period, the name 'Fanns Alley' – a street that ran east out of Aldersgate Street to Golden Lane, then located within the Borough of Finsbury (now the Borough of Islington), recorded in Olgivy and Mather's 1677 map of London, housing many of the city's fan makers – gives us an immediate sense of the presence of the fan leaf industry, and its products, located within the urban environment. Many immigrant families involved in fan production, particularly Huguenot fan makers, settled along the length of this street, attracted, in part, by the 'non-conformist' atmosphere first created by earlier communities of silk and textile weavers, which also located them

⁴ Soame Jenyns, *The Art of Dancing*, London: 1726: 20.

near to the Common Hall where the Worshipful Company of Fan Makers regularly met.⁵

Wilson himself was part of a now largely obscure collective of eighteenth-century London-based fan makers. His business was located at 108, St. Martin's Lane, in the centre of the city. Meanwhile, his works were entered and exhibited regularly at Stationers' Hall, an ancient Livery Hall of the Old Company of London Stationers. Wilson can also be assumed to have been a member of the Worshipful Company of Fan Makers, which was integrated in 1709 and located at 70 Fann Street. Wilson collaborated with other engravers and printers who specialised in printing fan leaf designs, figures such as the fan maker Cock, Joseph Read, and Sarah Ashton. Ashton, in particular, worked closely with Wilson in the publishing of many of his fan leaf designs – pointed up by the inclusion of the humorous line '*...by S.A Professor of Physiognomy & Corrector of the Heart*' in the lyrical verses placed in the centre of *The Quiz Club* fan leaf (see catalogue X) that allude to the initials of Sarah Ashton – and was a very prominent female publisher of fan leaves in the mid to late eighteenth century. She was admitted in 1770 into The Worshipful Company of Fan Makers as she carried on the printing business in Little Britain, near St. Paul's Churchyard, after her husband died. Ashton published at least 13 engraved fan designs, of which the two printed versions of *Shakespeare's Seven Ages* (see catalogue VI), are featured in this particular catalogue. On occasion, publishers such as Read and Ashton issued Wilson's fan leaf designs themselves, while Wilson

⁵ [Anon], 'History of Stationers' Hall', www.stationers-hall-events.co.uk :2.

himself sometimes partook in the business of publishing his designs, such as *The Ladies Bill of Fare, or a Copious Collection of Beaux* (see catalogue I).⁶

The presence of the objects such figures published in a wider graphic culture is usefully registered in the engraved trade card for Mrs Dorothy Mercier's print and stationary shop entitled *Print seller and Stationer* (Fig. 1), from 1770. This serves as a beautifully illustrated graphic advertisement offering a highly-detailed depiction of the interior of Mrs Mercier's shop in Windmill Street, off Golden Square in central London – a shop which, as the print's caption explains, also sold fans. Other notable late eighteenth-century fan leaf shops included Martha Gamble's fan shop, located at the Golden Fan in St. Martin's Court, which sold political prints and mounted fan leaves engraved after a number of William Hogarth's artworks, including *A Harlot's Progress* and *A Midnight Modern Conversation*.

WILSON AS INNOVATOR

Wilson's fan leaf engravings included in this catalogue raisonné can be seen to build upon traditional iconographies engraved on the fan leaves published in the second half of the eighteenth century, which typically included romantic landscape scenes, featuring mythological figures like *Bacchus and Ariadne*, historical, political, as well as satirical subject matter that focused on the humorous follies of man, among many

⁶ Angela Rosenthal, 'Unfolding Gender: Women and the "Secret Sign Language of Fans in Hogarth's Work' in Bernadette Fort and Angela Rosenthal (eds), *The Other Hogarth: Aesthetics of Difference*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press: 2001: 125.

others. In particular, a number of Wilson's fan leaf designs, such as *The World Grown Odd and Crazy or the Folly of Man* and *The Ladies Bill of Fare, or a Copious Collection of Beaux*, extend the practise of disseminating traditional satirical print work through Wilson's skilful use of engraving techniques and adaption of established narrative illustration format to suit the confines of the fan leaf shape. Many fan leaf designs were copied directly from well-known early to mid eighteenth century satirical print narrative series, like that of Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress*, in order to transform these fan leaves into amusing artwork of sorts, sold in large numbers at places like Aldermary Church-Yard in Covent Garden and at Stationer's Hall.

In contrast, a number of English fan leaf designs printed between the 1750s and 1790s illustrate popular topographical subject matter, like that of Ranelagh Gardens – many fan leaf prints copying a version of this scene first painted by Canaletto, now lost – alongside other such 'souvenir' and commemorative fan leaf designs a focus on 'polite' subject matter. This genre of eighteenth-century fan leaf design regularly included the likes of topographical illustrations (such as Esther House in Surrey) and decorative allegorical themes as eclectic as that of George III's recovery from serious illness in 1789, advertised less as throw-away ephemeral objects rather as exquisite miniature works of art, designed for a period of longevity if mounted and framed.⁷ Wilson's *The United Sisters* (see catalogue XI), a large hand-coloured allegorical commemorative fan leaf design printed on silk, can be seen to fit neatly within such

⁷ Helene Alexander, *Fans*, London: Shire Publications Limited: 2002: 51.

a category, concerned, as it was, with at promoting itself as a novel form of ‘high art’, worthy of scholarly attention and display in the same manner as the more permanent medium of oil on canvas might normally warranted.

THE FAN LEAF AS A MATERIAL OBJECT

It appears Wilson specialised exclusively in fan leaf engraving, alongside a number of émigré eighteenth-century French fan makers who, like Wilson, concentrated upon designing engraved, hand-colour tinted, and hand painted fan leaf design in this more discrete area of print manufacture located within the capital. A few notable engravers and publishers, like Cock, produced both satirical prints and engraved fan leaf designs for sale, highlighting the strong link between many common mid to late eighteenth-century fan leaf designs and popular, well-circulated, satirical print work produced in the capital.

Interestingly, Wilson may well have intended a number of his engraved fan leaf designs to be mounted and framed in a similar manner to that which some sizable satirical prints would have been. *The World Grown Odd and Crazy or the Folly of Man*’s large size, skilful blend of engraving, etching and aquatint, combined with its elegant italicised text, suggests its attraction, and possible functionality, as a framed work of art for a collective of companions to view and discuss. Similarly, the thick paper board used as a medium on which to print one version of *The Female Seven Ages* (see catalogue VII.ii), aligned with the painted gold-rim applied around the

middle section of its fan leaf shape, confirms that this particular print would have been best-suited for framing and viewing.

Additionally, the contrasting, yet complimentary, themed narratives of male and female *Seven Ages* (see catalogue VI and VII), suggest that they were intended to be mounted double sided so as to allow a lady to view the contrasting narratives of men and women for one's amusement and contemplation when alone, and also, perhaps, when out and able to watch other people's actions and interactions with each other.

Other fan leaves designed by Wilson, *The United Sisters* being an obvious example, were intended to be displayed with some semblance of semi-permanence due to their expensive materiality, highly-finished hand-tinted imagery and very large size. Moreover, *The United Sisters* exhibits three punched hole marks either side of its surface that suggest the fan leaf was once mounted into a frame and exhibited on a wall, or placed inside a glass frame, so as to show the exquisite imagery of this 'souvenir' to best effect, as well as preserve a superior fan leaf design and delicate materiality of form for posterity.

FANS IN THE CULTURAL AND LITERARY CONTEXT OF LATE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LONDON

'What daring Bard shall e'er to tell attempt
The powers that in this little engine dwell?
Its motions, charms and arts?

Its shake triumphant, its virtuous clap
Its angry flutter, and wanton tap'⁸.

Jenyns' verses, written in his manual *The Art of Dancing*, first published in 1726, provide us with a good introduction to the multitudinous virtues of the British reticulated mounted fan leaf. The fans which such figures as Wilson designed and published were ubiquitous features of fashionable life. As Edith Standen has pointed out, the novelty and convenience of the folding fan first led to its adoption within British middle and upper-class female society in the early decades of the eighteenth century.⁹ First imported from Asia and then mass-produced within Britain itself, by the middle of the eighteenth century the acquirement of a folding fan as an obligatory accoutrement could not be accounted for merely because of its functional use. A glance at Henry Crouch's *A Complete View of the British Customs*, compiled in 1753 as an inventory of all merchandise imported to London from overseas for that year in order to calculate portage tax, indicates the level of trade in fans in this era. The list counts '[among] one hundred weight of Elephant teeth, a thousand tips of horns...[and] a Large Load of fanns'¹⁰. Similarly, *The Daily Journal* reported on the 20 May 1721 that the 'Demand [for printed fans] is become so great, that the Ladies cannot be supplied with them fast enough...'¹¹

⁸ Jenyns, 1726: 20.

⁹ Edith Standen, 'Instruments for Agitating the Air', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 23: 7: 1965: 243.

¹⁰ Henry Crouch, *A Complete View of the British Customs*, London: 1753: 409.

¹¹ Rosenthal, 'Unfolding Gender: Women and the "Secret Sign Language of Fans in Hogarth's Work': 123.

The visual ubiquity of the eighteenth-century English folding fan leaf soon saw it becoming a subject discussed by poets, dramatists and cultural commentators. Chief among their preoccupations was the flirtatious fluttering for which such objects were – it was said – regularly used. Charles Francis Bandini's fan leaf design entitled *The Fanology or Ladies' Conversation Fan* (Fig. 2), first published in 1797 by William Cooke at Number 42 Pall Mall, provides us with a useful means with which to begin to analyse the instructions and motions of the mounted fan leaf in the hands of a proficient owner.

Bandini declares that, 'The telegraph of Cupid is in this fan/ Though you should find, suspect no wrong;/ Tis but a simple and diverting plan/ For Ladies to chit-chat and hold the tongue'¹². Looking more closely at this fan leaf design, the text placed below the title text, *Rudiments of Fanology*, positioned to the left hand side of the fan leaf, gives clear advice as to the methodology of employing the fan leaf for communication:

The Art of Conversing with the Fan consists in printing out the Letters of the Alphabet or even Words phrases & full periods by some peculiar motions of that instrument. These motions relate to number & the following arrangement will shew five of these are sufficient to express the whole alphabet any of the letters may be easily expressed by painting out the division to which it belongs & the number under written so that as two Signals will stand for a single letter & five for all the Alphabet these signals or motions are advisory but the movements that appear more easy and convenient to express 1st by moving the fan to the right arm 2 by moving the fan to the left 3 in placing the fan against the bosom 4 raising the fan to the mouth & 5 to the head.

By moving the fan leaf in a combination of these gestures a woman could either ask or answer a question. One such question proposed on *The Fanology or Ladies'*

¹² Rosenthal, 2001: 127.

Conversation Fan leaf text as an example was ‘*How do you like my dress?*’ with the corresponding choice of replies written on the opposite side of the fan leaf as: ‘*Not at all*’, ‘*So So*’ or ‘*very Well*’.

Meanwhile, poems such as *Laura’s Fan*, which was included within a collection entitled *The Garland; A Collection of Poems* and published in 1788, invoked the fan’s potential to induce love in a suitor by quipping:

Say, Laura, say what means this mystic shew;
The quiver’d arrows, and this silver bow
...Say, are not these the instruments of Love?
Yes, yes, they are: I feel it in my breath
...On me that quiver empties every dart.¹³

Consequently, the ‘language’ of the British eighteenth-century folding fan could facilitate what Bertha de Vere Green coins ‘close-proximity communication’, affecting conversation by inflecting and amplifying physical gestures.¹⁴

The responsiveness of the mounted fan leaf to the hand’s inflection, no matter how slight, could allow for a lady’s amorous intentions to be noticed and understood. This inspired the authors of such texts as *The Ladies Miscellany*, an anonymously penned collection of poems published in 1718, to exalt the reticulated fan as an essential instrument in the art of overt and subtle flirting. One of the poems contained in this collection noted that, ‘Till by decay of Nature’s force compell’d;/ By Art we’re taught the *Fluttering Fan* to hold;/ Whilst Love in Ambush lies in ev’ry

¹³ [Anon], *The Garland: A Collection of Poems*, Oxford: 1788b: 32.

¹⁴ Bertha De Vere Green, *A Collector’s Guide to Fans over the Ages*, London: Fredrick Muller Press: 1975: 147.

Fold'¹⁵. *The Cabinet of Love*, a miscellaneous collection of short stories and humorous anecdotes authored by the Earl of Rochester, first published in 1728, proposes, in even stronger terms, the fan's potential for flirtatious sociability. The first few lines of John Gay's poem, *The Fan in Three Cantos*, published in 1713, echo such a viewpoint, as Gay notes:

...If conscious blushes on her cheeks arise,
With this she veils them for her lover's eyes,
No levell'd glance betrays her am'rous heart,
From the fan's ambush she directs the dart¹⁶.

Such observations did not operate in isolation. An understanding of the folding fan as something that enabled romantic and social ambitions is something that populated many poems and theatrical texts of the mid eighteenth century.¹⁷

This preoccupation with the language of the fan is maintained by an anonymous contributor to 'Miss on her Fan' from *Puerilia; or, amusements for the young. Consisting of a collection of songs, adapted to the fancies and capacities of those of tender years*, published in 1751.¹⁸ Gay, who imagines manipulating a fan in the third canto of *The Fan*, also draws attention to the various sounds a reticulated fan could make, asking that 'Rife, happy youth, this bright machine survey,/ Whose ratt'ling sticks my busy hands sway,/...The Fan shall flutter in all female hands...[sometimes

¹⁵ [Anon], *The Ladies Miscellany*, London: 1718: 32.

¹⁶ John Gay, *The Fan, Third Canto*: London: 1713: 24.

¹⁷ Eighteenth century magazines, such as *Tatler* and *Spectator* (i.e. May 1712), and more specialist periodic journals like *The Craftsman*, all printed in London, regularly advertised the modish nature and flirtatious possibilities of the mounted fan leaf to their readers.

¹⁸ John Marchant, *Puerilia; or, amusements for the young. Consisting of a collection of songs, adapted to the fancies and capacities of those of tender years*, London: 1751: 3.

rising] to noisy anger'¹⁹. Alternately, the fan could, as another songstress notes, 'move with such a graceful air and soothing sound'²⁰. Moreover, as was noted by Mr Cresswick, author of *The Lady's Preceptor; Or, a Series of Instructive and Pleasing Exercises in Reading* of 1792 – a manual compiled specifically for 'the particular use of females' – the fan, tapped or fluttered by skilful fingers, could betray or intentionally register the actions and emotions of its owner to a wider audience.²¹ One contemporary song proclaims, 'thus ev'ry Passion by the Fan is seen,/ From chatt'ring Anger to the sullen Spleen'; another anonymous author exclaims that, 'this fluttering Fan/ Well brandish I can,/ And flirt it about as I please;/ I strike it and crack it/ And instantly make it/ Turn it this way or that at my ease...'²²

The absurdities to which such objects could lead were nicely satirised in *Age and Folly, or the Beauties* (Fig. 3) a print of 1776, which used the image of a grotesque, exaggeratedly-dressed woman brandishing a fan as an aesthetic symbol of the clichéd superficiality of eighteenth-century urban manners. However, a happier note is sounded by diary entries from the period which reveal the subtle usages of the fan, as in the case of a Miss Cleone Knox, who recorded in May 1764 that:

My sister, examining me, was highly satisfied with my appearance, only wishing me to use my fan gracefully, for said she, "There is a whole language

¹⁹ Gay, 1713: 25.

²⁰ Marchant, 1751: 4.

²¹ Mr Cresswick, *The Ladies Preceptor; or, a Series of Instructive and Pleading Exercises in Reading*, London: Hookham and Carpenter: 1792: 2.

²² Cresswick, 1792: 2.

in the fan. With it the woman of fashion can express Distain, Love, indifference, encouragement and so on.²³

II

HISTORIOGRAPHY

In this thesis, I will look closely at the fan designs of a single participant within this industry, George Wilson, whose work of this kind seems to have been concentrated in the years 1795 to 1801. Through studying Wilson's work, we can begin to understand that fan leaf designs, like the contemporary graphic satire produced in this era, engaged with many of the crucial issues, abuses and excesses of late eighteenth-century life.²⁴ The nature of Cust's cataloguing was to separate fan leaf design by nationality first, then subcategorised according to each fan leaf design's status as either mounted or unmounted, and, finally, by theme and subject matter, with a brief description, normally of one or two sentences, detailing the theme illustrated underneath each title. This thesis extensively develops categories first established by Cust, chronologically cataloguing Wilson's fan leaves so as to illustrate his progression of interest in, and revisiting of, particular themes, engraving techniques, and cultural concerns and issues over the course of the last decade of the eighteenth century, and the ways in which these may have related to, or translated, relevant cultural and aesthetic developments within the same period in England.

²³ Rosenthal, 2001: 131.

²⁴ Edward Cocker, *Cocker's English Dictionary*, London: 1707: 14.

I will analyse Wilson's ephemeral print works in detail, treating them both as complex, multilayered representations that engage with eighteenth-century female preoccupations and a range of wider urban concerns, and as individual *objets d'art* that demonstrate highly skilled workmanship and a refined aesthetic appeal. This study will take the form of a scholarly catalogue, in which Wilson's fan designs, all known examples of which are to be found in the British Museum, are described and analysed in some detail. Such an approach will allow us to recover the ways in which Wilson's imagery assimilated high and low graphic materials from both contemporary and historical sources, and adapted these materials to the particular characteristics and constraints of the fan leaf.

CATALOGUE PREFACE

Within this thesis I use short catalogue essays to link George Wilson's fan leaf designs to the historical, literary and artistic environments in which they were produced and with which they engaged. The catalogue builds upon the existing catalogue of these works at the British Museum, follows the Museum's conventions, and will take a chronological format. In instances where there are several versions

or variations of the same fan leaf design, the prime example will be placed first. All eighteenth-century text, including capitalisation, is in original format.

**CAT 1. THE LADIES BILL OF FARE, OR A COPIOUS
COLLECTION OF BEAUX**

Title (object)

*The Ladies Bill of Fare, or a Copious
Collection of Beaux*

Location

Fans Unmounted Roy

Date

1795

British Museum Registration number

1891, 0713.724

Materials

Paper

Techniques

Hand-coloured stipple engraving

Production person

Published by Joseph Read after George Wilson

Production place

Published in London

Mark/ inscription and text

Title text held up by a winged cupid, reads: *The Ladies Bill of Fare, or a Copious Collection of Beaux.* In the centre of this fan leaf appears a cupid with butterfly wings, either side of which are draped with decorative laurel wreaths that extend to the edge of both sides of the fan leaf and two long cornucopias of flowers and fruit that reach below the frontispiece of text. Below the figure of the cupid reads the poem:

*To plague and please all womankind/
Here's Gallants' sure a plenty!- Choose
then a Beau to suit your mind, or change, to content ye.*

Above the image of the cupid appear twelve scenarios illustrating different beaus in varying states of emotion and their corresponding thoughts in the text underneath.

These read, from left to right:

No. 1- The Merry Lover- 'I live, love and laugh'/ No.2- The Melancholy- 'I die alas! Poor me/ No. 3- The Impetuous- 'Lend me Wings!' / No. 4- The Cautious- 'Consider well first/ No. 5- The Platonic- 'Tender to me Thy divine Soul!' / No. 6- The Casual Lover- 'Give me any good jolly person' / No. 7- The Constant- 'Fix'd on thee alone' / No. 8- The Capricious- 'Bin Constancy – give me Variety' / No. 9- The Coquet- 'Take a good aim you rogue- and wound a lot' / No. 10 - Lover of the Cash- 'Come ladies who bills most- A Fine fellow for a trifle' / No. 11- Lover of Himself- 'Faith lad, thou art a killing dog' / No. 12- The Lover of Nothing- 'get out wretch- devil take ye all- the World's full of plagues.'

The production line reads: '*Published as the Act directed by G Wilson 14 Feb 1795, 108 St Martin's Lane*'.

School

British

Dimensions

144mm x 468mm

Associated objects

1891, 0713.512; 1887, 1010.28; 1891, 0713.724; 1891, 0713.511; 1887, 1010.29 and 1891, 0713.510

Acquisition date and name

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1891

Description:

This unmounted version of *The Ladies Bill of Fare, or a Copious Collection of Beaux*, exhibits almost the same imagery as that of the other two engraved fan leaf prints of the same title featured in this catalogue. However, this version, unlike the other two fan leaf prints from this particular plate, provides the most complete design that Wilson devised for this theme- that is, one which incorporates line and stipple decorative engraving that fills the gaps between each oval medallion, and that features doubled rows of decorative laurel leaves. This printed version also incorporates a hand-coloured engraving of figurative imagery. It features pastel colours, with mainly pink and blue tonal variations. In addition, the coloured frontispiece, illustration, and intertwining curved lines closely echo the top of the fan leaf surface.

Wilson concentrates on the detailed depiction of the figures, which can be described as follows, from far left to far right: ‘*The Merry Lover*’ is depicted as a round-bellied man with arms outstretched. ‘*The Melancholy*’ is a thin young man with his face in

his hands. *'The Impetuous'* beau is a young man standing on a pair of wings. *'The Cautious'* beau is pictured as a man standing on a symbolically slow tortoise. *'The Platonic'* beau is shown as a man reading from a script. *'The Casual Lover'* is a man standing with his arms and legs outstretched, clasping a glass of wine in each hand. The right-hand side of the image depicts the following figures: *'The Constant'* beau features a young man who looks devotedly at a miniature of a lady in a rural landscape.

'The Capricious' beau illustrates a man carelessly throwing a miniature of one lady away with one hand whilst at the same time holding up a miniature of a different lady with the other hand as a weather cock swings wildly in the background. *'The Coquet'* is a beau placed in the foreground, pointing to the distant images of three ladies standing in the background. *'Lover of the Cash'* depicts a fat man, dressed in a feathered hat and a waistcoat. The *'Lover of Himself'* is shown as a man looking at himself in a mirror. *'The Lover of Nothing'* is a man with an annoyed face who kicks a small dog in the far left of the picture.

This image is conceived by Wilson as a satirical variant on the theme of depicting a collection of beaus, a device that can also be found in *A Selection of Beau's Whimsical, Comical & Eccentric, or Candidates for the Ladies Favor* (see catalogue II). This particular fan leaf design invites the viewer to analyse pairs of contrasting characteristics and states of mind on the part of the fan's subjects; six sets of beaus are placed in pairs around the outer edge of the fan leaf. As the title suggests, this set of images presents a programme, starting with *'The Merry Lover'*

and concluding with a savage depiction of ‘*The Lover of Nothing*’. Wilson’s coupling of contrasting characters, highlighted, for example, by ‘*The Merry Lover*’ being placed before ‘*The Melancholy*’, ‘*The Impetuous*’ being placed before ‘*The Cautious*’, and ‘*The Constant*’ being positioned before ‘*The Capricious*’, presents the viewer with a formulaic grouping of beaus, designed to encourage the female viewer to contemplate their contrasting characteristics. Moreover, this compositional strategy guides the eye’s movements over the fan leaf, inviting the gaze to rest at regular intervals upon these contrasting images. Interestingly, Wilson also introduces a series of pictorial puns, including the tortoise that conveys the cautious nature of one beau and the weather cock that shows the changeable nature of another.

The beaus depicted in *The Ladies Bill of Fare, or a Copious Collection of Beaux* are not so much individual personalities but stock representations of masculine types, completed in a theatrical, almost baroque, aesthetic style. These images use and recycle popular satirical figures derived, in part, from traditional literal and visual puns involving symbolic animals and objects. Significantly, his fan leaf design was published on February 14, St. Valentine’s Day, an entirely appropriate date on which to lampoon the romantic affections and excesses of the modern beau.

For a fuller discussion of the figure of the eighteenth-century beau, see the catalogue entry for *A Selection of Beau’s Whimsical, Comical and Eccentric: or Candidates for the Ladies Favour* (cat. II)

References:

Cust, 1891: 82.

**CAT I.ii. *THE LADIES BILL OF FARE, OR A COPIOUS
COLLECTION OF BEAUX***

Title (object)

*The Ladies Bill of Fare, or a Copious
Collection of Beaux*

Location

Fans Unmounted Roy

Date

1795

British Museum Registration number

1887, 1010.28

Materials

Paper

Techniques

Stipple engraving

Production person

Made and published by George Wilson

Production place

Published in London

Mark/ inscription and text

Title text, main text and production line read identical to that of cat. no: I.

School

British

Dimensions

285mm x 545mm

Associated objects

1891, 0713.512; 1891, 0713.724; 1891, 0713.724; 1887, 1010.29 and 1891, 0713.510

Acquisition date and name

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1887

Description:

This unmounted version of *The Ladies Bill of Fare, or a Copious Collection of Beaux* exhibits a design similar to that of Wilson's two other engraved fan leaves of the same title, also featured in this catalogue raisonné. However, this version, unlike the first and the last version, features an uncoloured monochrome stipple engraving.

References

Cust, 1891: 82.

**CAT I.iii. THE LADIES BILL OF FARE, OR A COPIOUS
COLLECTION OF BEAUX**

Title (object)	Location
<i>The Ladies Bill of Fare, or a Copious Collection of Beaux</i>	Fans Unmounted Roy
Date	British Museum Registration number
1795	1891, 0713.512
Materials	
Paper	
Techniques	
Stipple engraving	
Production person	
Made and published by George Wilson	
Production place	
Published in London	
Mark/ inscription and text	

Title text and production line read identical to that of cat. no: I.

School

British

Dimensions

143mm x 526mm

Associated objects

1887, 1010.28; 1891, 0713.724; 1887, 1010.29 and 1891, 0713.510

Acquisition date and name

Donated in 1891 by Lady Charlotte Schreiber

Description:

This unmounted fan leaf exhibits a more restrained and less ornamental rendering of the pictorial format by Wilson, when compared to the surfaces of the aforementioned versions of *The Ladies Bill of Fare, or a Copious Collection of Beaux*. In the completion of this particular fan leaf design, Wilson has chosen to omit the extended text featured below each of the twelve-pictured figures.

References

Cust, 1891: 82.

CAT II. A SELECTION OF BEAU'S WHIMSICAL, COMICAL & ECCENTRICAL; OR CANDIDATES FOR THE LADIES FAVOR

Title (object)

Location

A Selection of Beau's Whimsical, Comical & Eccentric; or Candidates for the Ladies Favor Fans Unmounted Roy

Date

British Museum Registration number

1795

1891, 0713.511

Materials

Paper

Techniques

Stipple engraving

Production person

Anonymously published after George Wilson

Production place

Published in London

Mark/ inscription and text

Title text, held up by a winged cupid across the frontispiece, reads: *A Selection of Beau's Whimsical, Comical & Eccentric; or Candidates for the Ladies Favor.*

Centre text on the cupid's scroll reads:

*That Simple Thing-A Woman's Heart ;/ How Oft tis Playd upon/ What Beau's
oft cause its painful smart,/ And triumph when they're done [underneath]
Mark well-our Motley Group above,/ The Liars Shun- the Honest love.*

Above the image of the cupid are placed a series of twelve images of different types of beau, with each characterisation titled above the image and a satirical opinion of each placed below. These read:

*No.1- [title] A Spark of some Conceit -[below] 'Let me die if I don't believe
she thinks of me Day & Night/ No.2- A Man of High Price- 'I am adamant
not to Marry any Woman under a Duchess' / No.3- A Sighing, Lying, Dying
Rogue- 'Believe I am yours- Only Yours' till death' / No.4- An Honest Lad, But
Rather Aukward- 'Madam your Conviviality is very great- I shall never forget
your kindness/ No.5- The General Lover- 'black, brown or fair's alike to
me!' / No.6-A Cross Grand Old Bachelor- 'Cats calling & Brats squalling,
have given my poor brain a Sound Mauling' / No.7- The Quintessence of
Politeness- 'Fifty Miles thro frost & snow, wou'd I march, to kiss the tip of
your dear little finger/ No.8- A Babe of Grace- 'Hear waiter-jump you
Rascal-another bottle' / No.9- A Warm Old Lad of Eighty- 'When will the dog
Cupid have done with his Pranks' / No.10- Mother's Little Darling- 'Mother
says I's a lad for a Princess-So I be- and who knows but I may have a
Brunswick- as well as Gregory' / No.11- A Lover in the Good Graces of his
Mistress- 'The World looks Cheerful when my charmer smiles' / No.12- An
Unfortunate Dog cross'd in Love- 'I've a good mind to enlist for a Soldier &
if I should be kill'd, I'll haunt her Morn, Noon & Night in the shape of a
bear.'*

The production line below the figure of cupid reads: '*G. Wilson, del*' and, on either side: '*London, Published May 25, 1795, by I. Read No. 135 Pall Mall*'.

School

British

Dimensions

140mm x 465mm

Associated objects

1887, 1010.29; 1891, 0713.512; 1891, 0713.724; 1887, 1010.29; 1887, 1010.28 and
1891, 0713.510

Acquisition date and name

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1891

Description:

A Selection of Beau's Whimsical, Comical & Eccentric, or Candidates for the

Ladies Favor features an unusually ornate and detailed imagery that unifies the fan

leaf composition. Placed at the bottom left-hand side of the fan leaf composition is

an artist's palette surrounded by fauna, whilst directly opposite on the right-hand side is an image of a violin placed on top of a collection of trumpets and foliage, including laurel branches. The intricate imagery found on this fan leaf design builds upon the aforementioned fan leaf design in *Men in Various Attitudes (study)*, featuring text, complex motifs, and an underlying satirical continuation created by a sequence of beaus that Wilson employs to curve artfully across the surface. From the far left to the middle across the top rim of the fan leaf, these images are as follows: '*A Spark of some Conceit*', a man standing arrogantly facing the viewer; '*A Man of High Price*', a man vainly looking at himself in a mirror; '*A Sighing, Lying, Dying Rogue*', a man bending on one knee with hands holding his cap in hand; '*An Honest Lad, But Rather Aukward*', a stout young man clumsily tipping over a tea table to his left as he turns to bow to someone just outside the image; '*The General Lover*', an amorous young man standing with both arms outstretched in a romantic pose; '*A Cross Grand Old Bachelor*', a man sporting a feathered hat while standing with legs outstretched and positioned in front of a crying baby in a cot.

The figurative images to the right of the sketch of a crying baby depict: '*The Quintessence of Politeness*', a man bowing with arms held together as he claps; '*A Babe of Grace*', a fat, round-bellied man serving himself a drink from a bottle beside him; '*A Warm Old Lad of Eighty*', an old, bedraggled man holding a walking stick and looking down towards the ground; '*Mother's Little Darling*', a peculiar looking, boyish, beau with his hair tied in bunches with bows, holding his hat in his hands and looking towards the viewer; '*A Lover in the Good Graces of his Mistress*', a thin young man with curly hair with his legs crossed and arms outstretched to the viewer;

‘*Unfortunate Dog cross’d in Love*’, a depressed looking man sitting with his arms and legs crossed.

In the eighteenth century, the word ‘beau’ simultaneously referred to both a man who is a lover of women and a man who is overly concerned with his dress and appearance. Frequently aligned with the ‘dandy’ and ‘gallant,’ the late eighteenth-century beau was often identified as a figure who regarded dress and bodily aesthetics as the sole worth of a person. *The Modern Beau*, a song included in an anonymously written work entitled *Monsieur Kaniferstane* in 1790, mockingly stresses this point. The fictional ‘modern beau’ exclaims:

My daddy is dead and left me some money,
I’ll dress very fine and look very funny...As I strut round the room,
I’ll stare in their faces,
Then pull down my ruffles all cov’ed in lace;
The ladies all giggle while their hearts are a thumping,
What a sweet fellow is that...²⁵

Wilson visually translates such literary manifestations of the ‘modern beau’ as someone overly concerned with outward appearance, including specific examples of beaus, such as ‘*Mother’s Little Darling*’, and who states he may have a ‘Brunswick as well as Gregory.’ A Brunswick is a type of eighteenth-century ladies’ jacket featuring a hip-length jacket, a high neckline, and a hood. It originated in France but proved to be popular in England and was worn by women and some men towards the turn of the nineteenth century.²⁶ The mention of this specific item in the speech text

²⁵ [Anon], 1790: 6.

²⁶ Ribero, 2002: 37.

below the figure of '*Mother's Little Darling*' alludes to the beau's preoccupation with outward appearance and fashion. It is also a more subtle reference to the effeminate nature of beaus.

The practice of dandyism, a category associated with the beau, also involves refined language, leisurely hobbies, and devotion to the 'Cult of the Self.'²⁷ An amusing satirical letter entitled *Letter X* and subtitled *Taste and Spirit*, included in Christopher Anstey's literary guide, *The New Bath Guide*, penned in 1766, personifies such an attitude. A satirical beau declares the following:

So lively, so gay, my dear mother, I'm grown,
I long to do something to make myself known;
For persons of *taste* and true *spirit*, I find,
Are fond of attracting the eyes of mankind:
Whose numbers one sees, who, for that very reason,
Come to make such a figure at *Bath* ev'ry season!²⁸

Many notable beaus stalked the popular spa towns of England, such as those in Bath, as well as the London streets. 'Lines on a Celebrated Beau, at Bath,' included in Charles James' *Poems by Charles James*, published in 1790, satirically testifies to this observation. Again, James attests to the vain nature of the beau as he writes of his tendency '[t]o tie the cambrick nicely round his neck,/ Produce the frill and give the ruffle room,/ Display the fav'rite dear deluding coat,/ The boast of Paris, or the pride of Rome.'²⁹

²⁷ Taylor, 1989: 375.

²⁸ Anstey, 1766: 86.

²⁹ James, 1790: 22.

The figures found in works such as Matthew Darly's 1772 *A Character* (Fig. 4), and in an anonymously produced satirical print published in 1791 entitled *A Beau 1700. A Beau 1791* (Fig. 5), and in *A Beau* (Fig. 6), produced by Hannah Humphrey after Robert Dighton in 1790, give some sense of the contemporary satirical and artistic interest in the figure of the beau in print culture. Wilson transforms this imagery's depiction of the beau – which assigns such figures rather antiquated stiff gestures and indistinguishable gestures – into inventive forms of characterisation, which are enlivened yet further through the addition of text written in the first person and directed at the reader.

Divided into three imagined personality categories (whimsical, comical, and eccentric), the beaus depicted across this fan leaf surface are accompanied with sometimes bizarre descriptions, such as '*A Warm Old Lad of Eighty*'. The first person text underneath each figure helps the viewers to identify and understand each figure's own actions and character – most are found comically proclaiming, in a deluded state, their own virtues or complaints as to the state of life and its treatment of them.

In the design of this fan leaf, Wilson concentrates on every specific example of a beau in terms of age, character, and position in life. Some are indeed *eccentric*, defined as taking a character and clothing to extremes. Others, such as '*A Lover in the Good Graces of his Mistress*', illustrate a more *whimsical* nature. An eighteenth-century lady could have taken pleasure in the variety of forms and of textual speech and content that Wilson offers on this fan leaf surface, where each candidate

competes for a lady's favour and attention. Importantly, Wilson's 'motley group' of characters on this fan leaf juxtaposes both good and bad beaus. 'A Sighing, Lying, Dying Rogue', who exclaims, 'Believe I am yours-Only Yours' till death', is placed adjacent to 'An Honest Lad, But Rather Aukward' to convey such variations in a man's character and to warn those ladies unaware of the dangerously soft tongue of a beau, thus enabling such women to pick out the honest men from a multitude of ne'er-do-wells.

The *whimsical* figures Wilson includes in this fan leaf design are predominantly placed sideways to the viewer, normally positioned in a submissive bow or showing a clumsy gesture, as demonstrated by the figure in 'The Quintessence of Politeness'. Wilson can also evoke a more exaggerated facial expression, as illustrated by the comical figure of 'A Babe of Grace', creating a varied range of imagery and viewer responses. Wilson's placement of the frontispiece at the core of the fan leaf design can itself be aligned, symbolically and metaphorically, with a woman's heart-vulnerable, as the frontispiece exclaims, to the lamentations and proclamations of the beaus that surround it. The laurel wreaths that encapsulate the frontispiece both protect it and link it to the rest of the fan leaf surface, leading the eye over the outer edge of the fan leaf surface into the frontispiece and then out again, aiding the viewer to assess the relative virtues and vices of the displayed beaus and to negotiate their imploring discourse.

References

Cust, 1891: 90.

**CAT III. MEN IN VARIOUS ATTITUDES (UNTITLED FAN LEAF
STUDY FOR A SELECTION OF BEAU'S WHIMSICAL, COMICAL
& ECCENTRICAL; OR CANDIDATES FOR THE LADIES FAVOR)**

Title (object)	Location
<i>Men in Various Attitudes</i> (study)	Fans Unmounted Roy
Date	British Museum Registration number
1795	1887, 1010.29
Materials	
Paper	
Techniques	
Hand-coloured stipple engraving	
Production person	
Published by Joseph Read after George Wilson	
Production place	
Published in London	
Mark/ inscription and text	
No discernible text is evident but faint pencil line visible towards the centre of the fan leaf.	
School	
British	
Dimensions	
290mm x 540mm	
Associated objects	
<i>A Selection of Beau's Whimsical, Comical & Eccentric; or Candidates for the Ladies Favor</i>	
Acquisition date and name	

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1887

Description:

This highly finished hand-coloured study for *A Selection of Beau's Whimsical, Comical, & Eccentric, or Candidates for the Ladies Favor* introduces the frequently lampooned eighteenth-century figure of the 'beau' as a central satirical and amusing focus of Wilson's fan leaf imagery.

Men in Various Attitudes depicts twelve small stock images of men in different poses and representing different attitudes. From the far left to the middle across the top rim of the fan leaf, these images are as follows: a man with a long curved nose, similar to that of a Pulcinella clown face, standing arrogantly facing the viewer and wearing a red cape and yellow trousers; a man vainly looking at himself in a mirror, wearing a fanciful feathered hat and yellow trousers; a man bending on one knee with hands holding a purple cape; a stout young man, dressed in a blue jacket and blue trousers, clumsily tipping over a tea table to his left as he turns to bow to someone just outside the image; an amorous young man standing with both arms outstretched in a romantic pose, one hand holding a walking stick, and wearing a bright red cap and a green waistcoat; a man dressed in yellow and sporting a blue feathered hat while standing with legs outstretched and positioned in front of a crying baby in a cot.

The figurative images to the right of the sketch of a crying baby depict: a man bowing with arms held together as he claps, wearing a red cap and a green outfit; a fat, round-bellied man, dressed in bright yellow, serving himself a drink from a bottle

beside him; an old, bedraggled man dressed in purple, holding a walking stick and looking down towards the ground; a peculiar looking, almost boyish, beau with his hair tied in bunches with red bows, holding his hat in his hands and looking towards the viewer; a thin young man with curly hair, dressed in yellow with his legs crossed and arms outstretched to the viewer; a depressed looking man sitting with his arms and legs crossed, wearing yellow trousers and a red top and sporting wild, wavy hair.

The colourful collective of beaus displayed on this fan leaf surface is less an illustration of beaus' particular attitudes and movements than a general assortment of exaggerated manly and unmanly poses and gestures. Furthermore, the figures present the viewer with a series of purely coloured jewels, dotted over the entirety of the fan leaf surface, which, with the figures' variety of poses and numerous graceful movements, help guide the eye fluidly over the semi-circle of continuous imagery- and chimes in with the fluttering movements expected of the fan itself. The predominant themes and issues raised by this fan leaf design are similar to those discussed under Cat. No. II.

References

Cust, 1891: 82.

CAT IV. THE GOOD SWAIN

Title (object)

The Good Swain (unfinished)

Location

Fans Unmounted Roy

Date

1795

British Museum Registration number

1891, 0713.483

Materials

Paper

Techniques

Stipple engraving

Production person

Published by Joseph Read after George Wilson

Production place

Published in London

Mark/ inscription and text

Title text reads: *The Good Swain*. Each scene, having its own title, reads from left to right: *The Morning of Youth, Mid-day of Life, Cheerful Evening of Old Age*. Poetic lines underneath each illustration, corresponding to each scene title, reading, from left to right: 1. *Unless with my Amanda blest, In Vain the Woodbine Blower, Unless to death her sweeter breast, In Vain I rear the breathing flower*, 2. *What is the world to them, It's Pomp and Pleasure-it's nonsense all!, Which in each other's arms we'll face whatever fear forms, and lavish our hearts last wish*, 3. *Together they totter about, or sit in the sun at the Door, And at night when old Darby's pipe's out, Old Joan will not smoke one whiff more*. Production line reads: *'London. Published Feb. 20. 1795. by J. Read. 133 Pall Mall and Geo. Wilson, delt'*.

School

British

Dimensions

145mm x 488mm

Associated objects

1891, 0713.484; 1891, 0713.482 and 1887, 1010.32

Acquisition date and name

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1891

Description:

Wilson's title for this fan leaf design, *The Good Swain*, effectively aligns it with a moralistic narrative in the mind of a viewer. It features three large oval medallions encapsulating the progressive cycles of love, life, and death, and each narrative has four lines of verse below it.

The first narrative, '*The Morning of Youth*', shown on the far left of the fan leaf, illustrates a very detailed outdoor environment, filled with bushes and trees that are used to frame the composition. This is similar to the compositional method which Wilson uses in the production of his later fan design, *The Female Seven Ages* (see catalogue VII). In the image a young shepherd bends on one knee in front of a beautiful young woman who sits under a tree, and offers her a crown of roses. The second image, '*Mid-day of Life*', depicts the same woman at an older age, sitting outside a house set in a rustic setting and surrounded by her own children as her husband looks on, standing and leaning against the door of the house. The third narrative, '*Cheerful Evening of Old Age*', pictures the couple, now old, seated just outside the front of their rustic house; the old man is wearing a waistcoat that covers his round belly and is smoking a pipe contentedly as his wife sits to his left in a dress, also smoking a pipe in satisfaction.

Surrounding each medallion, Wilson uses a circular black border featuring flower motifs and tiny sealed envelopes, bounded by another border of thin black line.

Within the borders are arrangements of flowers spilling out of cornucopias. Two circular laurel lines on the outer edges of the fan leaf remain unfinished.

The first image, depicting the '*Morning of Youth*', with its focus on a young shepherd's amorous attentions towards a girl named Amanda (meaning 'lovable' in Latin), may be seen as distilling a multitude of mid- to late-eighteenth century sentimental and satirical images that represent the first flush of love, and that often featured traditional iconographic symbols of rustic or rural life. One such satirical precedent for Wilson's introductory image is John Goldar's 1766 print, *Modern Love: Courtship* (Fig. 7), etched as the first image of a narrative series that plots a doomed relationship, after a design by John Collet.

Wilson recycles many of the pictorial details exhibited in Goldar's image, such as the compositional positioning of the young couple in front of a wooded background and the detail of the man reaching towards the woman with an expression of amorous intent. However, he dispenses with the allegorical details of the statues of Venus and the musical instruments that are scattered around Goldar's couple. Instead, Wilson chooses to frame his own figures against a timeless landscape and to dress them in classical garb, with no symbolic reference to either the fashionable dress of eighteenth-century men and women or the issues and debates surrounding 'modern,' late eighteenth-century marriage.

The timelessness of the narrative that emerges in the first image is carried on within the second image in the series, '*Mid-day of life*', which features the trope of a woman, now a wife and mother, sitting outside a rustic cottage with her children, with her husband looking on. This was a form of sentimental imagery that increased in popularity during the last decades of the eighteenth century. George Morland's *Dancing Dogs* (Fig. 8), for example, painted in 1790, provides us with one such compositional model. This image, like Wilson's second narrative, includes a wife and mother sitting in front of a rural dwelling with her husband standing by her side. Imagery like this promoted the moral worth of the family unit and helps to contextualise the central message of *The Good Swain* as one that offers an exemplary imagery of ideal companionship.

The final image of 'old Darby' and 'Old Joan', shown sitting beside each other smoking pipes in a rustic idyll, offers a highly positive image of blissful old age and of an enduring form of companionship that is symbolised by the smoking pipes and the mirrored actions of the old couple. The sense of satisfaction evoked in this particular narrative is reinforced by the text underneath, which reads as follows: *Together they totter about, or sit in the sun at the Door, And at night when old Darby's pipe's out, Old Joan will not smoke one whiff more.* Wilson's approach to portraying this narrative is notably enhanced by using Christian names to identify the two main protagonists in the story and by using both past and present tenses in the completion of the text.

We can better understand Wilson's employment of 'Joan' and 'Darby' if we take note of the fact that the coupling of these names was synonymous with the notion of a contented elderly couple from as early as the 1730s. Defined variously as 'a happily married couple who lead a placid, uneventful life' and as 'loving, old-fashioned and virtuous,' the fictional characters John Darby and his wife Joan were first mentioned in print in a poem published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* by Henry Sampson Woodfall in 1735, under the original title of *The Joys of Love Never Forgot: A Song*.³⁰ Woodfall wrote this ballad about a happily married elderly couple whilst working as an apprentice to a man called Darby, a publisher who worked in the Little Britain area of London and who was married to a lady called Joan. The poem is widely presumed to be based on these real-life characters. The poem proved to be so popular it was reissued again, this time as a broadside in 1748. The first stanza of the poem reads as '*Old Darby, with Joan by his side/ You've often regarded with wonder/ He's dropsical, she is sore-eyed/ Yet they're ever uneasy asunder*'.³¹

The enduring popular appeal of this poem also led to the creation of a further broadside, entitled *Darby and Joan*, produced by the American poet John Honeywood in 1763 and largely based on the original text penned by Woodfall. Honeywood's poem narrates that '*When Darby saw the setting sun/ He swung his scythe and home he run/ Sat down, drank off his quart and said/ My work is done, I'll go to bed*'.³² An eclectic selection of late eighteenth-century prints replicated this sentimental story. Such images include a 1750 etching attributed to

³⁰ Woodfall, 1735: 153.

³¹ Woodfall, 1735: 153.

³² Honeywood, 1763: 1.

and published by John June, *Old Darby and Joan* (Fig. 9) and, later, a highly finished mezzotint and engraving – again entitled *Old Darby and Joan* (Fig. 10), and published by Bowles and Carver – that reverses the position of the old couple pictured in June’s image. In particular, Bowles and Carver’s image (which again depicts an elderly couple sitting contentedly smoking their pipes outside a cottage; Darby on the right, holding a tankard on his knee with a dog faithfully lying at his feet and gazing at Joan who holds a cup and a pipe) is almost directly comparable to Wilson’s final image in *The Good Swain*.

Wilson, however, revises this image by omitting the symbolic conceit of the dog and placing old Darby to the left and old Joan to the right of his own illustration. Wilson can thus be seen to have assimilated this well-known poetic trope and pictorial iconography into his design, so as to underscore the central message of the fan leaf, which emphasises the importance of commitment within a long-term relationship. The inclusion of this highly familiar pictorial trope of elderly domestic companionship reinforces the earnest central message of this fan leaf, in direct contrast to the satirical message of its companion piece, *The Good-for-Nothing Swain* (see catalogue V).

Wilson’s design also recalls a multitude of allegorical mythological scenes depicting *The Three Ages of Man* that were produced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Paintings such as Giorgione’s *The Three Ages of Man* (Fig. 11), painted in 1510, illustrate something of the interest in *The Three Ages of Man* in previous centuries. Wilson translates this pictorial formula – which interestingly depicts all

three stages of life on the same canvas in a narrative fashion comparable to that employed on his fan leaf – in line with contemporary cultural concerns and preoccupations. Within this fan leaf design, then, two narratives overlap – one traditional and the other more contemporary.

Wilson's pictorial deployment of a rural idyll as the backdrop for this narrative series marks it as unique among his fan leaf designs, allowing for sustained focus on the details of the landscape itself. Images such as Dosso Dossi's *The Three Ages of Man* (Fig. 12), painted in Italy around 1485, depicting a young shepherd and his sweetheart embracing under a tree, indicate something of the established pictorial formulae intrinsically linking a man's life to a pastoral environment. Meanwhile, Wilson's incorporation of modern dress into a somewhat sentimentalised setting would have appealed to an eighteenth-century female clientele looking for an appealing, heroic image of manly conduct.

References

Cust, 1891: 84.

CAT IV.ii. (UNTITLED FAN LEAF)

Title (object)

Three Ages of Man (study)

Location

Fans Unmounted Roy

Date

1795

British Museum Registration number

1891, 0713.484

Materials

Paper

Techniques

Hand-coloured stipple engraving

Production person

Published by Joseph Read after Joseph Read

Production place

Published in London

Mark/ inscription and text

Each scene, having its own title, reads from left to right: *The Morning of Youth, Mid-day of Life, Cheerful Evening of Old Age*. Poetic lines underneath each illustration, corresponding to each scene title, reading, from left to right: 1. *Unless with my Amanda blest, In Vain the Woodbine Blower, Unless to death her sweeter breast, In Vain I rear the breathing flower*, 2. *What is the world to them, It's Pomp and Pleasure- it's nonsense all!, Which in each other's arms we'll face whatever fear forms, and lavish our hearts last wish*, 3. *Together they totter about, or sit in the sun at the Door, And at night when old Dolby's pipe's out, Old Joan will not smoke one whiff more*. Production line reads: 'London. Published 20 Feb by J. Read. 133 Pall Mall and Geo. Wilson, del'.

School

British

Dimensions

142mm x 482mm

Associated objects

1891, 0713.483 and 1891, 0713.482

Acquisition date and name

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1891

Description:

This unmounted fan leaf is a highly finished, hand-coloured compositional and narrative study for *The Good Swain*, almost identical in compositional and textual features but without the title text. Wilson uses the limited colour palette employed in this fan leaf's completion to great effect. The pink and pale blue tonal variations in the woman's and man's dress reinforce the ornamental nature of the fan leaf itself. The predominant themes and issues raised by this fan leaf design are discussed under cat. no: IV.

References

Cust, 1891: 84.

CAT V. THE GOOD-FOR-NOTHING SWAIN

Title (object)

The Good-for-Nothing Swain

Location

Fans Unmounted Roy

Date

1796

British Museum Registration number

1891, 0713.482

Materials

Paper

Techniques

Stipple engraving

Production person

Published by Joseph Read and George Wilson after George Wilson

Production place

Published in London

Mark/ inscription and text

Title text reads: *The Good-for-Nothing Swain*. Each verse of poetry underneath each scene has its own title, reading, from left to right: *The Vow of Constancy*, *The Hour of Infidelity* and *Cupid's Farewell*. Poetic lines underneath each illustration, corresponding to each scene title, reading, from left to right: 1. *With Soothing Smile he won my easy heart, And vow'd— but oh, he feign'd the part*, 2. *Sure of all ills the worst which we can find, And those Ingrates who would wound our peace of mind*, 3. *Fond Love distains the palace, or the Cot, true friendship mourns, and Romance is Forgot*. The production line reads: *Geo. Wilson, del. and London, Published Jany. 1. 1796 by J. Read, 133, Pall Mall*. Stretched below the fan leaf image reads the production line: *'London. Pub. No 1 1796 Published. As the Act Directs by GWilson 108 St. Martins Lane'*.

School

British

Dimensions

145mm x 478mm

Acquisition date and name

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1891

Description:

The Good-for-Nothing Swain, a satirical companion piece to *The Good Swain* fan leaf design published a year beforehand, bears an intentional similarity to its counterpart, with additional decorative motifs surrounding the three central medallions identical to those of *The Good Swain*. It can be viewed as a precursor to *The Folly of Man or The World Grown Odd and Crazy* (see catalogue IX) in terms of its overlying compositional and satirical concentration on the follies of men, real and imagined, to incite mirth in its viewer. Wilson published this fan leaf design himself, indicating perhaps a particular interest in capitalising upon the complementary theme illustrated in *The Good Swain*.

Conceived in direct contrast to ‘*The Morning of Youth*’, the first of the three oval medallions, ‘*The Vow of Constancy*’, satirically pre-emptes the disastrous consequences that will ensue at the end of this narrative, bringing the young couple’s short affair to an abrupt end. This introductory oval features a young man bending on one knee in front of a young woman sitting under a tree and giving a ‘vow of constancy’ (intentionally similar in composition to the first narrative of *The Good Swain*); the second oval, ‘*The Hour of Infidelity*’, which can be seen almost as an insertion into *The Good Swain*’s narrative, ‘*Mid-day of Life*’, shows the same young man sitting under a similar tree but, pointedly, now with a different lady. Its design is ironically similar to the first scenario, and he is presumably whispering the same ‘vow of constancy’ to another vulnerable young woman. From behind the barrier of a tree, the woman he is pictured wooing in the first picture stares on in disbelief as she observes the behaviour of this particular ‘good-for-nothing swain.’

The use of a wooded landscape setting to frame a satirical illustration of an illicit or adulterous act, normally overseen by another shadowy female, followed a well-established pictorial format. Engravings, such as Charles Warren's *Print Book Illustration* (Fig. 13), printed in 1795 and showing a woman collapsing into the arms of her female companion as she spies on her husband on his way to meet a secret lover, typify this genre of illustration that Wilson draws upon to highlight *The Good-for-Nothing Swain*'s behaviour and to enable easy identification of his image's subject matter and its moral message.

Similarly, the final image, satirically entitled '*Cupid's Farewell*', intentionally differentiates itself from '*Cheerful Evening of Old Age*' as it shows the young couple sitting at opposite ends of a table with their heads turned away from each other as a cupid flies, farcically but meaningfully, out of the window, his head turned towards the viewer. This is opposed to the contented image of the old couple turned towards each other as they smoke their pipes in perfect unison. Such compositional elements echo earlier images that portray the popular eighteenth-century theme of unsuitable marriages that disintegrate soon after their union. This is typified by paintings such as William Hogarth's celebrated *Tête à Tête*, the second image from his *Marriage-a-la-Mode* series (Fig. 14), painted in 1743. Wilson's portrayal of his two unhappy protagonists – sitting in an interior at a table but metaphorically and physically turned away from one another as the cupid flies symbolically out of the window – directly parallels Hogarth's depiction of his newly wedded couple sitting apart from each other, and already involved in pursuing individual, separate entertainments.

Notably, Wilson jettisons the longer lifelong timeline established across *The Good Swain*, representing instead a far more fleeting narrative, as befits the flighty character of the ‘good-for-nothing swain’. Here too, the viewer is not invited to identify or sympathise with either of the two main protagonists in *The Good-for-Nothing Swain*. Wilson does not include the Christian names, real or imagined, of either the man or the woman in the accompanying speech below any of the three images.

The highest point of this fan leaf surface corresponds meaningfully to the moment of infidelity rather than to reproduction, unlike its counterpart’s story tale image, again pre-empting the format and thematic content of the narrative of ‘*A Good Husband teaching morality by example*,’ exhibited on the *Folly of Man or the World Grown Odd and Crazy*, printed and published in 1797 (see catalogue IX). Details such as the Cupid, replete with inventively spotted butterfly wings, confirm the more experimental visual path that Wilson takes with the production of this fan leaf design. Significantly, this fan leaf serves as a satirical and amusing warning for women against the advances of ill-suited suitors and their wooing words of amorous intention. Most crucially, this fan leaf text also refers to the damage done to a woman’s reputation by such ‘good-for-nothing swains’ and their own propensity to fall for men’s dubious romantic intentions.

References

Cust, 1891: 84.

CAT VI. SHAKESPEARE'S SEVEN AGES

Title (object)

Shakespeare's Seven Ages

Location

Fans Unmounted Roy

Date

1796

British Museum Registration number

1891, 0713.413

Materials

Paper

Techniques

Stipple engraving

Production person

Published by Sarah Ashton and made by George Wilson

Production place

Published in London

Mark/ inscription and text

The title text reads: *Shakespeare's Seven Ages*. The verses under each image read, from left to right: *First, the infant,/ Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms;/ Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel,/ And shining morning face to school: and then, the lover,/ Sighing like a furnace, with a woeful ballad/ Made to his mistress's eyebrow: Then, a soldier;/ Full of strange oaths and bearded like a bard/ Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,/ Seeking the bubble reputation/ Even in the cannon's mouth: and then, the justice:/ In fair round belly, with good capon lin'd/ With eyes we vere, and beard of formal cut,/ Full of wise saws and modern instances,/ And so he plays his part: The sixth age shifts,/ Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloons;/ With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side;/ His youthful hose well sav'd, a world too wide/ For his shrunk sank; and his big manly voice,/ Turning again to childish treble, pipes/ And whistles in his sound: Last scene of all,/ That ends this strange eventful history,/ Is second childishness, and mere oblivion;/ Sans tenth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.* The production line reads: 'Publish'd 1st. Jany. By Sarah Ashton. No. 28, Little Britain', on the left-hand side and on the right-hand side, 'Entered at Stationer's Hall'. Underneath the central medallion in the centre of the fan leaf, the lettered inscription reads: *G. Wilson, del.*

School

British

Dimensions

285mm x 530mm

Associated objects

1887, 1010.32

Associated titles

A similar, superior hand-coloured stipple engraving anonymously produced between 1770-1800, entitled *Shakespeare's Seven Ages*, which may have been produced by George Wilson as a finalised colour version (Reg. No: 1891, 0713.412).

Acquisition date and name

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1891

Description:

This superior unmounted fan leaf version of *Shakespeare's Seven Ages* exhibits the same design as that of the other version of the same title (Reg. No. 1887, 1010.32) but is executed with a greater definition of form and outline due to the set impression being firmly applied during the printing process. This particular unmounted fan leaf design is concerned with the age-old themes of birth, life, and death first encountered across the fan leaf surfaces of *The Good Swain* and *Three Ages of Man*, elucidating Wilson's continued interest in pictorially illustrating the Ages of Man. However, this fan leaf design follows a specific and increasingly well-established tradition, dividing human life into seven stages. This fan leaf pictorially translates the soliloquy speech Jacques gives in Act Two, Scene Seven of William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, which was first published in 1623 and which was frequently performed on the eighteenth-century London stage.

The first medallion, '*the infant*', on the far left-hand side of the fan leaf depicts a young woman cuddling her young son and sitting on a chair in side profile. '*The whining schoolboy*' is an image of a young boy making his way to school; '*the lover*' illustrates a young man holding a fashionable hat in his left hand whilst holding a letter in his right hand, which rests on a large table. '*A soldier*' shows a man at the zenith of his life, both mentally and physically; he is clad in armour, holds a sword in his left hand and places his right hand firmly on his hip while looking out at the viewer; '*and then, the justice*' records a man with a round belly who sits in a chair and is dressed in a rich costume. '*The sixth age*' illustrates a more wizened man, bent over and carrying a sack over his shoulder. The '*last scene of all*' features an

old man sitting in his chair, now experiencing a 'second childhood' and supported by a young woman.

Wilson's design draws upon established pictorial models for depicting the progression of human (almost always male) life and death. These were populist print manifestations, which, as Malcolm Jones has pointed out, satisfied 'both decorative and economic needs...' of its potential purchasers.³³ This imagery had widespread appeal right up until the end of the eighteenth century, when it was picked up by Wilson as an easily adaptable compositional template.

This imagery was often found in printed works which were concerned with representing the stages in life in a most basic manner. Significantly, as Jones has noted, it is almost always 'the life of *man*' presented to the viewer in such prints; the focus on the corresponding stages in a woman's life comes much later in the English print market.³⁴ We can start to understand the compositional and narrative strategies deployed by Wilson by first looking at *The Four Ages of Man* (Figs. 15.a–15.d), a set of four Italian prints completed by Raphael Sadeler in 1591 and comprising a narrative succession of separate engraved prints on paper.

³³ Malcolm Jones, *The Print in Early Modern England, An Historical Overview*, London: The British Museum Press: 2010: 16.

³⁴ Jones, 2010: 22.

Sadeler's *Four Ages of Man* offers a seminal model of imagery narrating the life of a man as divided into four stages. Sadeler equates each stage with a man's assumed position and ambitions in life, adding corresponding mythological gods and goddesses in each successive image. *The Four Ages of Man*, an artistically ambitious print first published in the 1660s by Robert Walton, also focuses on the four stages of a man's life, and is illustrated by emblems (Fig. 16). It offers the same emphasis upon a man's life, divided into four progressive stages, as we find in Sadeler's images. Meanwhile, the shapely curve of *The Life of Man Demonstrated in Their Several Ages* (Fig. 17), an anonymous print published by John Overton in the late seventeenth century, features a detailed pictorial manifestation of the 'Staircase of the Ages' format, presenting another illustrative precedent for *Shakespeare's Seven Ages* in its offering of an extended narrative of the latter stages of a man's life. In particular, the etching features a sustained focus on a man's decline into 'a second childhood' and senility, a motif that is also to be found in earlier medieval and Tudor images that illustrate this theme.³⁵ Overton's image of the balance between birth and death, interpreted by the rising and falling of one's personal and professional status in life, is compositionally mirrored on *Shakespeare's Seven Ages* fan leaf surface. The composition of *Shakespeare's Seven Ages*, with the composition of *The Good Swain* and *The Three Ages of Man*, gracefully reflects the rise and fall of a man's life in a semi-circular shape of the fan leaf.

³⁵ Jones, 2010: 32.

The *Staircases of the Ages-Couples* (Fig. 18), a detailed woodcut published by George Minnikin between 1685 and 1699, offers another visual precedent for *Shakespeare's Seven Ages*, unusual for these years in being concerned with the progression of *both* women and men up and down the Staircase of Ages, although the woman is still defined in relation to her male counterpart. The featured male figures wearing fashionable dress as they ascend the staircase are replaced by the image of increasingly infirm, bowed figures, which are perfectly mirrored in *Shakespeare's Seven Ages* within scene seven, wherein an elderly man sits bent forward in a chair and wearing a similar cap to signify his own advanced age and frailty of body form.

In the *Staircases of the Ages*, the gently curving profile of couples in this image as they stand on each step of the staircase, with their most fruitful period lying at the top of the staircase, is perfectly transposed by this fan leaf design. Moreover, Wilson utilises the natural gradations on the fan leaf surface to help convey the full meaning of the different stages within *Shakespeare's Seven Ages* to the female gaze and aid in the understanding of the male psyche. We only have to place *Shakespeare's Seven Ages* next to *Staircases of the Ages-Couples* to confirm a clear sense that Wilson evoked an assimilation of far earlier compositional motifs to create his own sequence of narratives pertaining to Shakespeare's *As You Like It* stage-play script.

With its clear narrative structure and its faithful pictorial translation of Shakespeare's literary text, *Shakespeare's Seven Ages* also owes a debt to many late eighteenth-century painted and printed images that chose to elaborate the theme of *The Seven*

Ages in a range of eclectic styles and compositions. *The Various Ages and Degrees of Human Life* (Fig. 19), an anonymous etching published in 1793 by John Evans based on the late seventeenth-century *Staircases of the Ages-Couples*, exemplifies patterns of pictorial continuation. Indeed, *The Various Ages and Degrees of Human Life* is a clear adaptation of *Staircases of the Ages-Couples*, with the addition of two roundels featuring a marriage and a funeral.

Wilson also adapts another pictorial translation of *Shakespeare's Seven Ages*, which had been published only a few years beforehand. This was an unusual composition entitled *Shakespeare's Beautiful Idea on the Seven Ages of Man* (Fig. 20), a stipple engraving designed and published by Joseph Gear in 1792. This particular engraving consists of seven oval medallion shapes, each containing one of Shakespeare's seven stages of man, together with a centrepiece featuring Shakespeare's own bust.

Wilson's work duplicates many features of *Shakespeare's Beautiful Idea on the Seven Ages of Man*, particularly in its encapsulation of each image in an oval format and in its simplified composition, featuring just one figure in either an interior or an exterior setting. And if we look closely at the two prints, we can see that Wilson has directly translated the compositional format used by Gear into the seven ovals he places across his own fan leaf- placing a baby on the knee of his mother in scene one; picturing a schoolboy next to a school house in scene two; depicting a young man in an interior setting in scene three (although Wilson substitutes the sword the young man wears in Gear's image for a book, and replaces the baroque costume

shown in scene four with an suit of armour). It appears almost as if Wilson has taken *Shakespeare's Beautiful Idea on the Seven Ages of Man* and spread the medallions around the semi-circular design of his fan leaf, dispensing only with the central medallion depicting Shakespeare's bust. Whilst Wilson rejects Gear's use of the Tudor costume in his own narrative images, as well as the drapes and almost baroque-like theatrical masks that hold up the central medallion, much else is the same.

The most relevant source to note for *Shakespeare's Seven Ages* is Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and texts which focused on the famous speech alluded to by Wilson's fan. One such prominent example is the popular *Shakespeare's Seven Ages; paraphrased by Mr Collins*, published in 1797. Combining gentle satire with theatrical poetic form, Collins' verses adapts Shakespeare's speech (as spoken by the character of Jacques) whilst humorously updating the subject matter. He begins as follows:

Our immortal Poet's Page
Says that all the World's a Stage;
And that Men, with all their Airs,
Are nothing more than Players;
Each using Skill and Art
In his Turn, to top his Part.
All to fill up this farcical Scene O!
Enter here
Exit here;
Stand in View,
Mind your Cue.³⁶

Collins carries on this commentary with each stage of *The Seven Ages*, for example, quipping that the fifth age of man brings the following:

³⁶ Mr Collins, ed., *Shakespeare's Seven Ages*, London: 1797: 1.

Next the Justice in his Chair, With broad Grin and Vacant stare;
With his Wig of formal Cut
And a Belly like a Butt
Well lin'd too with Turtle Hash,
Calipee and Calipash.
All to fill, &c.
Bawd and Cull
Pimp and Trull,
And his Nod,
Go to Quod.³⁷

Collins imaginings of a man's aging process provides a bawdy, comical modernisation of Shakespeare's text that a late eighteenth-century audience could relate to very well. *Shakespeare's Seven Ages* shares this underlying preoccupation with making the playwright's themes accessible to a contemporary audience.

Another literary social satire, this time concerned with illuminating relationships between collective groupings of 'seven sets of things' to facilitate thought and laughter amongst its readers was also produced in the latter half of the eighteenth century.³⁸ An anonymously penned satirical pamphlet published in 1764 and sold in Aldermary Yard in London, entitled *The Figure of Seven*, typifies this genre, presenting the figure of seven as significant and mystical in a number of ways. Its frontispiece exclaims the following:

The Figure of Seven: Containing Divers Matters, pleasant and profitable; fitted to the Capacities of both the Learned and Ignorant. WHEREIN Is much more treated of, than of any Subject written before of this Kind/ So some are of a high and lofty strain,/ And some for writing that is down-right plain:/ [Continuing] The Figure of Seven I here to you present,/ Hoping the same will give you rich Content,/ For here is nothing laid forth to your Sight,/ But

³⁷ Mr Collins, ed., 1798: 1.

³⁸ [Anon], *The Figure of Seven: Containing Divers Matters, pleasant and profitable; fitted to the Capacities of both the learned and Ignorant*, London: Aldermary Church-Yard: 1764: 10.

*may the Reader profit and delight./ Here is the Variety for to content ye,/ The better so, that we may compliment ye...*³⁹

Within this particular pamphlet, the author goes on playfully to discuss numerous groupings of seven, ranging from more traditional groupings, such as *The Seven Ages of the World* and *The Seven Wise Men of Greece*, before turning to more whimsical and ridiculous subjects, such as *Seven Things Invisible*.

Wilson's *Shakespeare's Seven Ages* offers not only a pictorial engagement with Jacques' soliloquy from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, but a dialogue with other late eighteenth-century literary and pictorial versions of this Shakespearean text. The playwright's works dominated the London stage as the eighteenth century progressed. After the Licensing Act of 1737, one out of every four plays performed on the London stage was by Shakespeare.⁴⁰

As You Like It, a light-hearted comedy telling the story of the complicated love lives and desires of a group of young aristocrats led by the heroine Rosalind, who flees from her uncle's court into the surrounding forest, proved especially popular with eighteenth-century audiences. The play became a favourite at Drury Lane, appearing there more often from 1776 to 1817 than any other Shakespearean drama.⁴¹ The growing prominence of Shakespearean plays in the cultural life of late eighteenth-century Londoners was amplified in 1789 by the opening of Shakespeare Gallery in

³⁹ [Anon], 1764: 10.

⁴⁰ George Nettleton, *English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century (1642-1780)*, London: Macmillan Press: 1914: 5.

⁴¹ Nettleton, 1914: 5.

Pall Mall by John Boydell. With the production of this design, Wilson, having recognised the theme's suitability for transfer to the curving surfaces of a fan-effectively reinvents pictorial renderings of Shakespeare.

References:

Cust, 1891: 90

CAT VI.ii. SHAKESPEARE'S SEVEN AGES

Title (object)	Location
<i>Shakespeare's Seven Ages</i>	Fans Unmounted Roy
Date	British Museum Registration number
1796	1887, 1010.32
Materials	
Paper	
Techniques	
Stipple engraving	
Production person	

Published by Sarah Ashton/ Made by George Wilson

Production place

Published in London

Mark/ inscription and text

Title text, main text and production line read identical to that of cat. no: VI.

School

British

Dimensions

285mm (sheet dimensions) x 530mm (sheet dimensions)

Associated objects

1891, 0713.413

Associated titles and images

A similar, superior hand-coloured stipple engraving anonymously produced between 1770-1800, entitled *Shakespeare's Seven Ages*, which may have been produced by George Wilson as a finalised colour version (Reg. No: 1891, 0713.412).

Acquisition date and name

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1887

Description:

The description of and themes and issues raised by this fan leaf design are discussed under cat. no: VI.

References

Cust, 1891: 90.

CAT VII. THE FEMALE SEVEN AGES

Title (object)

The Female Seven Ages

Location

Fans Unmounted Roy

Date

1797

British Museum Registration number

1891, 0713.723

Materials

Paper

Techniques

Stipple engraving

Production person

Published by Ashton and Hadwen and made by George Wilson

Production place

Published in London and exhibited at Stationer's Hall

Mark/ inscription and text

The title text reads: *The Female Seven Ages*. The pictures and accompanying text read as follows: 1. *See first the mother and Babe, with cherub dimpled face, / Smiling & toying in its Mother's Arms* 2. *Then the neat Seamstress, pent in School, To learn the useful arts-to mend and make* 3. *And Then alas poor girl, unskill'd in life, The drooping victim of Love's painful whafes, Sighing in secret, & in secret* 4. *Then comes a good wife with her growing cares, Adventurer- little dreaming of the woes of Sicking Babe, Widows painful lot* 5. *And now a matron grave, severe, & just, Teasing with prudence...many a lesson from experience gain'd* 6. *The sixth age gives the widow relic, musing on the past with pain. Yet trusting Heaven to renew her bliss* 7. *Last scene brings patient resignation. A mind supported by upholding faith to One Unchangeable & Good*. The production line reads: 'London. Pub. Ashton & Co. No. 28, Little Britain' towards the bottom left-hand corner and 'Entered at Stationer's Hall 1st Jany. 1797', placed on the bottom right-hand side. Beneath the centre medallion, a separate production line reads: *Geo. Wilson, invent, et del.*

School

British

Dimensions

138mm x 464mm

Associated objects

1891, 0713.415; 1887, 1010.33 and 1891, 0713.501

Associated titles and names

William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*

Acquisition date and name

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1891

Description:

The production of this particular fan leaf design probably resulted from the fact that Wilson thought it desirable to produce this variant on the theme of *The Ages of Man* after enjoying success with his *Shakespeare's Seven Ages* a year beforehand. This fan leaf design represents a decision on the part of Wilson to adapt the age-old tradition of depicting the trials and tribulations of a man's life, but to depict instead a woman's life-cycle across the surface of a fan leaf.

Each of the seven small medallions are placed equidistantly across the fan leaf surface, and read from left to right in an exact replication of the compositional format and decorative motifs featured on *Shakespeare's Seven Ages*. 1. 'See first the mother and Babe' features a small baby lying on its mother's lap, seated on a stool in an interior environment. 2. 'Then the neat Seamstress' focuses on a small girl concentrating on sewing a piece of fabric in a school interior. 3. 'And Then alas poor girl' illustrates a young woman dressed in classical garb sitting in a landscape scene beneath a tree holding her head in hands. 4. 'Then comes a good wife', placed directly over the arch of the fan leaf, depicts a well-dressed woman standing in an outdoor landscape, looking contented. 5. 'And now a matron' pictures a woman seated at a table in a comfortable interior setting surrounded by three young children in domestic tranquillity. 6. 'The sixth age gives the widow relic' shows an ageing woman sitting by herself. 7. 'Last scene brings patient resignation' pictures the same woman, now haggard and wearing an old maid's cap and shawl, seated in an interior looking out towards the viewer.

The Female Seven Ages thus presents the viewer with a sustained 'timeline', progressively illustrating a woman's youth, middle age, and death, based on the cycles of marriage and reproduction. Though *Shakespeare's Seven Ages* offers an obvious point of reference, it is the far earlier print entitled, *Staircases of the Ages* (see figure 18) that offers the most striking visual parallel for *The Female Seven Ages* as it is concerned, very unusually for this period, with the progression of *both* women and men up and down the Staircase of Ages.

Besides this, the artful curve of *The Female Seven Ages*, which organises the stages sequence of the aging process so as to align the high point of a woman's life at the top centre of the fan leaf, finds a perfect precedent in the *Staircases of the Ages*, which similarly codifies women as fundamentally virtuous. Furthermore, *The Female Seven Ages* invokes a strong sense of impending spiritual judgement. Wilson's imagery offers an unusually extended focus on the latter stages of a woman's life, and includes a clear textual reference to religious judgement underneath the last medallion: 7. 'Last scene brings patient resignation. A mind supported by upholding faith to One Unchangeable & Good'.

In *The Female Seven Ages*, Wilson self-consciously updates the pictorial elements in each of its narratives to reflect accurately late eighteenth-century life, even though it presents the life of a woman in terms of a traditional ideal. In a sense, *The Female Seven Ages* can be seen effectively to re-align Shakespeare's famous literary speech in relation to eighteenth-century reappraisals of, and growing interest in, women, which acknowledges the hardships that will have to be endured by most women during their lifetime.

Moreover, *The Female Seven Ages* effectively assigns men a secondary role in a women's life, blaming them for causing heartaches and prescribing religious faith in the afterlife as the only method to keep oneself strong. This is illustrated by the earnest gaze of the old woman looking out of scene seven towards the viewer, in a

meditative fashion. Thus, *The Female Seven Ages* ultimately leads to a unique pictorial adaptation of Shakespeare's literary masterpiece, one that focuses exclusively on female experience, acknowledging women's increasing social and cultural significance in the eighteenth century and pictorial updating on the venerable *Ages of Man* formula.

The preoccupations of *The Female Seven Ages* chime in with those of an eclectic mix of literary texts published in the latter half of the eighteenth century, concerned with cultural, religious, and social issues. The most relevant contemporary literary source and one that enjoyed a prolonged period of popularity is, of course, Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. An anonymously penned satirical pamphlet sold in Aldermary Yard in London, entitled *The Figure of Seven* and published in 1764, may also have influenced Wilson not only in creating his design of *Shakespeare's Seven Ages*, but in providing a model against which Wilson could produce a more positive image of woman. Within this particular pamphlet, the author discusses, among many others, *Seven Things a Maid Loves*, including the following: 1. *Fine Clothes*. 2. *Walking abroad*. 3. *Choice of suitors, lying a-bed*. 5. *Good victuals*. 6. *Strong drink*. 7. *Long sleeps*. This satirical set of seven negative and destructive interests can be directly compared to, and contrasted with, Wilson's own narrative of what a woman's preoccupations and ambitions in life should entail.⁴²

⁴² [Anon], 1764: 10.

Rather than castigating women for their follies or representing them as ‘fallen women’, Wilson presents them as virtuous and ingrained with genuine ‘modes of integrity,’ as Tita Chico calls it.⁴³ Marlene Le Gates reminds us that ‘in eighteenth-century literature and letters there occurred a dramatic change in the image of the woman and in associated ideas in marriage... [older ideas are] replaced by the eighteenth-century version of the Cult of True Womanhood’⁴⁴.

The embedded idea of a woman as fundamentally ‘disorderly’ was replaced by the literary imaginings of a ‘chaste’ woman and, more importantly, an obedient wife. Wilson draws heavily upon such ideals of femininity, something which is demonstrated particularly aptly in scenes four to seven, which illustrate an acceptance of loneliness and of widowhood and of the need to look forward to spiritual deliverance in heaven. Wilson’s narrative fan leaf image can thus be understood as offering a visual expression of the contemporary ‘Cult of Virtuous Womanhood,’ inventively supplementing and contributing to this wider literary and ideological trope.⁴⁵

The concerns of *The Female Seven Ages* can also be seen to engage directly with those of a multitude of female conduct manuals published earlier in the eighteenth century, as well as manuals published nearer to the date at which the fan itself was

⁴³ Tita Chico, *Dressing Women: The Dressing Room in Eighteenth-Century English Literature and Culture*, Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press: 2005: 192.

⁴⁴ Marlene Le Gates, ‘The Cult of Womanhood in Eighteenth-Century Thought’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 10: 1: 1976: 39.

⁴⁵ Le Gates, 1976: 26.

released. Thus, Thomas Marriott's *Female Conduct: Being an Essay on the Art of Pleasing. To be practised by the Fair Sex before and after Marriage*, first published in 1759, and *Female Conduct: Being an Essay on the Art of Pleasing*, published in the same year, similarly concerned themselves with the virtuous conduct of women during marriage. Furthermore, *The Female Seven Ages* seems related to emerging modes of religious belief in the last decades of the eighteenth century. A resurgence of 'emotional religious revival,' followed through by a raft of religious propagandist literary materials, caught hold, encouraging a late eighteenth-century rejection of 'religious rationalism' in favour of 'stressing religion of the heart rather than of the mind.'⁴⁶

Rectors, such as Benjamin Cracknell, delivered sermons at the pulpit endeavouring to reaffirm spiritual belief in the face of growing political, social, and cultural instability, and regularly published these lectures as textual moral 'advisers.'

Cracknell's *A Discourse on the Importance of Right Sentiments in Religion, As to their INFLUENCE ON THE MORAL CHARACTER OF MANKIND*, published in 1796, warns of 'virulent attacks on the divine authority of revelation... [and declares] that right sentiments in religion are necessary to promote holiness in life'⁴⁷.

Such sentiments are duplicated by *The Female Seven Ages*, which can be seen to

⁴⁶ Lewis Hackett, *The European Review of Progress and Enlightenment*, London: World History Centre Press: 1992: 3.

⁴⁷ Benjamin Cracknell, *A Discourse on the Importance of the Right Sentiments in Religion, As to their INFLUENCE ON THE MORAL CHARACTER OF MANKIND*, London: G. Auld:1796: 8.

have functioned almost as an illustrated scriptural text in its own right, appealing directly to the hearts and minds of its female owners.⁴⁸

Interestingly, women themselves became preachers in some parts of Britain towards the turn of the nineteenth century, which is reflected in writings such as that published as *The Story of the Methodist-lady* in 1770. Such works indicate the extent to which religious debates involving women were becoming a part of public consciousness. Religious experience, in this sense, gave women the language to enter a public space and to explore any distinction between inner emotion and outer bearing, as emphasised in *The Female Seven Ages*.⁴⁹ Debates over doctrines such as religious enthusiasm were, in reality, ‘expressions of deep-seated concerns over the role of marginalized members of society’ including women.’⁵⁰

The Female Seven Ages prescribes a life path defined in accordance with religious values and beliefs, focusing wholly on the thoughts and actions of an ideal woman, defined in the absence of any male presence, for contemplative purposes rather than any explicit aesthetic enjoyment. The gently curving narrative easily guides the eye along the curve of the fan leaf surface in a didactic progression to aid such contemplation.

⁴⁸ Cracknell, 1796: 8.

⁴⁹ An increasing number of women became active preachers in more rural communities in England, Wales and Scotland, towards the turn of the nineteenth century, encouraged by the popularity of radical Baptist and Methodist preachers’ revolutionary sermons.

⁵⁰ Le Gates, 1976: 26.

In addition, *The Female Seven Ages* balances its composition so as to mirror each earlier stage of life with a corresponding latter stage on the opposite side of the fan leaf. Wilson purposefully places an image of a woman at her high point of mental and physical productivity at the centre of the outer rim of the fan leaf surface and discards the traditional format of presenting the latter stages of a person's (man's) life as descending into 'a second childhood' in favour of illustrating a strong woman taking solace in her faith. *The Female Seven Ages* acts as a mobile advocate for peaceful female contemplation, as well as to aid religious mediation.

Significant pictorial parallels for the latter narratives on *The Female Seven Ages* fan leaf surface can be found in many portraits of widowed or elderly women completed in the last decades of the eighteenth century, who are often shown seated alone and turned towards the viewer, and wearing a cap and dark, solemn clothes. Two such examples are Henry Benbridge's 1776 oil portrait, *Mrs. Benjamin Simons* (Fig. 21) and Thomas Lawrence's 1789 portrait of *Queen Charlotte* (Fig. 22), featuring the aged Queen sitting in a chair and contemplating her surroundings in solitude.

Wilson's fan leaf adapts the conventions of such imagery and offers an unusual and ingenious representation of a woman's life cycle, playing with the concepts found in Shakespeare's famous text in order to acknowledge their lives and the shifting attitudes towards them.

References:

Cust, 1891: 90.

CAT VII.ii. *THE FEMALE SEVEN AGES*

Title (object)

The Female Seven Ages

Location

Fans Unmounted Roy

Date

1797

British Museum Registration number

1887, 1010.33

Materials

Paper

Techniques

Stipple engraving

Production person

Published by Ashton and Hadwen and made by George Wilson

Production place

Published in London and exhibited at Stationer's Hall

Mark/ Inscription and Text

Title text, main text and production line read identical to that of cat. no: VI.

School

British

Dimensions

286mm x 535mm

Associated objects

1891, 0713.723 and 1891, 0713.415

Associated titles

William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*

Acquisition date and name

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1891

Description:

This unmounted fan leaf design is the first of two variants of *The Female Seven Ages* design previously discussed (Reg. No. 1891, 0713.723). This version, however, exhibits a thinner paper board on which the stipple print is set over the top half of the semi-circular design and a thin gold paint line applied to the board, which separates it from the thinner paper placed on the bottom of the semi-circular fan leaf design.

The predominant themes and issues raised by this fan leaf design are discussed under cat. no: VII.

References

Cust, 1891: 91.

CAT VII.iii. *THE FEMALE SEVEN AGES*

Title (object)

The Female Seven Ages

Location

Fans Unmounted Roy

Date

1797

British Museum Registration number

1891, 0713.415

Materials

Paper

Techniques

Stipple engraving

Production person

Published by Ashton and Hadwen and made by George Wilson

Production place

Published in London and exhibited at Stationer's Hall

Mark/ Inscription and Text

Title text, main text and production line read identical to that of cat. no: VII.

School

British

Dimensions

148mm x 464mm

Associated objects

1891, 0713.723 and 1887, 1010.33

Associated titles

William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*

Acquisition date and name

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1887

Description:

This unmounted fan leaf design is the second of two subtle variants of *The Female Seven Ages* design previously discussed (Reg. Nos. 1891, 0713.723 and 1887, 1010.33). This version, however, exhibits a thin paper board similar to that of Reg. No.: 1891, 0713.723 on which the stipple print is set over the top half of the semi-circular design and omits any gold rimmed line spanning the midpoint of the fan leaf design. The predominant themes and issues raised by this fan leaf design are discussed under cat. no: VII.

References

Cust, 1891: 91.

**CAT VIII. THE LADY'S ADVISOR PHYSICAN & MORALIST OR,
HALF AN HOURS ENTERTAINMENT AT THE EXPENSE OF
NOBODY**

Title (object)

*The Lady's Advisor Physican & Moralist or,
Half an Hours Entertainment at the Expense
of Nobody*

Location

Fans Unmounted Imp

Date

1797

British Museum Registration number

1891, 0713.501

Materials

Paper

Techniques

Stipple engraving

Production person

Published by Ashton & Hadwen

Production place

Published in London and exhibited at Stationer's Hall

Mark/ inscription and text

Title text placed in the centre of the unmounted fan leaf, held up by a winged cherub holding up the image of a mounted reticulated fan leaf up to the viewer, reads: *The Lady's Advisor Physican & Moralist or, Half an Hours Entertainment at the Expense of Nobody. No. 1- How to Catch the Spleen. No. 2- How to Wind it. No. 3-How to Fall Very Deeply in Love. No. 4- A Gentle Cure for it. No. 5- How to Plague Everybody. No.6- How to Please Most Folks*, underneath reading: *With an account of the diseases of the Mind-Their growth-Mode of engendering a radical Cure for each by which any person not regularly admitted of the Physicians College, may become useful in the Art of Healing and dispensing happiness.* The text below each narrative reads, from left-hand side to the right-hand side; 1. *If you wish to be unhappy look at the unpleasant side of every object-then reject the society of human beings, & believe only amongst animals & Brutes dwells dear Sincerity*, 2. *If you wish to be happy disdain not the agreeable scenes but encourage a virtuous aspiration to partake of them with honour & Moderation*, 3. *look upon or listen to an object which is agreeable to your mind & if you have the least sensibility you will most probably be completely overhead & ears in pickles*. 4. *look upon the changeableness & natural in-consistency of Mankind and you will find a certain remedy for the cure of your delusion*, 5. *Be dissatisfied with everything, and everybody & declare war against the whole world, N.B A dangerous & disagreeable experiment, not recommended*, 6. *Be just to your Enemy, Sincere to your friend, constant to your Mistress-To please everyone is a task too great for a mortal-to please those deserving attention, nothing more is required than to follow the above rules. N.B. An Old and Approved Recipe.*

School

British

Dimensions

150mm x 470mm

Associated objects

1891, 0713.723

Acquisition date and name

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1891

Description:

Whilst Wilson's *The Female Seven Ages* design can be interpreted as a meditative and scriptural example of how a late eighteenth-century lady should conduct her life and physical deportment, *The Lady's Advisor Physician & Moralist, Or Half an Hour Entertainment at the Expense of Nobody* appears very different.

Around the outer edge of *The Lady's Advisor* are six narrative pictures spread over the entirety of the fan leaf. A title text is written above each image, whilst under each is a text that explains the illustration and provides advice regarding how to avoid the unhappiness that is depicted in the circular narratives. These narrative images (read from left to right) illustrate: *No. 1- 'How to Catch the Spleen'*, an old woman inside a domestic setting, sitting surrounded by cats, with her face partly covered with a veil; *No. 2- 'How to Wind it'*, a woman in eighteenth-century dress in the foreground of a landscape overlooking a group of people making merry in the background; *No. 3- 'How to Fall Very Deeply in Love'*, an amorous couple dressed in classical clothing, seated under a tree in a secluded spot; *No. 4- 'A Gentle Cure for it'*, a young woman pointing to her new born baby to the profound shock of her lover; *No. 5- 'How to Plague Everybody'*, a young man, a dramatic silhouette of a devil holding a club with the words 'ILL NATURED SATIRE' emblazoned across his club and brandishing a shield with 'spare no one'; and *No. 6- 'How to Please Most Folks'*, a woman in a classical landscape holding a paintbrush and palette looking out to the viewer.

Wilson utilises an eclectic range of pictorial models in *The Lady's Advisor*. The scene of outdoor revelry illustrated on *The Lady's Advisor's* delicate surface provides one such example of Wilson's registration and assimilation of traditional images. More specifically, it draws on the traditional motif of bacchanalian or pastoral dance that appears in many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century works illustrating mythological, religious, or historical subject matter. *The Triumph of Pan* (Fig. 23), painted by Nicolas Poussin in 1636, represents an especially sophisticated imagery

of such a dance, which finds a direct and modernised parallel in scene two on *The Lady's Advisor*.

The theatrical staging of Poussin's triumphant dance, depicting a mixture of mythological Grecian nymphs, satyrs, and goats cavorting in a woodland clearing, before a figurative characterisation of the god Pan, is suffused with symbols of physical excess and theatricality, combining elements of both Pagan and Christian religions.⁵¹ Wilson effectively reverses and resituates the composition so that a single woman, dressed in similar classical attire, is poised close to the edge of the picture plane, looking back over the landscape behind her to view a group of figures dancing in a circle. He thus purposefully places the activity of dance far in the background, so as to focus attention on the foreground female figure and her own observations.

Wilson's text underneath the image reinforces such a reading, giving gentle encouragement to the viewer, if confronted by a similar situation, to take its advice and 'distain not the agreeable senses but encourage a virtuous aspiration to partake of them with honour & moderation'. *The Lady's Advisor* can also be seen to recall many contemporary eighteenth-century pictorial images. Thus, scenes two and three can be associated with William Hogarth's *Before and After*, completed between 1730 and 1731 (Figs. 24.a and 24.b).

⁵¹ Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey, *Nicolas Poussin*, Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1996: 54.

Both *The Female Seven Ages* and *The Lady's Advisor* present the viewer with an unusual, dualised focus on, the often contradictory, views and opinions expressed regarding women and a host of cultural issues and emerging themes relating to them during the eighteenth century by utilising two separate, though comparable, strands of pictorial formulae to give guidance to a female clientele. *The Female Seven Ages* presents us with an effective pictorial realignment of an age-old pictorial formula previously centred on illustrating a man's stages in life and progression in age.

The Lady's Advisor, instead, invites its viewer to contemplate, and amend, their behaviour by focusing on the dangers of excessive emotion, which could easily turn into either love or hate. Interestingly, Wilson replaces the central image of *The Female Seven Ages* on *The Lady's Advisor* fan leaf design with a decorative fan leaf held outstretched by a cupid. This fan leaf frontispiece plays with a more complex idea of pictorially 'speaking' to the viewer, presenting the spectator with scenarios of positive and negative behaviour and mental attitudes from which they need to learn. This is reinforced by the underlining of the word your in the text, emphasising its importance and relevance to an owner.

As the outspread fan leaf frontispiece explains, this work provides '*an account of the diseases of the Mind- Their growth- Mode of engendering a radical Cure for each by which any person not regularly admitted of the Physicians College, may become useful in the Art of Healing and dispensing happiness*'. This printed fan leaf design has effectively taken the place of a lady's companion or doctor and is promoting itself, seemingly independent of its designer, as an oracle, inviting any owner to

compare these enactments of darkly humorous female folly and eccentricity against experiences gained in life.

The six narratives displayed sequentially across the surface (enjoying the same size and semi-circular arrangement as that of *The Female Seven Ages*) allude to a range of scenarios. Whereas *The Female Seven Ages* presents the observer with an ideal of childbearing within a married union, *The Lady's Advisor* shows comical, yet potent, examples of the '*natural inconsistency of mankind*'. However, this particular fan leaf design reminds its reader that in accepting such unexpected occurrences in life, a lady can '*find a certain remedy for the cure of [her] delusion*'.

Furthermore, *The Lady's Advisor* invites the viewer's gaze not just to search for scenarios depicting curative narratives or restorative advice, but also for pure entertainment that could be enjoyed, as the fan leaf itself suggests, in half an hour. Significantly, whereas *The Female Seven Ages* rallies against the enlightened ideas of reasoned thinking and scientific progression *The Lady's Advisor*, by its very evocation as an aesthetic physician, casts itself in an alternative, more 'scientific' mode. In a sense, both fan leafs are a response to cultural shifts in understanding women. These two fan leaf designs could be joined together back to back, with each oval turning to reveal a different viewpoint on a scenario of a woman's life.

Together, they illustrate the two visual strategies Wilson employed to appeal to female clients and to aid in their overall happiness. They also illustrate the two identities women were constantly identified with in this era – as either virtuous or as dangerously excessive in emotion and desire.

References

Cust, 1891, p. 85.

CAT IX. THE FOLLY OF MAN OR THE WORLD GROWN ODD AND CRAZY

Title (object)

*The Folly of Man or
the World Grown Odd and Crazy*

Location

Fans Unmounted Roy

Date

1797

British Museum Registration number

1891, 0713.495

Materials

Paper

Techniques

Etching and engraving

Production person

Published by Ashton & Hadwen after George Wilson

Production place

Published in London and exhibited in Stationer's Hall

Mark/ inscription and text

The elegant frontispiece of varied scales of calligraphic text quips subversively: *The World Grown Odd and Crazy: Mirth's the solace of our day/Let us love her waggish way/ With her laugh till life shall end/And by jesting learn to mend.* The calligraphic titles which illuminate the contents of each of the medley narratives read, from left to right on the left-hand side of the fan, snaking downwards: 1. *Pigs playing at cards/* 2. *A Frenchman kicking the world before him for a football/* 3. *An Englishman learning to dance and turning his back on roast beef and the deeds of his ancestors/* 4. *A Good Husband teaching morality by example/* 5. *Jupiter bestowing Good Sense*

*and Candour on a critic/ 6. Cobblers turned Kings and Kings turned Cobblers/7. Monkeys lecturing on Innocence and Affection/ 8. A lawyer refusing a fee from Indigence/ 9. A Poet sans shirt and small cloths holding high converse with the great lord Apollo/ 10. Impudence instructing Ignorance/ 11. Scandal doing penance for abusing the world/ 12. A moll teaching tenderness and forbearance to lambs/ 13. A wit holding up in a strongbox a trifle against old age. Carrying on from this image, towards the right-hand side of the fan, the titles read: 14. A Beaux turned butterfly/ 15. A lover who has resorted to drown himself altering his mind/ 16. A tender lover turned careless husband/ 17. An old bachelor looking to the entreaties of Cupid/ 18. A Clown beating his wife to be revenged on his enemies/ 19. A Miser dispersing of his all to the poor/ 20. A lovely Duchess bribing Time to spare her charms/ 21. A lady persuading Death to take her useless husband and spare her faithful dog/ 22. Flattery turned out of court and turned out of town shutting their doors against him/ 23. Venus and Cupid grown old and carrying their Turtle Doves to market to subsist on/ 24. Vice grown quite out of date and Virtue become quite the Ton/ 25. Lucifer seeing mankind bent on reformation determines to hang himself! Text accompanying this image reads: *In the year 1797 Pride and Iniquity died-the World grew good. Forlorn, depressed and abandoned I seek comfort from Hemp, Reader pray for my Soul!**

School

British

Dimensions

155mm x 479mm

Associated objects

1887, 1010.30

Acquisition date and name

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1891

Description:

It hath been...mine endeavour...to give unto every limb and part not only his due proportion but...his due place, and not to set the head where the foot should be, or the foot where the head. I may adventure to see many guilty of that crime which was laid against the Apostle, to turn that world upside down and to set that in the bottom which others make the top of the building, and to set that upon the roof which others lay for a foundation.⁵²

⁵² Cited in Christopher Hill, *Change and Continuity in the Seventeenth Century*, London: Weinfeld and Nicolson: 1974: 32.

The lectures of the radical preacher Henry Denne, delivered in the midst of the turbulence of the English Civil War (1642–1660), may be useful to bear in mind when we analyse the complicated imagery found on the surface of *The Folly of Man or The World Grown Odd and Crazy*. With the production of this striking, highly accomplished fan leaf design, Wilson demonstrates an individual and innovative style, distinctive in late eighteenth-century fan leaf design.

The twenty five miniature medley fan scenes that populate this fan leaf design describe an unfolding narrative of folly and humorous inversions in nature and society. 1. '*Pigs playing at cards*' shows two pigs playing cards on opposite sides of a table. 2. '*A Frenchman kicking the world before him for a football*' features a Frenchman kicking the globe as a football. 3. '*An Englishman learning to dance and turning his back on roast beef and the deeds of his ancestors*' illustrate a stout Englishman with his back turned on a scroll denoting his ancestors. 4. '*A Good Husband teaching morality by example*' pictures a husband in one corner kissing a servant whilst the wife looks on in horror from behind a door on the other side of the picture. 5. '*Jupiter bestowing Good Sense and Candour on a critic*' shows the figure of Jupiter extending his hand to a critic whilst sitting on a cloud.

6. '*Cobblers turned Kings and Kings turned Cobblers*' illustrates a King reduced to cobbling whilst a cobbler looks on, wearing a crown and royal coat. 7. '*Monkies lecturing on Innocence and Affection*' features a collective of monkeys standing next to a lectern, lecturing whilst men stand below listening. 8. '*A lawyer refusing a fee from Indigence*' encapsulates a narrative illustrating a lawyer pictured to the left-

hand side of the picture waving away a fee from a personification of Indigence. 9. '*A Poet sans shirt and small cloths holding high converse with the great lord Apollo*' is a narrative depicting a poet without a shirt, arms outstretched in gesture whilst holding a conversation with Apollo who is on a cloud. 10. '*Impudence instructing Ignorance*' depicts an animalisation of Impudence (as a fox) instructing an animalisation of Ignorance (as a donkey). 11. '*Scandal doing penance for abusing the world*' features a personification of Scandal, dressed in a large white cloth that covers his face, doing penance for abusing the world by standing on a stool in front of a crowd of people. 12. '*A moll teaching tenderness and forbearance to lambs*' illustrates a moll sitting surrounded by lambs in a rural setting. 13. '*A wit holding up in a strongbox a trifle against old age*' shows a wit sitting on his knees, examining a strongbox, which lies on the floor in front of him.

Positioned to the right of this is the unfolding narrative of images. 14. '*A Beaux turned butterfly*' titling an image of a butterfly floating in a countryside setting. 15. '*A lover who has resorted to drown himself altering his mind*' illustrates a dejected lover standing next to a pool of water. 16. '*A tender lover turned careless husband*' describes a scene with a husband standing to the left of the picture kissing a servant whilst the wife looks on in horror from behind a door. 17. '*An old bachelor looking to the entreaties of Cupid*' shows an old bachelor talking to Cupid across a table. 18. '*A Clown beating his wife to be revenged on his enemies*' illustrates a Clown beating a wife in an interior setting. 19. '*A Miser dispersing of his all to the poor*' pictures a miser carrying his possessions out to disperse them to the poor.

20. *'A lovely Duchess bribing Time to spare her charms'* features a young Duchess sitting across a tale from a personification of Time discussing saving her charms. 21. *'A lady persuading Death to take her useless husband and spare her faithful dog'* depicts a lady standing next to a stock personification of Death dressed in black, replete with a sickle, pointing to her husband who sits with his back turned whilst she holds a faithful dog. 22. *'Flattery turned out of court and turned out of town shutting their doors against him'* pictures a personification of Flattery with his back turned to a man who is in the process of shutting the door on him. 23. *'Venus and Cupid grown old and carrying their Turtle Doves to market to subsist on'* illustrates a personification of Venus and Cupid carrying their Turtle Doves to market to subsist on. 24. *'Vice grown quite out of date and Virtue become quite the Ton'* features a personification of Vice being carried away by the personification of Virtue. 25. *'Lucifer seeing mankind bent on reformation determines to hang himself!'* depicts a personification of Lucifer standing, about to put his head in a noose to hang.

Each narrative image is visually linked through an interweaving form of overlapping, jutting rectangular frames, creating a cumulative narrative effect that can be read in a manner similar to a textual document. Thus, this collective of narratives includes a devil hanging himself in despair, a group of pigs gambling, and an Englishman wearing the latest in continental fashion, learning to dance whilst turning his back, symbolically, on a meal of roast beef. Such is the diversity in the character of the diminutive, fantastical narrative trompe l'oeil scenarios that span, in an apparently random and disparate fashion, the entire surface of *The Folly of Man*. What are we to make of this complicated, overlapping satirical imagery?

Each densely detailed satirical scenario, combining a highly finished blend of etching, engraving, and aquatint techniques, visualises a variant on the theme of breakdown, instigated through numerous acts of folly. As such, *The Folly of Man* should be understood as maintaining and modernising a far wider European visual tradition preoccupied with this theme. The unusual compositional format of *The Folly of Man* allows each picture to be viewed as a separate entity or as part of a series that can be broken down into different sequences. Satirical continuities and tensions are built across its delicate surface, visually linking the miniature montage images that are depicted in the upper, bottom, and horizontal spheres of the fan leaf.

An earlier, similarly eclectic image, George Bickham Junior's *The Cardinal in the Dumps, With the Head of Colossus* (Fig. 26), provides a suggestive precedent for *The Folly of Man*'s satiric juxtapositions. The individual graphic elements in *The Cardinal in the Dumps*, such as the slightly oversized head that seems to be in conversation with an undersized cockerel that curiously peers at it from below, offer – in their surreal absurdity and comic dissonances – a suggestive precedent to the pictorial comedies scattered across the medley fan leaf. Noting such similarities, it becomes clear *The Folly of Man* re-inscribes the kinds of satirical assemblage presented in *Cardinal in the Dumps*, replacing the earlier print's rather acidic attack with more subtly satirical and intricately overlapping networks of juxtaposition.

More pointedly, Bickham Junior's print provides an interesting graphic compositional counterpart to *The Folly of Man* medley fan leaf. Just as Bickham's work depicts numerous kinds of image and text overlapping each other, forming inter-linkages of line and meaning, so in *The Folly of Man*, a similar compositional assemblage is chosen in which to organise its satiric narratives. This tradition of visual rhetoric was one that *The Folly of Man* sought both to subvert and to associate itself with.

The Folly of Man provides the viewer with a direct visual parallel to, and an updated version of, the wealth of etched and engraved images of an upturned world produced from the fifteenth century onwards. As Christina Kiaer has observed, the depiction of 'a topsy-turvy, reversed world is a central tool of satire....the pleasures from the side of disorder will always bleed into satire's imposition of order, inflecting and complicating its dualities.'⁵³ The satirical theme of 'the world upturned' normally involves an inversion of the natural order of universal social and natural stratification; this 'was to portray a biting social satire which could both fascinate and disturb the mind of the viewer.'⁵⁴

From the sixteenth century onwards, examples of human corporeal peculiarity encouraged both visual interest and mockery, acting as metaphorical examples of

⁵³ Christina Kiaer, 'Professional Femininity in Hogarth's *Strolling Actresses Dressing in a Barn*', Bernadette Fort and Angela Rosenthal (eds), *The Other Hogarth: Aesthetics of Difference*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press: 2001: 90.

⁵⁴ Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1995: 1.

one of the most popular themes of the era, ‘the world turned upside-down.’ If another peculiarity of medieval iconography that deals with certain characteristics of the theme of the world upturned is considered, that is, concerning the figure of the ‘foolish man,’ we can understand the extent to which *The Folly of Man* updated such a concept. In the late seventeenth century, the figure of ‘the foolish man’ became aligned with, or symbolic of, the iconography of an upturned world, visualising man’s innately foolish nature. As early as 1590, in its depiction of a globe encapsulated inside a jester’s cap, *A Map Made Like a Fool’s Head* (Fig. 27) inextricably links the universe with innate human folly.

An eighteenth-century print that helped re-introduce this particular trope is the anonymously produced *We are Seven* (Fig. 28), dated 1770 and sold in large numbers at London’s Bow Church Yard. Within this particular distinctive image, a group of assorted foolish figures is depicted in an unfamiliar rural landscape, making up one less than the title suggests so that the viewer makes up the last in number by virtue of observation.

The text at the bottom of *We are Seven* spells out the intended comparison between the viewer and the innate folly of all men, exclaiming, ‘Welcome my friend thus long we have been even/ Now thou art come thou makest our number Seven/ A perfect number foe men doe it call/ As perfect are we in our follies all.’ By extension, an eighteenth-century purchaser of *The Folly of Man* would have been implicit in, and part of, the cumulative cause of eighteenth-century follies, enabling

an astute ironic commentary on the part of Wilson.⁵⁵ Importantly, the pictorial theme of the inverted world appears in prints with regular occurrence from the mediaeval era, settling into an almost ‘comic strip’ format, which featured beginning, middle, and concluding pictures, a format that is still evident in the compositional structure of *The Folly of Man*.⁵⁶

Thus, prints such as the anonymously produced *A Pleasant History of the World Turned Upside Down* (Fig. 29), first published in the late sixteenth century and described by David Kunzle as developing into a ‘European Broadsheet type,’ introduced the theme of the inverted world.⁵⁷ The compositional format of these earlier prints is transmuted in a highly sophisticated manner on *The Folly of Man*’s elegant circular frontispiece and within each of its minute narrative pictures, wherein each picture of a very similar pictorial template is employed between the right-hand and left-hand sides of the image. Crucially, *The Folly of Man* extends this long established iconographic format by developing a storyline along an extended and sophisticated ‘comic strip’ format. The usage of this format allows a multitude of inversions of nature to be depicted along a cumulative, additive series to develop visually an overarching theme.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Hill, 1972: 1.

⁵⁶ Shelia O’Connell, *The Popular Print in England*, London: British Museum Press: 1999: 123.

⁵⁷ David Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip: Narrative Strips and Picture Stories in the European Broadsheet from c.1450 to 1825 (History of the Comic Strip)*, California: University of California: 1973: 1.

⁵⁸ O’Connell, 1999: 123.

Pointedly, the last image on *The Folly of Man* fan leaf surface, number twenty five, ‘*Lucifer seeing mankind bent on reformation determines to hang himself!*’ achieves a satisfyingly ironic, and concluding, scenario to the narratives enacted in the images leading up to it. The inclusion of the date 1797, written in the devil’s speech bubble, places the preceding narratives in an exact contemporary time frame and context and leaves any viewer with an intriguing ending upon which to deliberate.

In a similar vein, the startlingly inventive nature of *The Folly of Man* is partly shared by numerous seventeenth-century European interpretations of the world turned upside-down. These include the anonymously produced German letterpress print *Klagvber die verkerte Welt, zweyer Alter Philosophi* (Fig. 30), first printed in 1619. Indeed, the German print, whilst it does not include a traditional depiction of an inverted globe or a series of smaller narratives as displayed on *The Folly of Man*, proves to be an interesting, and ironic, prototype in terms of the animalisation illustrated upon its delicate surface. The Italian etching *Cosiva il mondo* (Fig. 31), produced by Giuseppe Maria Mitelli and published in 1685, offers a more abstract visualisation of the theme of the topsy-turvy world, introducing such pictorial conceits as the surreal image of a half- moon trapped in a tree.

One of the earliest known British prints depicting the natural world in unnatural revolt is a woodcut dated 12 March 1656, illustrating a cat’s castle being besieged by rats. An English version is an inexpensive engraving published by John Overton a year earlier, in 1655, entitled *The Cat’s Castle* (Fig. 32). Meanwhile, the frontispiece for John Smith’s broadside *The World Turn’d Upside Down: Or A Brief Description*

of the *Ridiculous Fashions of These Distracted Times* (Fig. 33), published in 1647, registers a graphic interpretation of the theme of the upturned world.

The medley fan leaf concentrates upon the distinctive inversions and behavioural follies of late eighteenth-century life, righted or ridiculed through metaphor.

Wilson's title for his image would have effectively '...led eighteenth-century observer[s] to look for encoded themes' of modern inversion and folly familiar to their own experience of daily life in London's urban metropolis.⁵⁹ The poem *The World Turn'd Upside Down, or, The Folly of Man; In Twelve Comical Relations Upon Uncommon Subjects*, first published in 1736, exemplifies the viewpoint of seeing the modern, relentlessly changing environment as one that generates a continual process of inversion. The introduction states the following:

...With all the new form'd worlds that float
In seas and air without a boat:
...No wonder then if we sometimes
We see a great variety...
If by chance of place Turn'd Upside-down:
...Turns the poor earth-worms topsy-turvy
Becomes the tennis ball of fools...
And as the mad brim'd world runs round
Still keeps towards the guilty ground.⁶⁰

John Trusler, a contemporary of William Hogarth and a notable commentator on his artwork, warned in his conduct manual of 1775 what the excesses of folly could bring, insisting that:

...There is a certain dignity that should be preserved in all our pleasures: in love a man may lose his heart without losing his nose: at the table a man may

⁵⁹ Castle, 1988: 16.

⁶⁰ [Anon], *The WORLD Turn'd Upside Down, or, The FOLLY of MAN; In Twelve comical Relations UPON Uncommon Subjects*, London: 1793a: 3.

have a distinguished palette without being a glutton...Every virtue has its kindred vice and every pleasure its neighbouring disgrace. Temperance and moderation make the gentleman: but excess the blackguard.⁶¹

Affectation was thought amongst the worst of behavioural follies as the eighteenth century progressed. In his *Divine Prayer*, taken from Samuel Davenport's edited compilation, *A Miscellaneous Selection of Religious and Moral Quotations*, first published in 1793, Dr Watts states that:

AFFECTATION may be said to be the root or spring of folly. There is scarce one species of ridiculous behaviour which is not immediately derived from it. He therefore who indulges himself, opens a door to a whole army of absurdities; and he who cures himself of affectation, cuts off a whole train of follies at one stroke.⁶²

Affectation could even pose an 'intimate challenge to the ordering patterns of life itself.'⁶³ 'Affected' gentlemen, as one essayist wrote in 1750, were perceived to take dress and outward appearance as an overriding interest and ambition:

I would fain know, whether anything that is Noble or Brave can be expected from such Creatures, who, if not Women, are at least Hermaphrodites...Do such nice gentlemen, who dress and play with their Bodies, as with Puppets, promise their native country, either refined and active Statesmen, or hardy and intrepid Soldiers?.⁶⁴

This viewpoint was crystallised by a writer in the *Universal Spectator*, who in 1728 wrote 'in every country Decency requires that the Sexes should be differenc'd by

⁶¹ Dr Trusler, *The Principles of Politeness*, London: 1775: 20.

⁶² Samuel Davenport, ed., *A Miscellaneous Selection of Religious and Moral QUOTATIONS*, London: 1793: 146.

⁶³ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, London: Harper Collins Publishing: 1997: 83.

⁶⁴ [Anon], 'Weekly Essay in July', *The London Magazine, and Monthly Chronicler*, 5: London, 1735: 365.

Dress, in order to prevent Multitudes of Irregularities which otherwise would be continually occasion'd.⁶⁵

W. Griffin advises in *The New Economy of Human Life*, first published in 1766, that as 'in all extremes there is folly/ Dress thyself according to thy rank and fortune; for as thou art a link of the great chain.'⁶⁶ M. Darly's 1771 humorous etching, *My Lord Tip-Toe Just Arrived from Monkey Land* (Fig. 34), depicts just such an occurrence of overblown continental material excess. In Darly's sketch, the foolish and effeminised Lord 'Tip-Toe,' very similar in iconographic representation to the Frenchman illustrated in 'A Frenchman kicking the world before him for a football', the second narrative scene on *The Folly of Man*, is depicted returning from France dressed in the foppish extremes of continental fashion.

The Folly of Man extends earlier eighteenth-century works charting England's perceived descent into social chaos in a highly inventive manner. This exchange can be better understood if we turn to analyse an image of a similar subject that, like the late eighteenth-century illustrated poem, entitled *The WORLD Turn'd Upside Down or, The Folly of Man: In Twelve Comic Relations UPON Uncommon Subjects* (Fig. 35), which thanks to its popularity, was republished three times throughout the eighteenth century. The print began its trajectory in an engraving by J. Cobb entitled *The Folly of Man or The World Turn'd Upside-Down* and completed in 1720 (Fig. 36). It was republished as *The Folly of Mankind Expos'd or the World Turned*

⁶⁵ Castle, 1995: 83.

⁶⁶ W. Griffin, *The New Economy of Human Life*, London: 1766: 50.

Upside Down (Fig. 37) by William Dacey of Bow Churchyard Street in 1733 and again in 1790, entitled *The World Turned Upside-Down or the Folly of Man* (Fig. 38) by the publisher John Evans. The natural state of the world is presented in twelve separate narratives, each focusing on an imagined inversion.

The compositional strategies used in this imagery are very similar to that found in *The Folly of Man*. Indeed, it is as if Wilson has picked a selection of these recognisable eighteenth-century stock stereotypes, playfully cut up each narrative image, and then carefully placed them in a deceptively arbitrary fashion, right across *The Folly of Man*. Such graphic inter-referentiality can be elaborated upon if we compare the first scenes from this earlier imagery with the second narrative on *The Folly of Man* fan leaf surface. Within both miniature illustrations, the pictorial convention of depicting an inverted globe, held by two medieval fools to introduce the theme, is transposed onto ‘*A Frenchman kicking the world before him for a football,*’ and modernised through the inclusion of the figure of a Frenchman carelessly kicking the globe. Re-reading one image against the other, the foreigner becomes aligned, physically and metaphorically, with the figure of foolishness.

In a similar vein, scene twenty one on *The Folly of Man*, entitled ‘*A lady persuading Death to take her useless husband and spare her faithful dog*’ corresponds to the third scene of the earlier imagery, which illustrates the unnatural inversion of the sexes by depicting the wife ‘turned husband.’ Meanwhile, the displacement of the customary introductory image of the inverted world to the second narrative image on *The Folly of Man*, and its replacement by an image of pigs gambling in ‘*Pigs playing*

at cards', induces a deliberately playful and paradoxical undertone. Significantly, the depiction of men gambling is a common target for artists satirising the bad manners of the era and is reproduced on a number of fan leaves preceding *The Folly of Man*, such as the satirical fan leaf *Bad Manners* (Fig. 39) produced in 1790. Wilson places two ill-mannered men gambling in a small narrative placed on *The Folly of Man*'s left-hand side to symbolically incorporate pigs comically to underscore the folly of gambling and to induce humour.

This particular narrative can also be seen to engage in dialogue with another social satire dealing with the deceits and folly of gambling, James Gillray's *A Pig in a Poke. Whist, whist* (Fig. 39), a hand-coloured etching on paper first published in 1788. Gillray's image plays upon the traditional linkage between greed – symbolically aligned with the great appetite of a pig – and gambling for money amongst men. Within Gillray's print, this point is emphasised by the deliberate placing of a picture of a pig eating from a trough above the head of the seated man to the left-hand side of the print, enabling the viewers to focus on the pig's image as well as on the men at the table. Within '*Pigs playing at cards*', the symbolic greed of men playing cards has been taken a step further; the figures of men within are replaced by the forms of two fat pigs. Furthermore, these pigs are huddled around the little table in almost the same compositional format as in *A Pig in a Poke. Whist, whist*, visually reinforcing the linkage between the folly of playing cards and the vice of greed.

The Folly of Man's elegant frontispiece quips subversively: '*The World Grown Odd and Crazy: Mirth's the solace of our day/ Let us love her waggish way/ With her laugh till life shall end/ And by jesting learn to mend*'. *The Folly of Man* thus also functions as a refined visual reminder that mirth itself can rectify follies of modern behaviour, exalting (and promoting) laughter, as a potential healing activity for some of the multifarious follies of affected living. There is also a particular, if fragmented, focus upon, and explicit enjoyment in, the details of dress, character, and movements in each microcosm of dramatic activity, which form a rhythmic link across *The Folly of Man*. Hogarth's 'serpentine line of beauty,' defined in Chapter 10 of his 1753 treatise, *Analysis of Beauty*, as the foremost principle of beauty that 'gives play to the imagination and delights the eye... [and] *leads the eye into a wanton kind of chance...*,' may be evoked here, if we imagine the viewer casting her eye over the waving lines and the variety of unsymmetrical imagery in the fan, blending harmoniously in an enjoyable mental and physical exercise.⁶⁷

Robert Shanahagan's comment in his 1779 pamphlet, *The Exhibition, or a Second Anticipation, Being Remarks on the Principle Works to be Exhibited Next Month at the Royal Academy*, that '...There is no distinct flatness on which the eye is compelled to rest; but it is kept in constant motion...', when referring to Thomas Gainsborough's work at the 1779 Royal Academy of Art Summer Exhibition, may well be applied to the direction of one's gaze when viewing the imagery on Wilson's medley fan leaf.⁶⁸ The feminine gaze, one that would initially cast its eye over the

⁶⁷ William Hogarth, *Analysis of Beauty*, London: 1935: 50.

⁶⁸ Michael Rosenthal and Martin Myrone, eds., *Thomas Gainsborough*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press: 1999: 1.

medley fan leaf surface in crowded commercial premises, may have been captivated by the variety of detail and tonal contrasts deployed across Wilson's work.

The visual spectacle of consuming the bizarre, unusually minute illustrations scattered across *The Folly of Man* fan leaf surface would have given any observer a degree of pleasure and incited an agreeable sense of curiosity. This was a view that could offer an alternative 'comment on urban culture' as well as providing a sophisticated, dystopic escapism within which to immerse one self.⁶⁹ Consequently, *The Folly of Man* offers one of the most ingenious visual interpretations of the theme of an upturned world, produced before visualisations of this symbolic theme began to decline at the turn of the nineteenth century.

References

Cust, 1891: 85.

CAT IX.ii. THE FOLLY OF MAN OR THE WORLD GROWN ODD AND CRAZY

Title (object)

Location

⁶⁹ Rosenthal, 2001: 125.

*The Folly of Man or
the World Grown Odd and Crazy*

Fans Unmounted Roy

Date

1797

British Museum Registration number

1887, 1010.30

Materials

Paper

Techniques

Etching, engraving and aquatint

Production person

Published by Ashton and Hadwen and made by George Wilson

Production place

Published in London and exhibited at Stationer's Hall

Mark/ Inscription and Text

Title text, main text and production line read identical to that of cat. no: IX.

School

British

Dimensions

290mm x 534mm

Associated objects

1891, 0713.495

Acquisition date and name

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1887

Description:

This unmounted fan leaf design entitled *The Folly of Man or the World Grown Odd and Crazy* is the second of the two printed fan leaf designs previously discussed (Reg. No. 1891, 0713.495). The predominant themes and issues raised by this fan leaf design are discussed under cat. no: IX.

References

Cust, 1891: 85.

CAT X. (UNTITLED FAN LEAF)

Title (object)

Location

The Quiz Club, Dedicated to all the Beaus in Christendom (Untitled Fan Leaf) Unmounted Fans Imp

Date **British Museum Registration number**
1797 1891, 0713.510

Materials

Paper

Techniques

Engraving

Production person

Published by Ashton & Hadwen and made by George Wilson

Production place

Published in London and exhibited at Stationer's Hall

Mark/ inscription and text

Text encapsulated in a medallion at the centre of the fan leaf reads: *The Quiz Club, Dedicated to all the Beaus in Christendom; by S.A Professor of Physiognomy & Corrector of the Heart. Dear Madam ask your loving Quiz If here he "spies his own dear Phiz, And if mark'd out some faults he find Like one or two which warp his mind, Bid the defaulter hence amend And be the Sexes honor'd friend"* . The twelve lines of descriptive text under each medallion, reading (from left to right): 1. *This Young Spark is perfectly a man of Taste-dresses like a Gentlemen, swears like a Noble and believes the Ladies think him a Clever Fellow,* 2. *This good Creature loves a Jest,- he can be smart on any subject that comes up- foremost Religion... Virtue or Decency,* 3. *This young Man loves fox hunting, Cock fighting, fishing, & the company of Stable boys, some call him Esquire, but his true title is Booby,* 4. *This man (wonderful Man he should be called) is a learned Ass, speaks grammatically nice, looks very solemn, & expects of ye Ladies to understand his consequence, happy are they who win his smile,* 5. *This amiable soul loves a game at Cards, he has played away his Estate, & is now venturing on his last stake, while his distress'd family sit in wait at home!,* 6. *A man of strict honor, that lies, cheats & deceives all who trust him & will give anyone that disputes his being so- a stab with a bit of cold steel to prove his worthiness,* 7. *A choice Spirit, one that is well known in Covent Garden for his frolics-and in his own family, looking for his folly,* 8. *A man well acquainted with everyone, knows every Lady in town, her connections, fragilities, virtues, whims, passions, & secret good or ill qualities yet knows no more of them than his Grandmother,* 9. *This gentleman is so very peevish, cross & tyrannical, that his wife & friends should be stones & statues to put up with his extravagant humours,* 10. *A heart at ease-give this Good Soul but a little retirement, present of Cash in his pocket, some good beef & Port in his belly & he cares nothing for the morro,* 11. *A fit man for Closet-give this Gentleman retirement, he requires to ear companion with none but immortals,- Gods, Goddesses, Genii, Fairies, Fawns, Sylphs, Naiads, Dryads, & ye like,* 12. *An unfit Man to be alone-one that his*

associates nick named boy Drowsy- he can find no amusement but on his own, & if he is left to half an hour alone he falls asleep. The production line reads: "Publish'd by Ashton & Co. No. 28 Little Britain, May 1. 1797 & Enter'd at Stationer's Hall and G. Wilson int. et sculp."

School

British

Dimensions

357mm x 576mm

Associated objects

1891, 0713.512; 1887, 1010.28; 1891, 0713.724; 1887, 1010.29 and 1891, 0713.510

Acquisition date and name

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1891

Description:

This sizable unmounted fan leaf design, completed on a thick paper board, represents Wilson's concluding – and most sophisticated – commentary on the figure of the beau. The twelve, highly accomplished, circular medallions that curve around the semi-circular edge of the fan leaf depict the following figures, from left to right: 1. *'This Young Spark'* illustrates a young beau dressed in a fancy ruffed shirt and hat, placed sideways to the viewer with one hand on his hip. 2. *'This good Creature loves a Jest'* presents a picture of an older beau looking skyward with stout, arrogant features, his arms placed firmly across his chest, seated at a table with a bottle. 3. *'This young Man loves fox hunting, Cock fighting, fishing, & the company of Stable boys'* illustrates an almost childlike beau turned to face the viewer holding a hunting stick. 4. *'This man (wonderful Man he should be called) is a learned Ass'* depicts a very fat beau with a snub nose wearing a judge's costume. 5. *'This amiable soul loves a game at Cards'* shows a thin beau sitting playing cards at a table. 6. *'A man of strict honor that lies, cheats & deceives all who trust him'* pictures an admiral dressed in naval hat and uniform standing in three quarter profile to the viewer.

Number 7 is titled '*A choice Spirit, one that is well known in Covent Garden for his frolics*' and illustrates a merry beau holding an overflowing wine glass while holding onto a table.

8. '*A man well acquainted with everyone*' presents a rotund beau with a round belly contemplating life as he sits reclining back in a large armchair. 9. '*This gentleman is so very peevish, cross & tyrannical*' shows a thin, cross-looking beau sitting upright in a chair. 10. '*A heart at ease*' presents a strange, childlike beau with a moon face and large thighs, wearing a feminine cap. 11. '*A fit man for Closet*' depicts a worried, thin young beau with wild hair who wears a berrie and looks intently at an open book. 12. '*An unfit Man to be alone-one that his associates nick named boy Drowsy*' illustrates a beau with his face resting on his arm in the process of falling asleep.

The decorative and symmetrical elegance and sophistication of this fan leaf design, created by both line and stipple engraving that encompasses the recurring refined motif of laurel leaves that are looped to cover the erudite, acerbic calligraphic text, stands out on first viewing. We are reminded of another of Wilson's fan leaf designs produced in the same year, *The Folly of Man or the World Grown Odd and Crazy* (see catalogue X1) which sports a similar complexity of design, variety of tonal line, and engagement with late eighteenth-century social stereotypes. Wilson uses both cross-hatching and line engraving techniques in his rendering of facial form and characterisation in this fan leaf design, contrasted against the line engraving that surrounds each circular medallion.

Any lady's beau might 'humorously' recognise himself in this pictorial line-up of manly folly and ineptitude. In so doing, a suitor or 'defaulter,' as Wilson terms it, could recognise the particular fault that 'warps his mind' and thus 'amend' his ways. Wilson brilliantly utilises the pictorial device of illustrating the physiognomy of each character to make their individual faults readily readable to the casual observer and, even more importantly, to potential offenders who could either recognise their own faults or have them pointed out, especially when viewed in conjunction with the corresponding text beneath. Each oval medallion containing an individual portrait can almost be viewed as a miniature of sorts.

As Wilson professes in his declaration emblazoned in the frontispiece, the fan leaf itself speaks to its owner as '*S.A. Professor of Physiognomy & Corrector of the Heart*, continuing by asking 'your loving Quiz' if, here, he '*spies his own dear Phiz, And if mark'd out some faults he find Like one or two which warp his mind.*'

Wilson's sardonic insertion of 'S.A. Professor of Physiognomy...' perhaps refers to Sarah Ashton, who published this particular fan leaf design, adding to his work's complex multi-layered humour.

With the production of this fan leaf, we, the viewer, also gets a sense of both the darker underbelly of vices a man can indulge in and Wilson's own acerbic, cutting wit, reaffirmed in the text accompanying each image (particularly his satirical use of the term 'Gentleman'). As such, Wilson has produced this fan leaf design, not

simply as an amusement, but as a sharp satirical tool of embarrassment and 'correction' aimed at *men*.

Thus, ornamental and satirical ends are jointly fulfilled in *The Quiz Club*, with Wilson effectively utilising the shape of the fan leaf itself to display the different types of beau and to incite possible offenders to identify themselves. Interestingly, although Wilson sometimes employs the method of placing different characters of beaus side-by-side on this fan leaf design, such as in image nine (*This gentleman is so very peevish, cross & tyrannical*) placed next to image ten (*A heart at ease*), overall he focuses upon a loose variety of figures to allow him to focus on a range of weaknesses in masculine character across the semicircle of the fan leaf.

References

Cust, 1891: 85.

CAT XI. THE UNITED SISTERS

Title (object)

The United Sisters

Location

Fans Unmounted Roy

Date **British Museum Registration number**

1801 1891, 0713.392

Materials

Paper

Techniques

Hand-coloured stipple engraving

Mark/ inscription and text

Title text reads: *The United Sisters*. Text elegantly emblazoned below the image reads: *Fair Sisters, Ideas of continent frame! To commerce, Arms, Arts of union* [on the right-hand side] *Long may sweet Union bind you three. Each blessing each, and least as free*. The small production script reads: *'Design'd and Engraved by George Wilson...London. Published by Ashton and Hadwen No. 28 Little Britain Jan.1. 1800'*.

Production person

Published by Joseph Read and made by George Wilson

Production place

Produced in London by Ashton and Hadwen and exhibited at Stationer's Hall, London.

School

British

Dimensions

140mm x 480mm

Associated objects

1891, 071.391

Associated Events

The 1801 Act of Union

Acquisition date and name

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1891

Description:

The preamble to this most important Act...shortly recites that it is passed in pursuance of his Majesty's gracious recommendation "to consider of such measures as might best tend to strengthen and consolidate the connections between the two kingdoms...on the 1st January, 1801, and for ever after, be

united in one kingdom, by the name of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland...”⁷⁰

The United Sisters, a striking, hand-coloured stipple engraved unmounted fan leaf on silk, was produced to commemorate the 1801 Act of Union between the countries of Scotland, Ireland and England. Completed at the dawn of the nineteenth century in 1801, Wilson pays tribute to this momentous national event. Such a beautifully engraved fan leaf design can be seen to signal, particularly when seen in conjunction with a similar fan leaf design completed later in the same year, *Peace Restored by the Genius of Happiness*, a concluding evolution in stylistic and thematic terms for Wilson.

The bold, hand-coloured figures make an immediate impression, with a female allegorical personification of England occupying a position of central focus, exhibiting a confident pose as she provides the unifying force in the picture, symbolically holding the hands of Scotland and Ireland. The gold-tinted colouring of the Unicorn’s crown and horn, and the female allegorical personification of Ireland’s embellished, carved golden harp, standing to the far right of the image, reinforce the theme of a newly united British nationhood. The symmetrical placing of figures is completed by the female allegorical personification of Scotland, placed to the far left of the image. The three female figures bear similar facial features, rosy red lips, and long flowing dark brown hair.

⁷⁰ [Anon], *An Act for the Union of Great Britain and Ireland*, London: 1800: 1.

The delicate silk canvas on which the imagery is printed further emphasises the celebratory nature of this particular fan leaf and its functionality as a propagandist ‘souvenir’ of sorts. *The United Sisters* exhibits three punched hole marks either side of the surface of the fan leaf, now frayed, that suggest the fan leaf was mounted into a frame and exhibited on a wall, or placed inside a glass frame as befits its exquisite materiality.

With the completion of this engraved fan leaf design, Wilson has utilised his technical, and printerly, expertise in order to evoke a sense of celebration and evocation of a crucially important national event. This beautifully-crafted miniature promotes the principles of peace, liberty, and happiness inferred by the political process of unification as a clearly defined identity of nationhood. As Wilson himself aesthetically registers with the printing of *The United Sisters*, the turn of the nineteenth century brought a shift in both cultural focus as Britain turned to consolidate its colonial power abroad, empower dominion over its global Empire, and confirm its own composite identity as a nation. Wilson’s work can be compared to other artworks produced in the immediate aftermath of the unification of a United Kingdom, such as a study drawing entitled *The Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland* (Fig. 40), sketched by James Barry in 1801, illustrating a similar compositional design to that of *The United Sisters*. Barry, an Irish artist, here illustrates the three allegorical female figures of England, Scotland, and Ireland grouped together behind an altar bearing a medal of George III and Queen Charlotte. The two figures on the right-hand side of Barry’s image clasp hands whilst a dove hovers above a third, who has wings and below whom a pair of scales appears with a heart on each side, as well as Britannia’s shield and the Welsh harp in her arms;

whilst to the left, a prophet dictates to a recording angel and a medallion of the King and Queen lies on the altar.

Another such image was *England/Ireland* (Fig. 41), an anonymously produced mezzotint produced in 1800 and published in London. This engraving illustrates the female allegorical figure of the new Britannia holding an olive leaf, and armed with a shield bearing the Union Jack, which is placed in front of the Royal lion to the left-hand side of the image. Separated by a tree placed in the centre of the image, the female allegorical figure of Ireland stands to the right-hand side of the mezzotint, holding a lyre and a sheet of music, next to a plinth with a female bust crowned with a laurel wreath.

Britannia or, an Emblem of England (Fig. 42), a mezzotint and etching anonymously completed in 1798, published by John Fairburn, gives an even closer parallel in terms of figurative representation to Wilson's own, as it represents the allegorical female figure of Britannia wearing a similar dress to that of England and sporting an elegant hairstyle identical to that of Wilson's own.

Wilson effectively distils the elements of such highly complex, overtly allegorical images into a more simplified composition, placing emphasis upon the three female allegorical figures and the two symbolic animals, both mythical and real, placed at each side of the image. The highly finished, colour tinted, depiction of form on *The United Sisters* would have no doubt enticed his female clients to purchase such a

beautiful image on silk, not simply as an ephemeral *objet d'art*, but as something to be kept as a refined memento of an historical event, transcending the normal expectations and life-span of the eighteenth-century fan.

References

Cust, 1891: 71.

CAT XII. PEACE RESTORED BY THE GENIUS OF HAPPINESS

Title (object)	Location
<i>Peace Restored by the Genius of Happiness</i>	Fans Unmounted Imp
Date	British Museum Registration number
1801	1891, 071.391
Materials	

Paper

Techniques

Hand-coloured stipple engraving

Mark/ inscription and text

Title text across the top of the semi-circular fan leaf reads: *Peace Restored by the Genius of Happiness*. The text, from far left to far right, below the far left image of the cornucopia bearing coins reads: *Where Wealth and Commerce left their golden heads And over our labours Liberty and Law Impartially Watch*, and below the central image: *Welcome Sweet Peace, Mans dearest friend, May blessing on thy steps attend; War sheathes the Sword and yields the plan To Thee, and thy harmonious trace*. The text underneath the far right image of the cornucopia and lyre reads: *Hail! Lovely Peace with Plenty crown'd/ Diffuse thy blessings all around*.

The production line reads: *'London Published by Ashton and Hadwen No. 28 Little Britain Oct 28 1801. Enter 'd At Stationers Hall'*. Below this: *G. Wilson del et sculpt.*

Production person

Published by Ashton and Hadwen and made by George Wilson

Production place

Published in London

School

British

Dimensions

267mm x 565mm

Associated objects

1891, 0713.392

Associated Events

The 1801 Act of Union

Acquisition date and name

Donated by Lady Charlotte Schreiber in 1891

Description:

Peace Restored by the Genius of Happiness is similar in design and illustration to *The United Sisters*, with Wilson again using two female allegorical personifications of Justice (dressed in white) and Happiness (dressed in red). Through a closer

examination of the compositional features and strikingly, high-quality coloration of *Peace Restored by the Genius of Happiness*, we can begin to understand the celebratory and propagandist function of this fan leaf design.

Peace Restored by the Genius of Happiness, an attractive stipple engraving, features a female personification of Justice clad in classical vestments, holding a sword of justice and turning to face a winged personification of Peace. A similarly winged cupid stands on the left of Justice leaning against her legs, turning to face the viewer and holding up a laurel wreath in one hand and clutching a single dove in the other. Peace stands holding a sword with her right hand and thrusting it into a furnace held on a plinth, which contains other such implements of war, including clear silhouetted outlines of hatchets and helmets.

To the left of this central image Wilson places an image of a cornucopia of overflowing coins and the winged helmet of Athena, the Goddess of wisdom but also of battle strategy and warfare, placed directly on top of the cornucopia, and to the far right, another image of a cornucopia bulging with fruit, with a dove and lyre placed above it. Whereas the female personifications in *The United Sisters* are shown as united, and dignified in their representation, Justice and Happiness illustrate movement, interaction, and communication.

This is demonstrated by the manner of the exchanged glances between the two personifications; the inclusion of the cupid carrying a dove and laurel sprig; and the

gently curving semi-circle outline that guides the eye from the outstretched arm of Happiness along the pale yellow cape which the figure of Justice wears and finally towards the figure of cupid who clasps at some of this material, carrying the eye up and around in a circular motion.

By way of such a compositional arrangement Wilson reinforces the central message of the fan leaf as one celebrating the tranquillity and commercial benefits that the restoration of peace could bring. The gentle curvature of the outline of the female figures featured within this fan leaf design also adds to the decorative nature of the fan leaf itself. This design includes many of the elements Wilson explored in earlier fan leaf compositions, such as the recurring, decorative motif of the butterfly wings with circular dots attached to some of his female figures and the cupid figure who bears the same butterfly wings.

The concerns of Wilson's fan leaf can be seen to echo those of other images from the period. For example, Francesco Bartolozzi's 1793 paper print, entitled *Justice and Veritas* (Fig. 43), features a globe floating on a sea, with a female allegorical figure of Justice sitting to the left of the image holding a very large sword of justice, whilst a cupid with wings floats just above the middle of the globe and an allegorical female figure of Veritas reclines to the far right of the image on a cloud.

Although Bartolozzi illustrates Justice as traditionally depicted – that is, as otherworldly – Wilson brings his personification of Justice 'down to earth', enabling

a female viewer to both identify with, and take aesthetic enjoyment in, the union between two virtuous female figures. The absence of background detail in the centre of the narrative allows further focus and prominence to be given to the female figures. Besides this, the absence of any male figurative imagery in this fan leaf narrative underscores the central role of female agency in bringing about peace and a restoration of happiness in society, as well as celebrating the qualities of peace and justice as that specifically aligned with women.

References

Cust, 1891: 71

CONCLUSION

By 1842, as the author of *Whittock's Complete Book of Trades* noted, '...fans are now to be obtained at the Haberdasher's Shops, but are now so little used as to be nearly or quite obsolete'⁷¹. From the turn of the nineteenth century, cultural commentators and fashion designers lamented the gradual decline in the design,

⁷¹ April Hart and Emma Taylor, *Fans*, London: The Victoria and Albert Press: 1998: 102.

choice of medium and execution of British fan leaf production in London and surrounding regional areas.

As I have hoped to have demonstrated in this catalogue, George Wilson's fan leaf designs provided his late Georgian audience with a final flourish of the genre. Even in the process of analysing just a few of Wilson's fan leaf designs, we can gain a new appreciation of the technical skill, narrative complexity and cultural responsiveness of fan designs in this period.

When we view the shifts of style and narrative in Wilson's fan leaf designs, we also become aware that there seems to be a significant natural progression in his work, one that seems to mirror the shifting social and cultural concerns of the period. The first few fan leaf designs, published in 1795, pictorially assimilate the modern satirical theme of the beau with the age old theme of the Ages of Man. There then follows a work that demonstrates Wilson's own interest in pictorially updating this theme so that it engages with women's concerns of the period. Wilson goes on to focus on urban follies, then pursues an interest in advisory fan leaf designs; and then, he engraves more 'conventional', celebratory fan leaf designs, signalling the rise of more sentimental aesthetic styles within fan leaf design in the early years of the nineteenth century.

We can now, I hope, acknowledge the singular, creative ingenuity and humour of Wilson, in a medium and a format which many artists overlooked as a vehicle for

professional advancement. It was a medium and a format that ultimately provided a productive platform for Wilson to showcase a sophisticated assimilation of existing engraving techniques. Besides this, Wilson's fan leaf designs also modernised age-old themes precisely in order to comment upon the dissonances and deviances of late eighteenth-century life in England.

The elusive nature of Wilson as a character and artist – he seems not to have been noted in any eighteenth-century written record – no doubt confirms the low status accorded to English fan design in the eighteenth century; but it should not blind us to the high levels of skill and invention that could be found in this medium.

Furthermore, viewing Wilson's fan leaf production enables us to glean a wealth of information regarding the cultural concerns, the central events and the comic stereotypes of late eighteenth-century London.

The extremely fragile nature of historical fan leaves means that, in all probability, the majority of Wilson's designs printed in the last decade of the eighteenth-century have now been lost. The group of fan designs now stored in the British Museum gives us only a glimpse of the full range of Wilson's thematic interests and his levels of artistic skill. However, viewing this small number of surviving fan designs offers us a chance to appreciate Wilson anew and provides a remarkable view into a particular moment within Britain's history.

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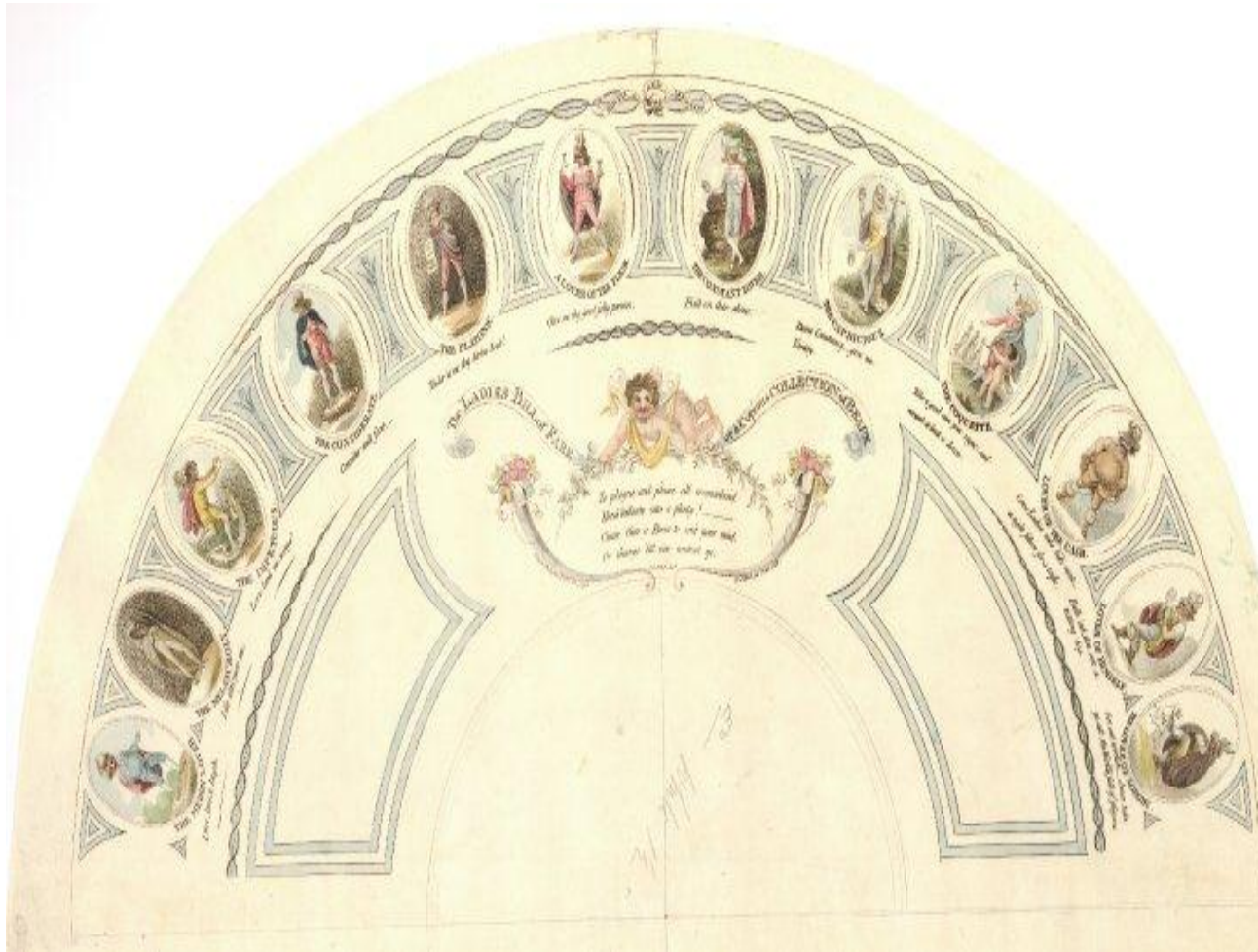
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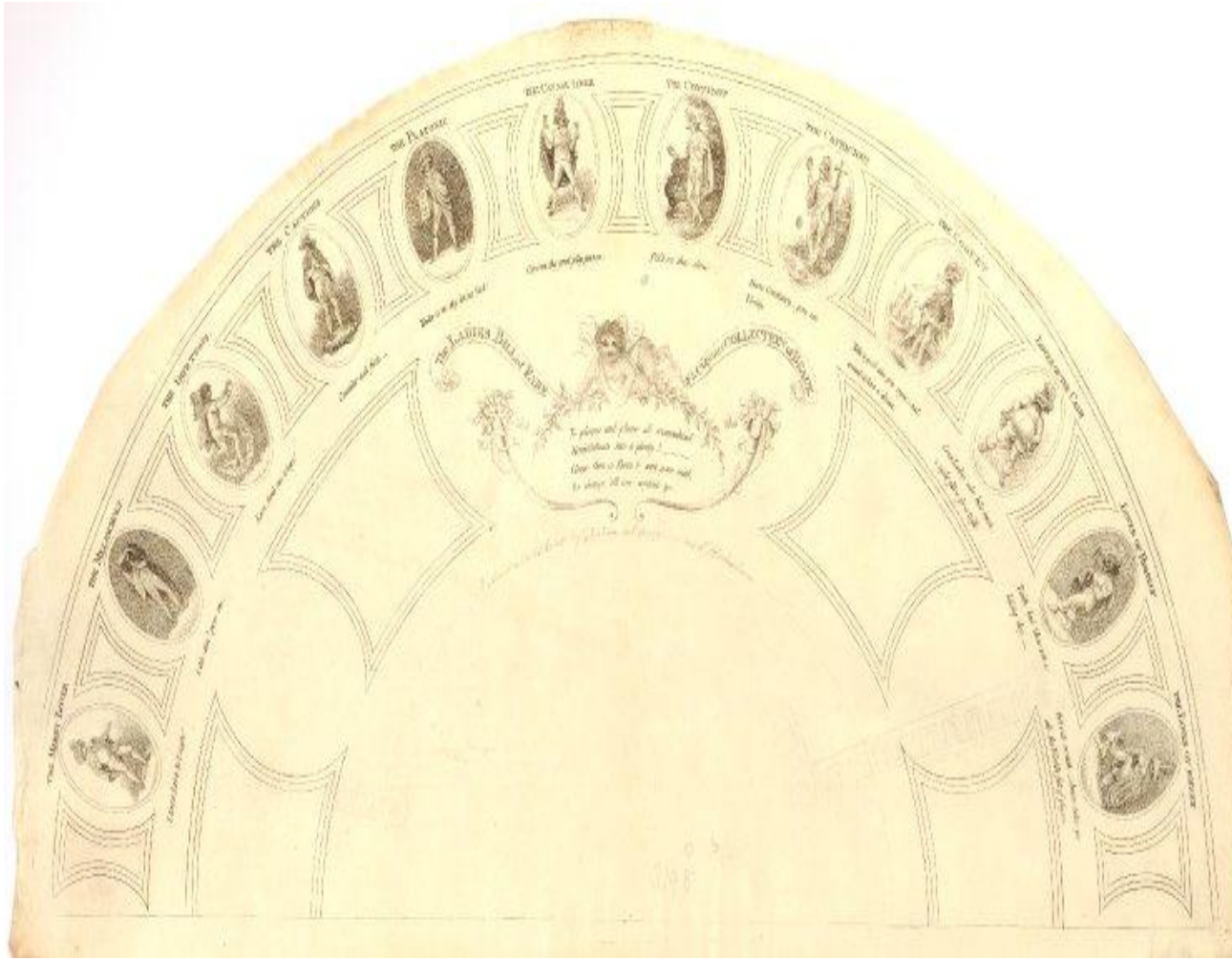
ILLUSTRATIONS
CATALOGUE ILLUSTRATIONS



(Cat. I). George Wilson, *The Ladies Bill of Fare, or a Copious Collection of Beaux*, 1795, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Unmounted Hand-Coloured Stipple Engraved Fan Leaf, 14.4 x 46.8 cms.



(Cat. I.ii). George Wilson, *The Ladies Bill of Fare, or a Copious Collection of Beaux*, 1795, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London.
Unmounted Stipple Engraved Fan Leaf, 28.5 x 54.5 cms.



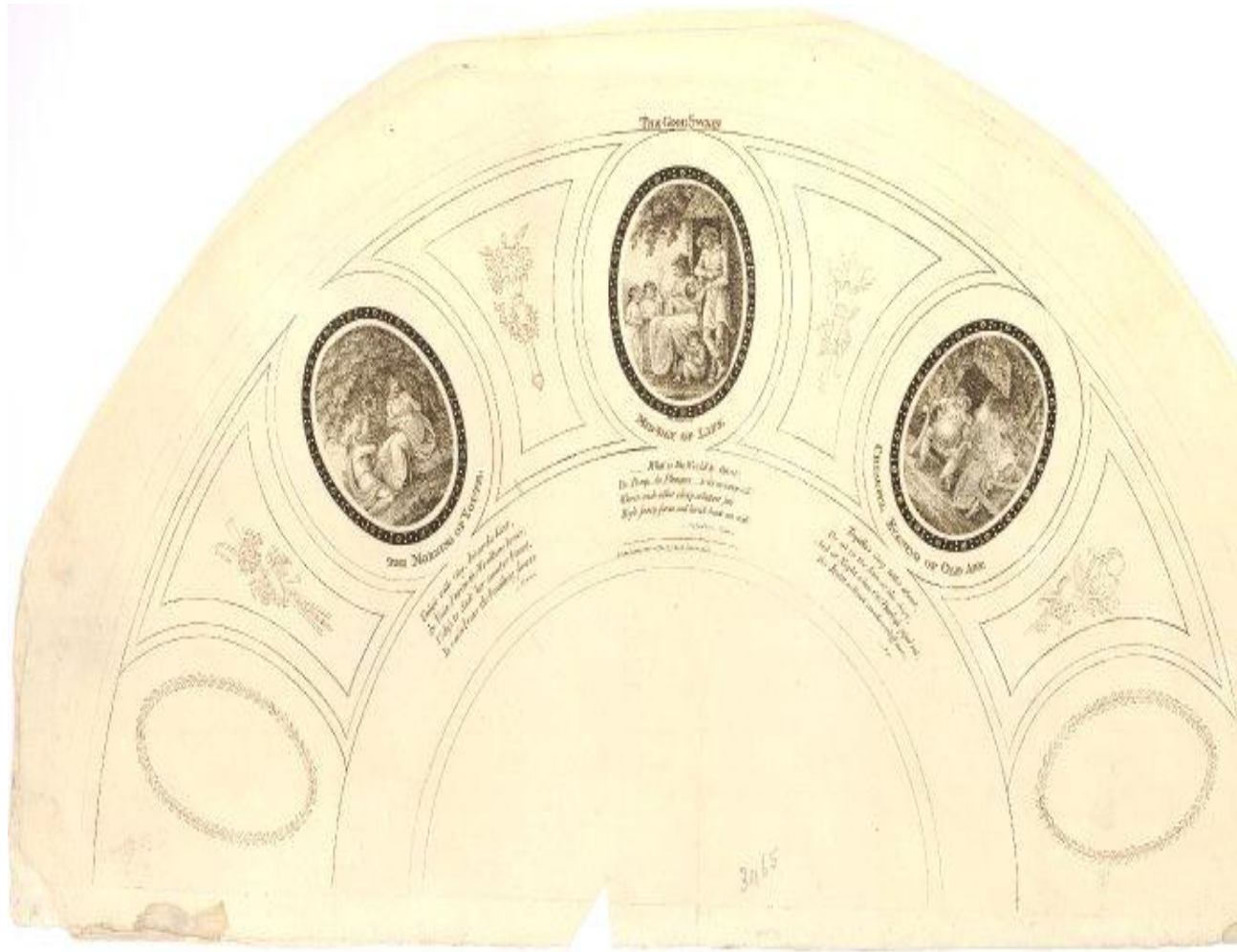
(Cat. Liii). George Wilson, *The Ladies Bill of Fare, or a Copious Collection of Beaux*, 1795, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Unmounted Stipple Engraved Fan Leaf, 14.3 x 52.6 cms.



(Cat. II). George Wilson, *A Selection of Beau's Whimsical, Comical & Eccentric; or Candidates for the Ladies Favour*, 1795, British Museum Prints and Drawing Department, London, Unmounted Stipple Engraved Fan Leaf, 14.0 x 46.5 cms.



(Cat. III). George Wilson, *Men in Various Attitudes (untitled)*, 1795, British Museum Prints and Drawing Department, London. Unmounted Hand-Coloured Engraved Fan Leaf, 14.5 x 47.7 cms. Platemark, 23.7 x 47.8 cms.



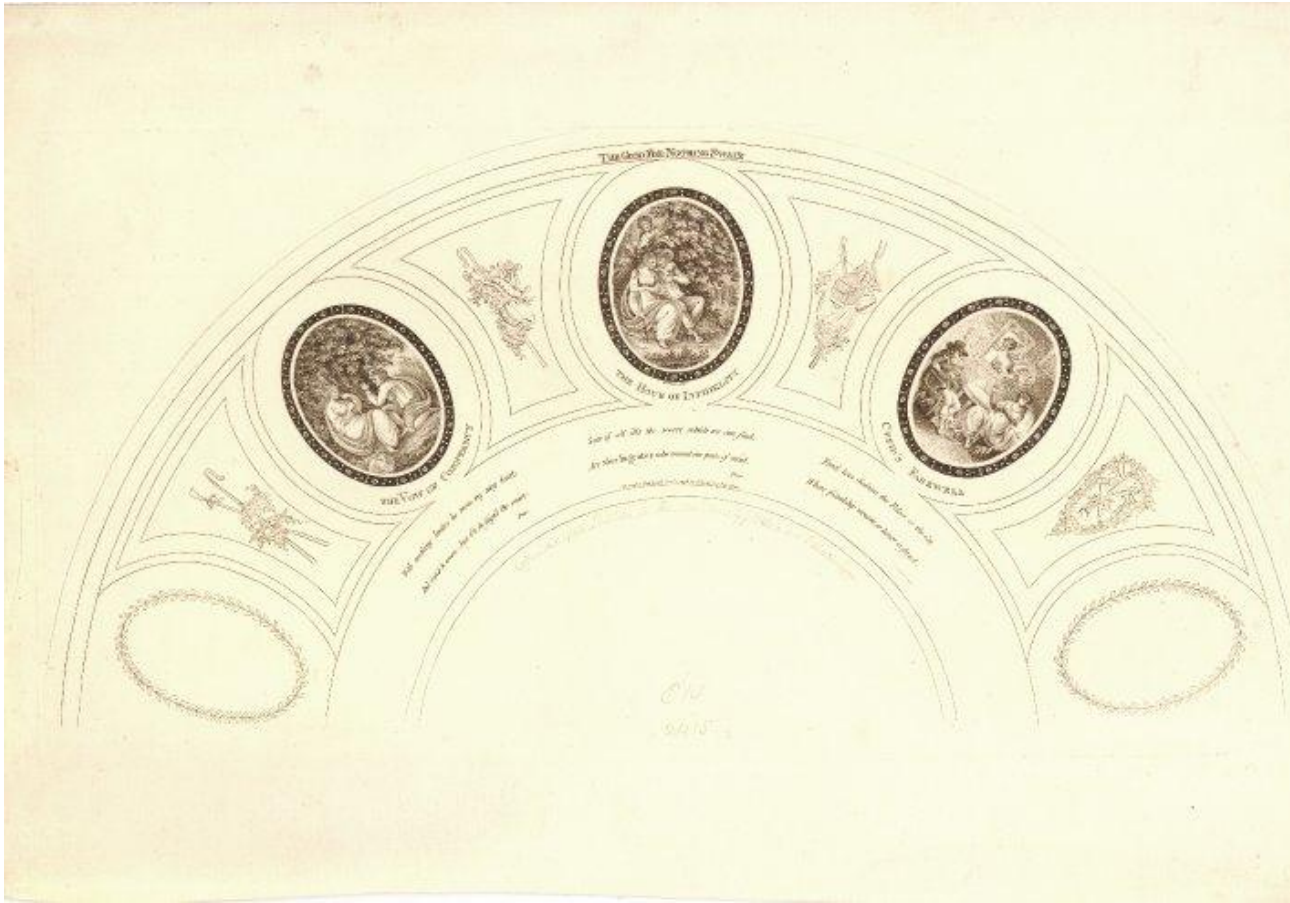
(Cat. IV.a). George Wilson, overview of *The Good Swain*, 1795, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Unmounted Stipple Engraved Fan Leaf, 14.5 x 47.6 cms.



(Cat. IV.b). George Wilson, detail of scene three on *The Good Swain*, 1795, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Unmounted Stipple Engraved Fan Leaf, 14.5 x 47.6 cms.



(Cat. IV.ii). George Wilson, *The Three Ages of Man (untitled)*, 1795, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Unmounted Hand-Coloured Stipple Engraved Fan Leaf, 14.2 x 48.2 cms.



(Cat. V). George Wilson, *The Good-for-Nothing Swain*, 1796, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Unmounted Stipple Engraved Fan Leaf, 14.5 x 47.6 cms. Platemark, 23.7 x 47.8 cms.



(Cat. VI). George Wilson, *Shakespeare's Seven Ages*, 1796, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Unmounted Stipple Engraved Fan Leaf, 28.5 x 53 cms.



(Cat. VI.ii). George Wilson, *Shakespeare's Seven Ages*, 1796, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Unmounted Stipple Engraved Fan Leaf, 28.5 x 53 cms.



(Cat. VII.a). George Wilson, *The Female Seven Ages*, 1797, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Unmounted Stipple Engraved Fan Leaf, 13.8 x 46.4 cms.



(Cat. VII.b). Detail of the right-hand side of *The Female Seven Ages*, illustrating Scene One and Scene Two.



(Cat. VII.c). Detail of the middle section of *The Female Seven Ages*, illustrating Scene Three and Scene Four.



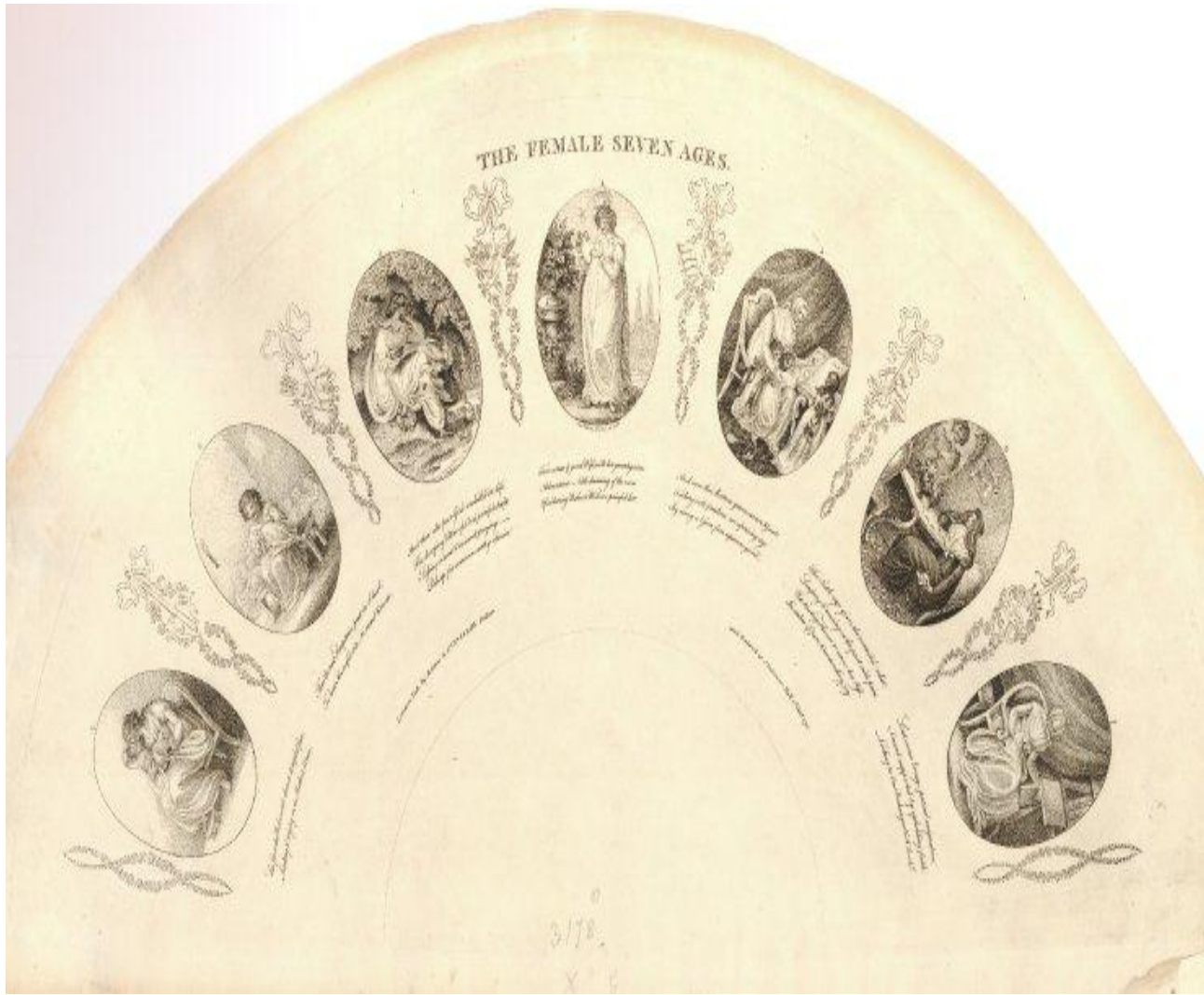
(Cat. VII.d). Detail of the left-hand side of *The Female Seven Ages*, illustrating Scene Five and Scene Six.



(Cat. VII.e). Detail of the far left-hand side of *The Female Seven Ages*, illustrating Scene Seven.



(Cat. VII.ii). George Wilson, *The Female Seven Ages*, 1797, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Unmounted Stipple Fan Leaf with Gold Leaf Lining on Board, 13.8 x 46.4 cms.



(Cat. VII.iii). George Wilson, *The Female Seven Ages*, 1797, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Unmounted Stipple Engraved Fan Leaf, 138 x464 cms.



(Cat. VIII.a). George Wilson, *The Lady's Adviser Physician & Moralist Or, Half an Hours Entertainment at the expense of Nobody*, 1797, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London, Unmounted Stipple Fan Leaf, 15 x 47 cm.



(Cat. VIII.b). Detail of the frontispiece of a cupid with butterfly wings holding up a mounted fan with a poem printed on it's leaf in the centre of *The Lady's Adviser Physician & Moralist Or, Half an Hours Entertainment at the expense of Nobody*.



(Cat. VIII.c). Detail of Scene One on the Far left-hand side of *The Lady's Adviser Physician & Moralist Or, Half an Hours Entertainment at the expense of Nobody*.



(Cat. VIII.d). Detail of Scene Two on the Far left-hand side of *The Lady's Adviser Physician & Moraliser Or, Half an Hours Entertainment at the expense of Nobody*.



(Cat. VIII.e). Detail of Scene Three on the left-hand side of *The Lady's Adviser Physician & Moralist Or, Half an Hours Entertainment at the expense of Nobody*.



(Cat. IX.a). George Wilson, *The Folly of Man or The World Grown Odd and Crazy*, 1797, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Unmounted Aquatint, Etching and Engraved Fan Leaf, 15.5 x 47.9 cms.



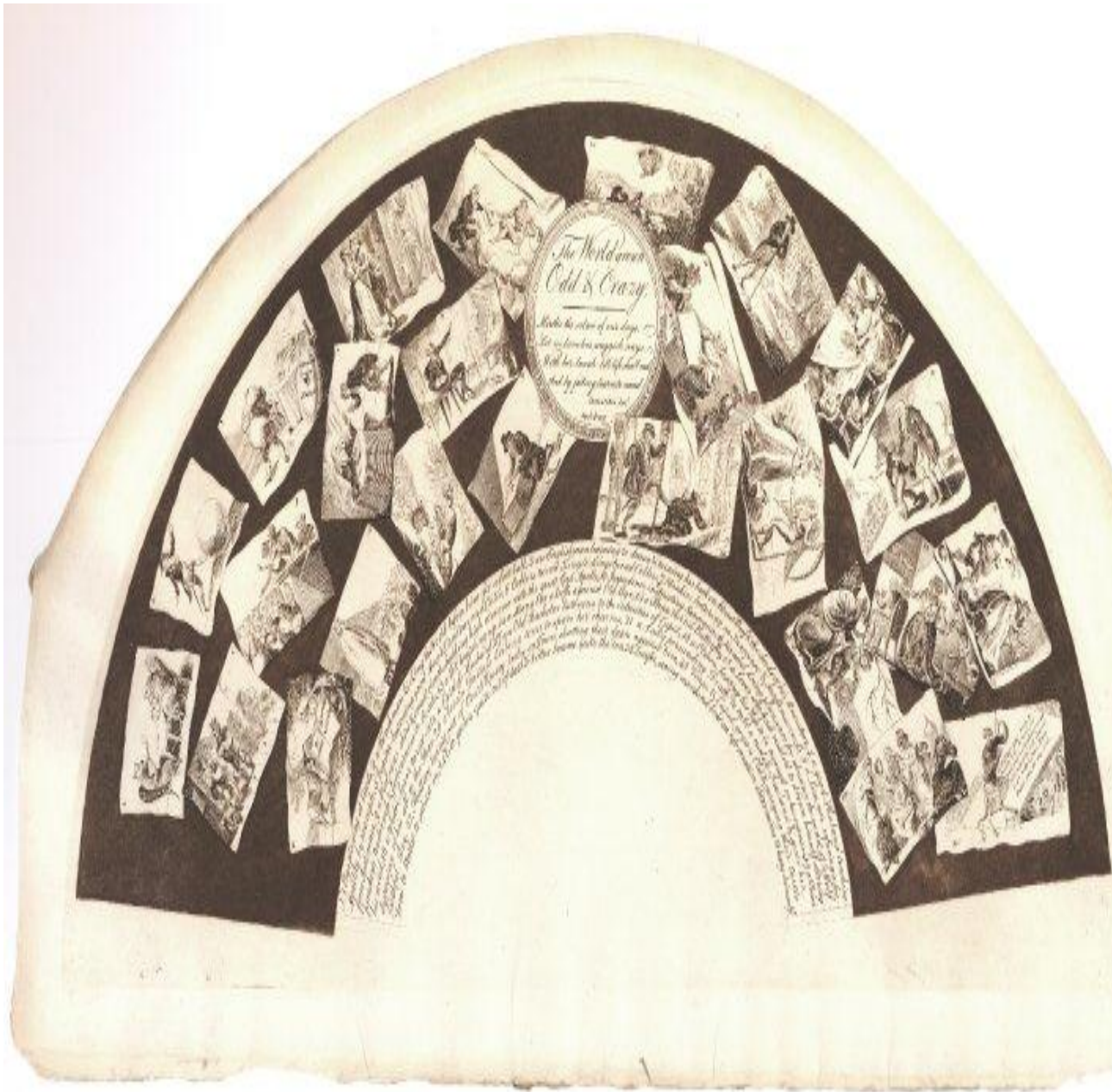
(Cat. IX.b). Frontispiece of *The Folly of Man or The World Grown Odd and Crazy*.



(Cat. IX.c). Detail of the left-hand side of *The Folly of Man or The World Grown Odd and Crazy*.



(Cat. IX.d). Detail of the right-hand side of *The Folly of Man or The World Grown Odd and Crazy*.



(Cat. IX.ii). George Wilson, *The Folly of Man or The World Grown Odd and Crazy*, 1797, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Unmounted Aquatint, Etched and Engraved Fan Leaf, 15.5 x 47.9 cms.



(Cat. X). George Wilson, *The Quiz Club, Dedicated to all the Beaus in Christendom; by S.A Professor of Physiognomy & Corrector of the Heart (untitled)*, 1797, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Unmounted Engraved Fan Leaf, 35.7 x 57.6 cms.



(Cat. XI.a). George Wilson, *The United Sisters*, 1801, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Unmounted Colour Print and Engraved Silk Fan Leaf, 45 x 35 cms.



(Cat. XI. b). Central image of *The United Sisters*, illustrating the British Royal Coat of Arms.



(Cat. XII). George Wilson, *Peace Restored by the Genius of Happiness*, 1800, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Unmounted Stipple and Line Fan Leaf, 14 x 48 cms.

FIGURE ILLUSTRATIONS



1791

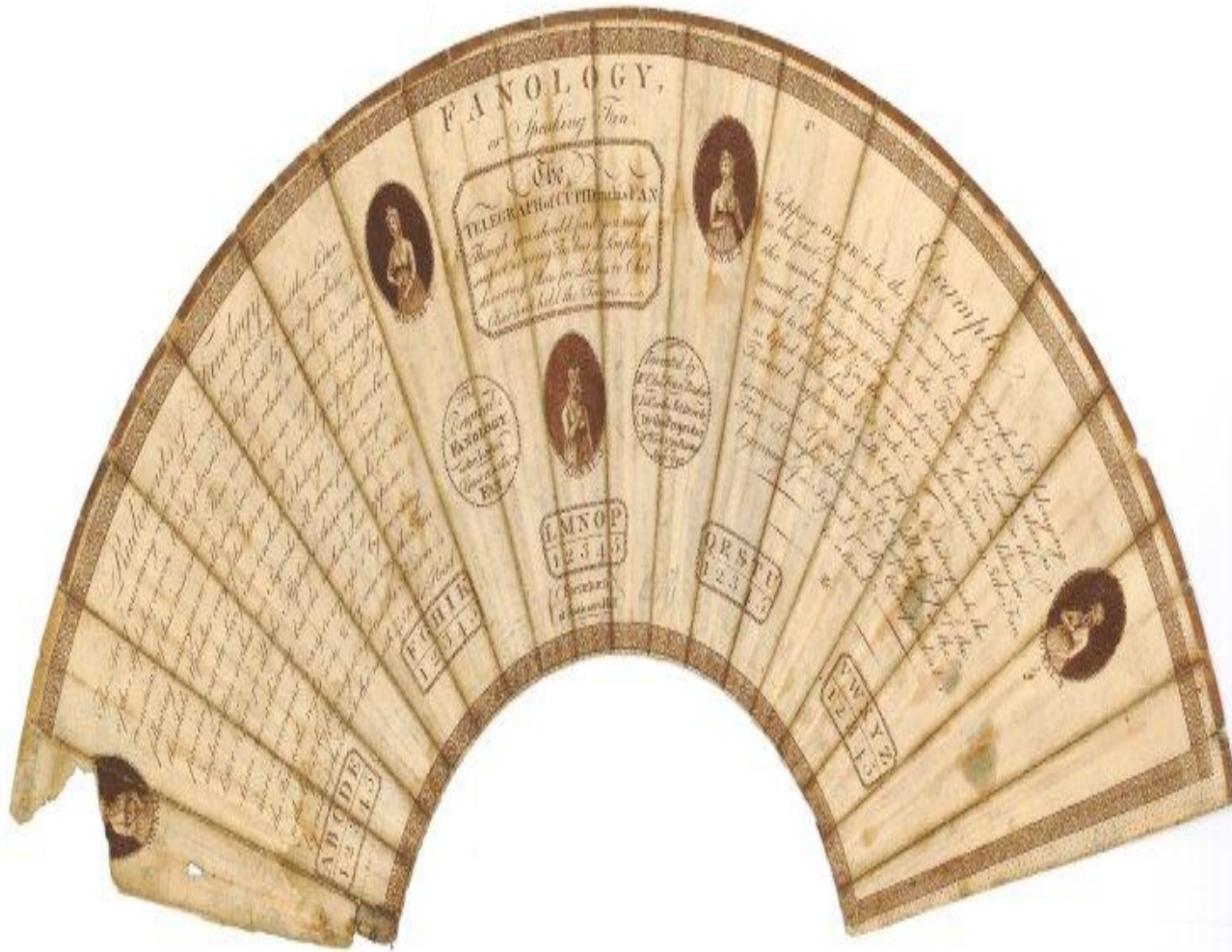
D. 2 3296

Dorothy Mercier
Printseller, and Stationer,
at the Golden Ball,
in Windmill Street, facing Silver Street, Golden Square,
London.

Sells all Sorts of Italian, French, and Flemish Prints.
Buys & Sells all manner of Old Prints.
Likewise Frames Prints, in the Neatest & Genteelest Taste.
Where may be had all Sorts of Papers for Drawing, &c.
The best Black Lead Pencils, Black, Red & White Chalk.
Variety of Water Colours, and Camels Hair Pencils.
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Sells Flower Pieces, in Water Colours, Painted by her self, from the Life.
And Fanns for Ladies, in a New & Elegant manner.
Also all Sorts of Shop Books, Finest Writing Paper, Both gilt, & plain, in all sizes
English, Dutch, & French Drawing Paper, Abortive Nillum for Drawing,
Writing Vellum, the Silk Paper for Drawing, with Different Sizes of
Message Paper, & Message Cards, Fine Black, Brown, & Blue India Ink.

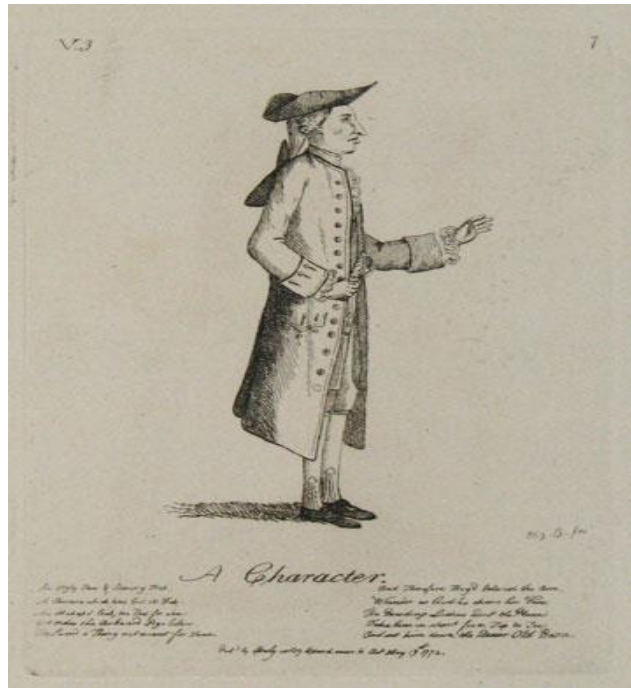
(Fig. 1). Mrs Dorothy Mercier, *Print seller and Stationer*, 1770, British Museum Prints and Drawing Department, London. Etching and Engraving, 10.7 x 14.7 cms.



(Fig. 2). Francis Bandini, *Fanology or Ladies' Conversation Fan*, 1797, British Museum Prints and Drawing Department, London. Unmounted Stipple Engraved Fan Leaf, 13.3 x 45.0 cms.



(Fig. 3). Anonymous, *Age and Folly, or the Beauties*, 1776, British Museum Prints and Drawing Department, London. Engraving, 35.3 x 25.1 cms.



(Fig. 4). M. Darly, *A Character*, 1772, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Etching, 17.6 x 12.3 cms.



(Fig. 5). Anonymous, *A Beau 1700. A Beau 1791* (illustrating the same image on the reverse), 1791, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Etching, 19.6 x 16.1cms.



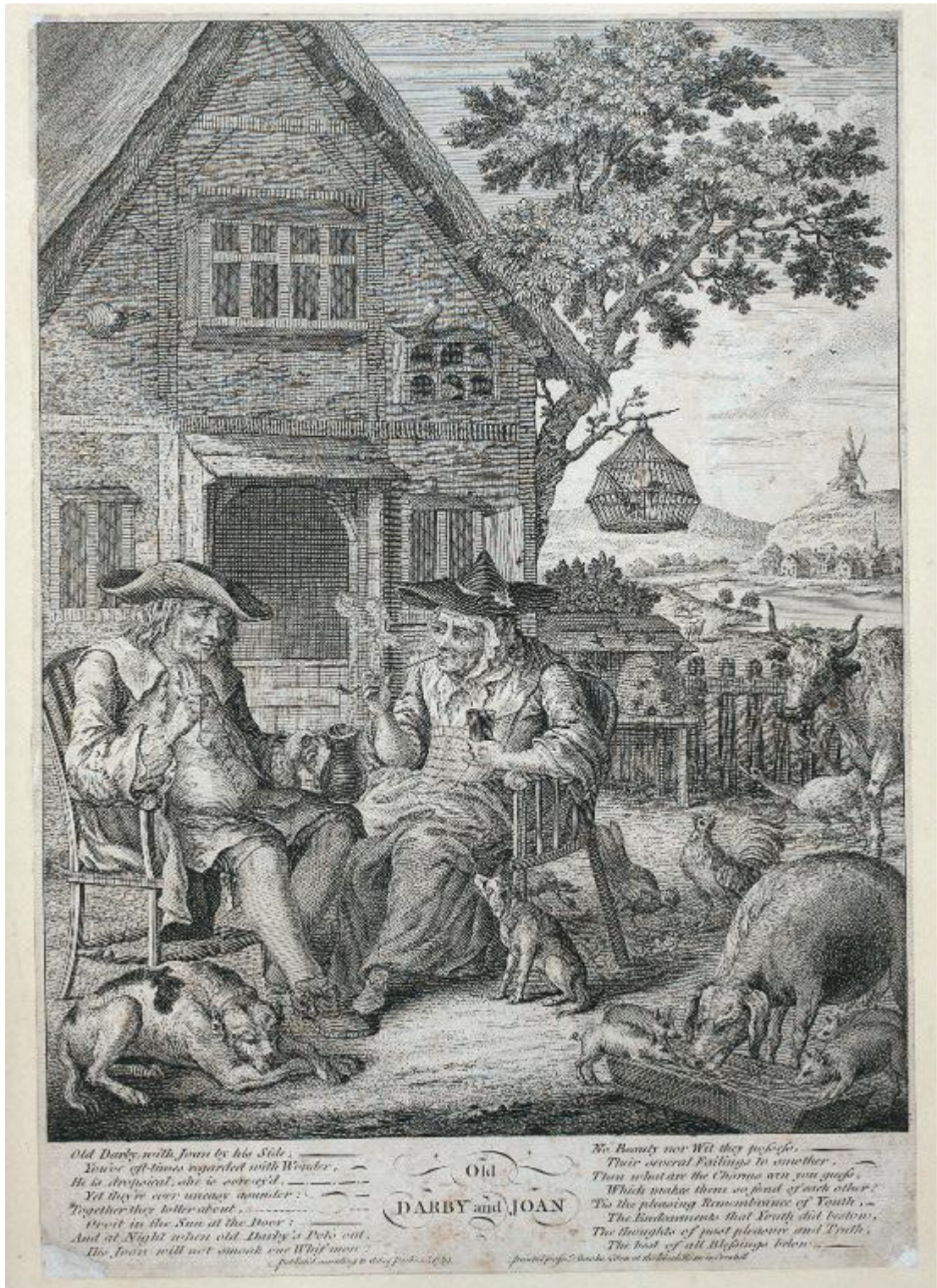
(Fig. 6). Hannah Humphrey after Robert Dighton, *A Beau*, 1790, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Etching, 2.10 x 11.4 cms.



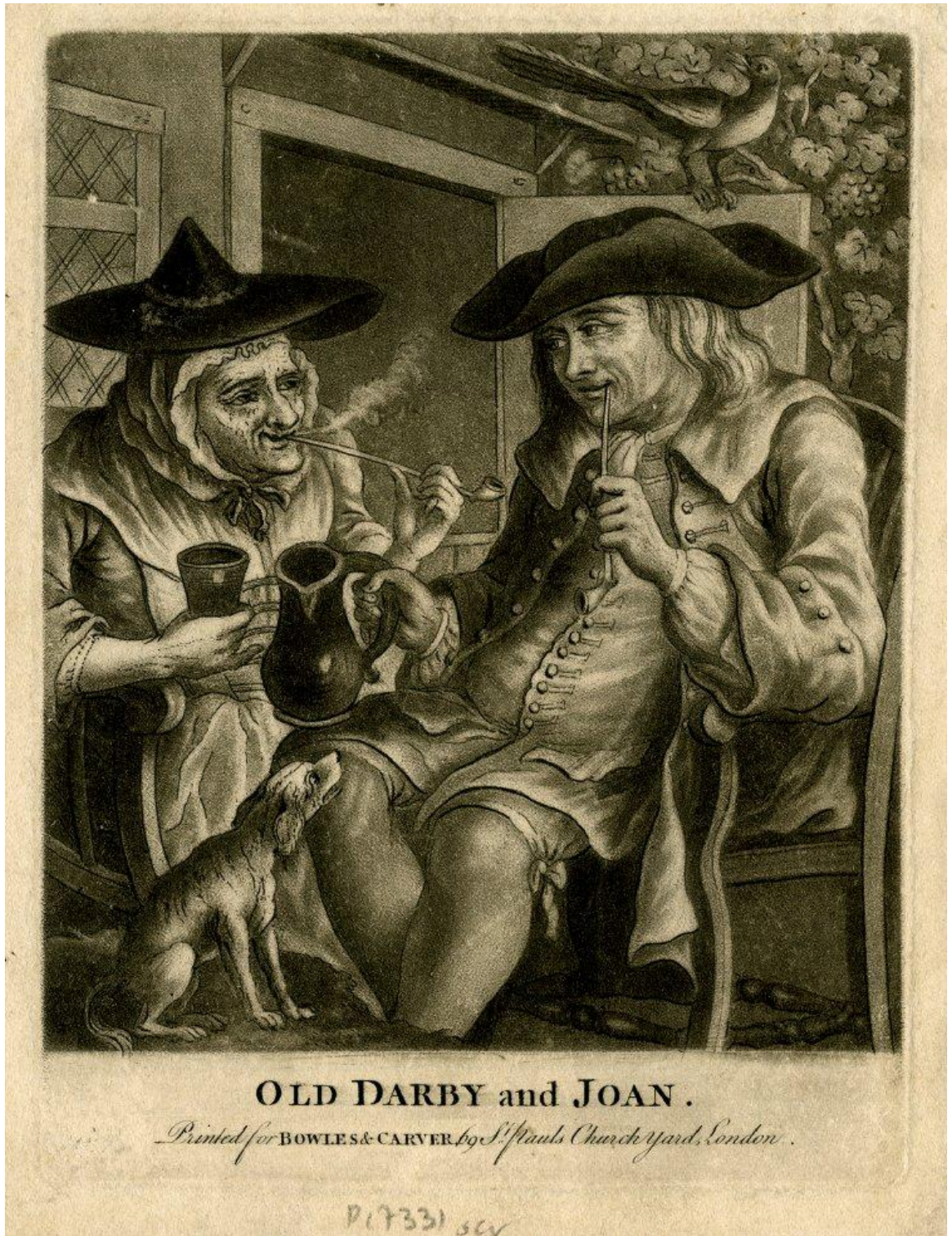
(Fig. 7). John Goldar after John Collet, *Modern Love: Courtship*, 1766, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Etching and Engraving, 40.3 x 46.8 cms.



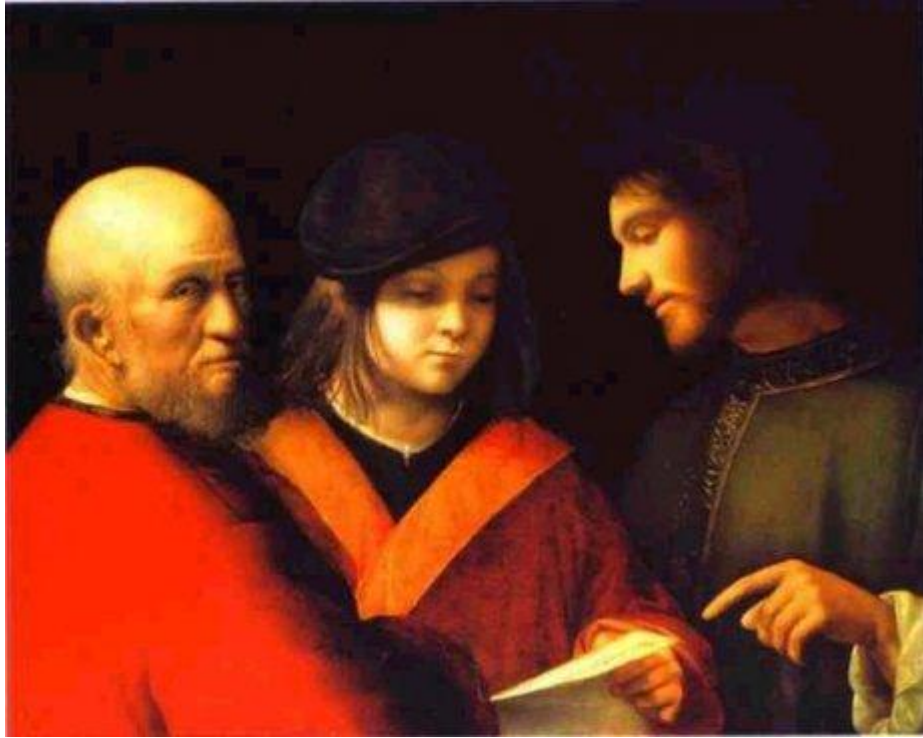
(Fig. 8). Attributed to George Morland, *Dancing Dogs*, 1790, Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, New York. Oil on Canvas, 76.2 x 63.8 cms.



(Fig. 9). Attributed to John June, *Old Darby and Joan*, 1750, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Etching, 34.1 x 23.8 cms.



(Fig. 10). Anonymous, *Old Darby and Joan*, 1780s-1790s, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Mezzotint and Engraving, 15.2 x 11.3 cms.



(Fig. 11). Giorgione, *The Three Ages of Man*, 1501, Galleria Palatina, Florence.
Oil on Canvas, 62 x 77.5 cms.



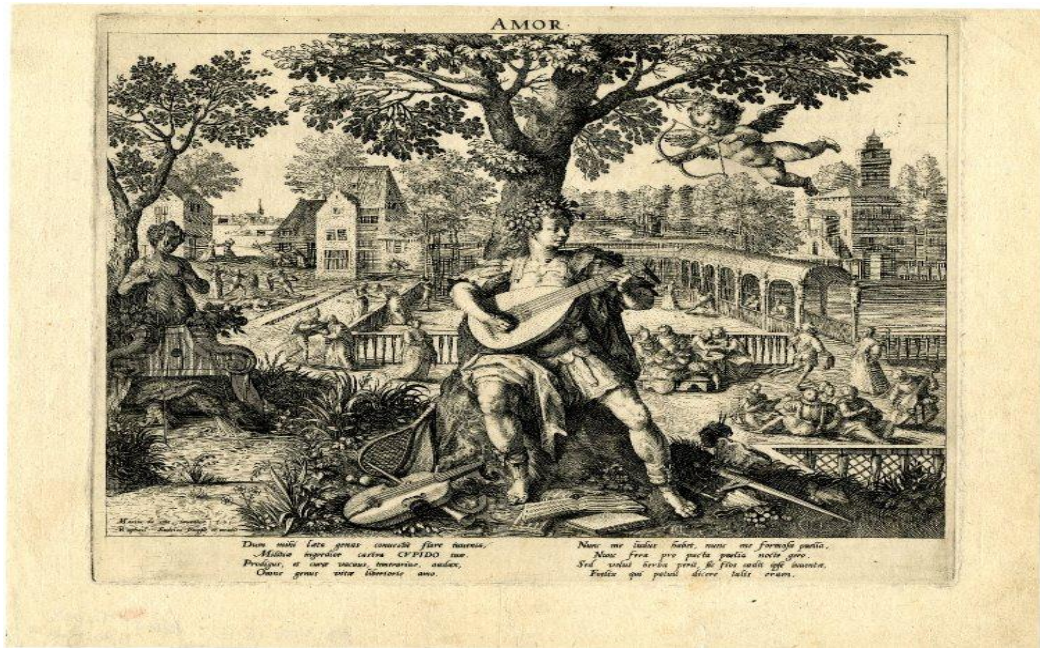
(Fig. 12). Dosso Dossi, *The Three Ages of Man*, 1485, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Oil on Canvas, 77.5 x 111.8 cms.



(Fig. 13). Charles Warren, *Print Book Illustration*, 1795, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Etching and Engraving, 15.1 x 10 cms.



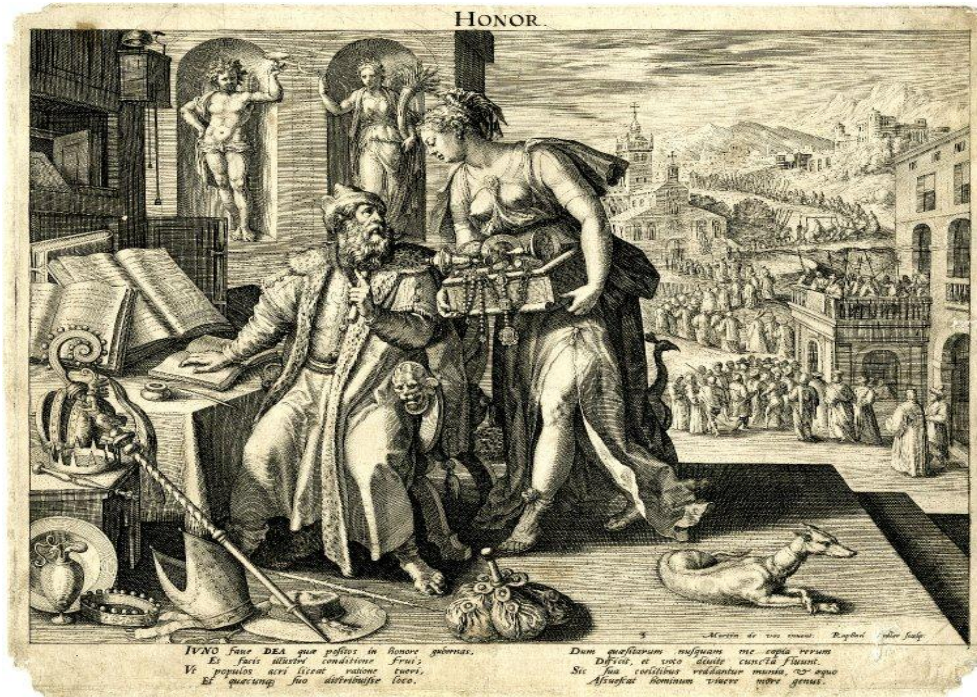
(Fig. 14). William Hogarth, *Marriage-a-la-Mode, (Tete-a-Tete)*, 1743, The National Gallery, London. Oil on Canvas, 69.9 x 90.8 cms.



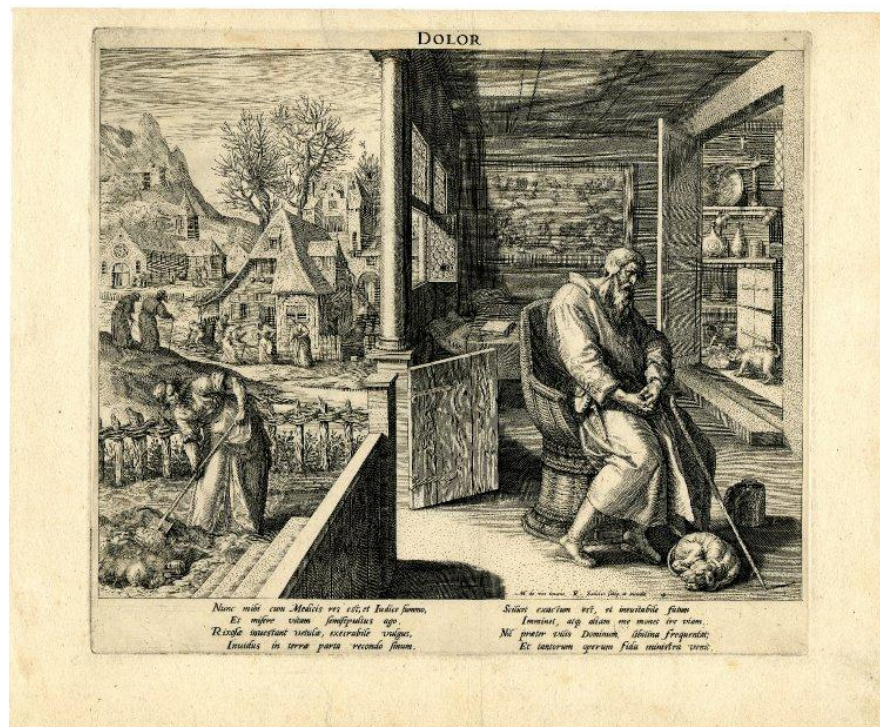
(Fig. 15.a). Raphael Sadeler, *The Four Ages of Man, (Amor)*, 1591, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Engraving on Paper, 22 x 26 cms.



(Fig. 15.b). Raphael Sadeler, *The Four Ages of Man, (Labour)*, 1591, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Engraving on Paper, 21.4 x 25.3 cms.



(Fig. 15.c). Raphael Sadeler, *The Four Ages of Man, (Honour)*, 1591, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Engraving on Paper, 21.9 x 25.6 cms.



(Fig. 15.d). Raphael Sadeler, *The Four Ages of Man, (Pain)*, 1591, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Engraving on Paper, 22 x 26 cms.



(Fig. 16). Anonymous, *The Four Ages of MAN Illustrated by proper Emblems*, 1660s, Bodleian Library, Oxford. Engraving, 15 x 17 cms.



(Fig. 17). Anonymous, *The Life of Man Demonstrated in Their Severall Ages*, late 1660s, The Bodleian Library, Oxford. Engraving, 30 x 50 cms.



(Fig. 18). Anonymous, *Staircases of the Ages-Couples*, 1685-99, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Woodcut, 20 x 35 cms.



(Fig. 19). Anonymous, *The various ages and degrees of human life*, 1793, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Etching, 37.3 x 47.2 cms.



SHAKESPEARE'S SEVEN AGES.

ALL the world's a stage,
 And all the men and women merely players;
 They have their exits and their entrances,
 And one man in his time plays many parts:
 His acts being seven ages. At first the INFANT,
 Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms,
 And then the whining SCHOOL-BY, with his fatchel,
 And thinning morning face, creeping like snail
 Unwillingly to school. And then the LOVER,
 Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad

Made to his mistress' eye-brow. Then a SOLDIER,
 Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
 Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel;
 Seeking the bubble reputation
 Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the JUSTICE,
 In fair round belly, with good cap on lin'd,
 With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,
 Full of wise saws and modern instances,
 And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
 Into the lean and slipper'd PANTALON,

With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side;
 His youthful hose well sav'd, a world too wide
 For his shrunken shank; and his big manly voice,
 Turning again toward childish treble, pipes,
 And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
 That ends this strange eventful history,
 Is second CHILDISHNESS, and mere oblivion,
 Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing.

Printed for S. W. FORES, Printer and Publisher, No. 3, Pat. Row.

(Fig. 20). Joseph Gear, *Shakespear's beautiful Idea on the Seven Ages of Man*, 1792, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Stipple Engraving, 31.6 x 30.7 cms.



(Fig. 21). Henry Benbridge, *Mrs Benjamin Simons*, 1776, Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, New York. Oil on Canvas, 75.5 x 63.5 cms.



(Fig. 22). Thomas Lawrence, *Queen Charlotte*, 1789, The National Gallery, London. Oil on Canvas, 239.5 x 147 cms.



(Fig. 23). Nicolas Poussin, *The Triumph of Pan*, 1636, The National Gallery, London. Oil on Canvas, 139.5 x 146 cms.



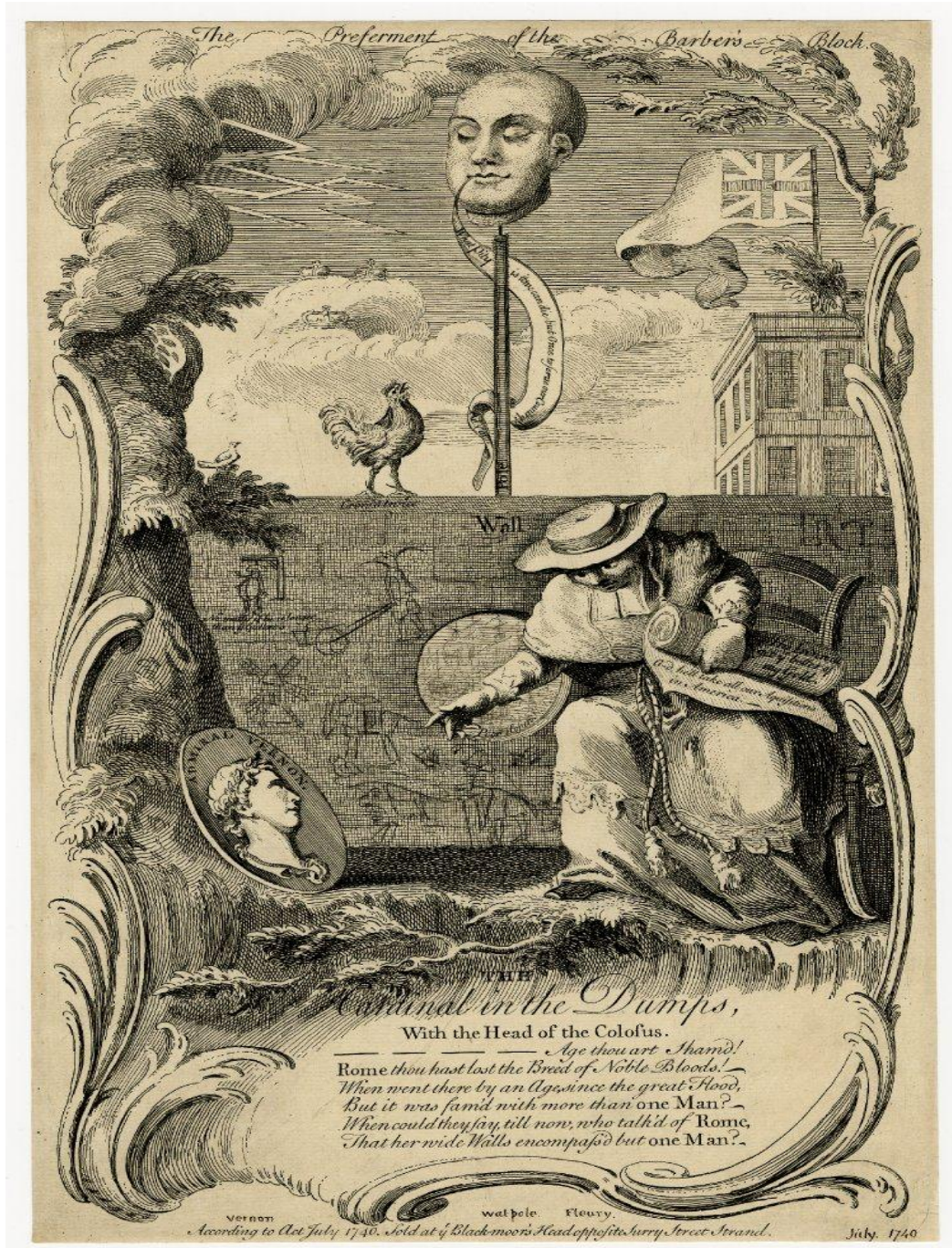
(Fig. 24.a). William Hogarth, *Before*, 1730-31, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Oil on Canvas, 38.7 x 33.7 cms.



(Fig. 24. b). William Hogarth, *After*, 1730-31, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Oil on Canvas, 38.7 x 33.7 cms.



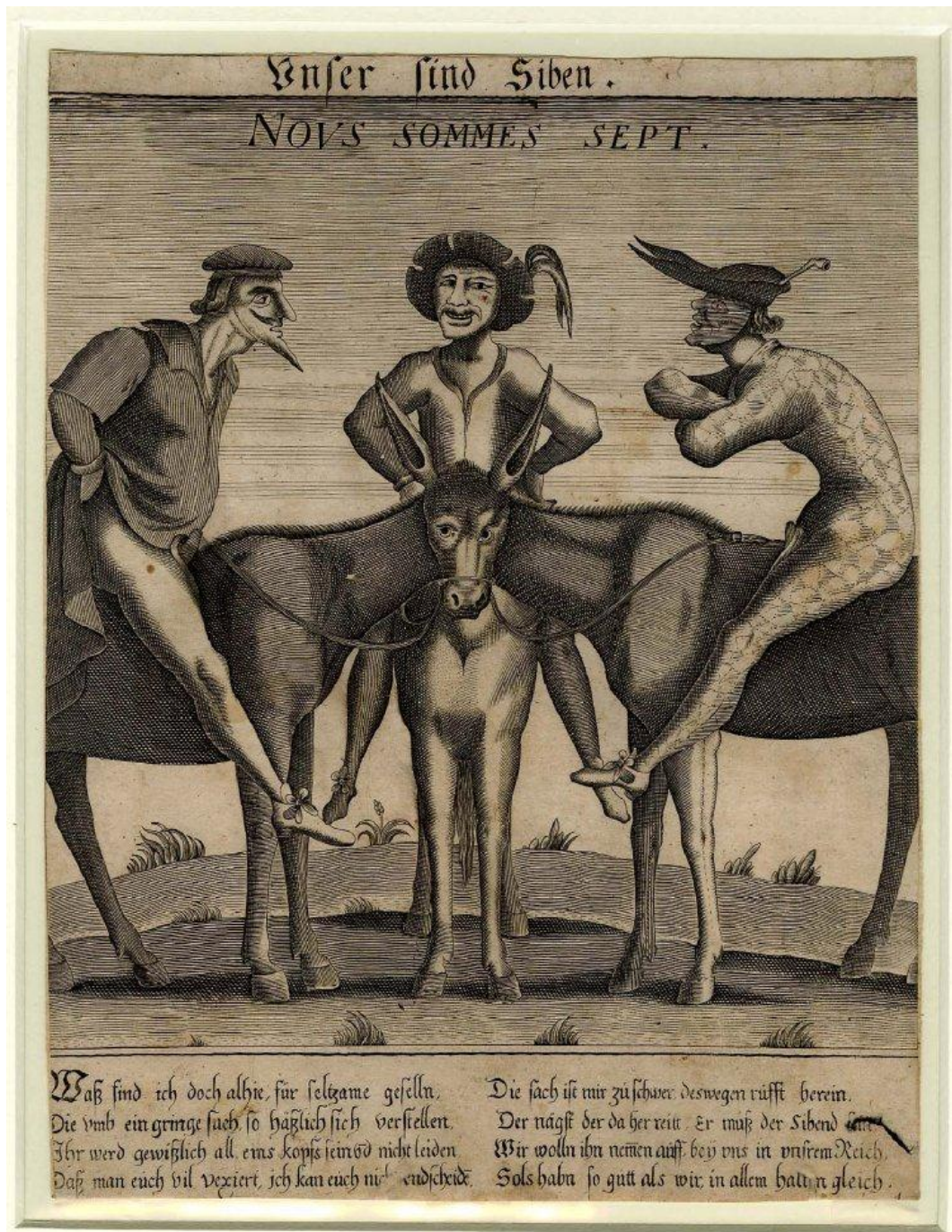
(Fig. 25). Angelica Kauffmann, *Self-Portrait*, 1787, The National Gallery, London.
Oil on Canvas, 74 x 61 cms.



(Fig. 26). George Bickham Junior, *The Cardinal in the Dumps, With the Head of Colossus*, 1740, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Engraving, 32.9 x 20.5 cms.



(Fig. 27). Anonymous, *A Map made like a fool's head*, 1590s, Bibliotheque Paris.
Engraving, 19 x 27 cms.



(Fig. 28). Anonymous, *We Three or We are Seven*, 1770, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Engraving, 27x 26 cms.



(Fig. 29). Anonymous, *A Pleasant History of the World Turned upside down*, late 1700s, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Engraving, 30 x 60 cms.



(Fig. 31). Giuseppe Maria Mitelli, *Cosiva il mondo* (*The Way of the World, Fortune Normally Brings an Ass*), 1685, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Etching, 27 x 20 cms.



(Fig. 32). Anonymous, *The Cats Castle*, 1655, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Etching, 21.7 x 29.5 cms.



(Fig. 33). Thomas Jordan, *The World Turn'd Upside Down: OR, A briefe description of the ridiculous Fashions of these distracted Times*, 1647, The British Library, London. Woodcut, 22 x 25cms.



(Fig. 34). M. Darly, *My Lord Tip-Toe Just Arrived from Monkey Land*, 1771, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Etching, 15.5 x 10.5 cms.

THE
WORLD turned Upside-Down.



PHILOSOPHERS of old will tell us,
As Tycho and such merry fellows,
That round this habitable ball
The beamy sun does yearly fall,
While we like nave of charriot wheel,
Keep rowling in the center still.
But modern stargazers of late
Assign the sun a better fate;
And plain as can be point it out,
That we it is go round about:
With all the new form'd worlds that float
In seas and air without a boat:
Whirl'd by that tuning Planet's force,
Around his orb in constant course,
No wonder then if some

(Fig. 35). Anonymous, *The WORLD Turn'd Upside Down, or, The FOLLY of MAN;*
In Twelve comical Relations UPON Uncommon Subjects, 1779, British Library,
London, Woodcut Frontispiece, 20 x 11 cms.



(Fig. 36). J. Cobb, *The Folly of Man or The World turn'd upside-down*, 1720, The Museum of London, London. Engraving, 40 x 50 cms.



(Fig. 37). J. Cobb, *The Folly of Man Expos'd or the World Turned Upside Down*, 1733, The Museum of London, London. Engraving, 42 x 51 cms.

THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE-DOWN OR THE FOLLY OF MAN



(Fig. 38). J. Cobb, *The World Turned Upside-Down or the Folly of Man*, 1790, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Engraving, 37.1 x 46.1 cms.



(Fig. 39). James Gillray, *A Pig in a Poke. Whist, whist*, 1788, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Etching, 2.32 x 32.9 cms.



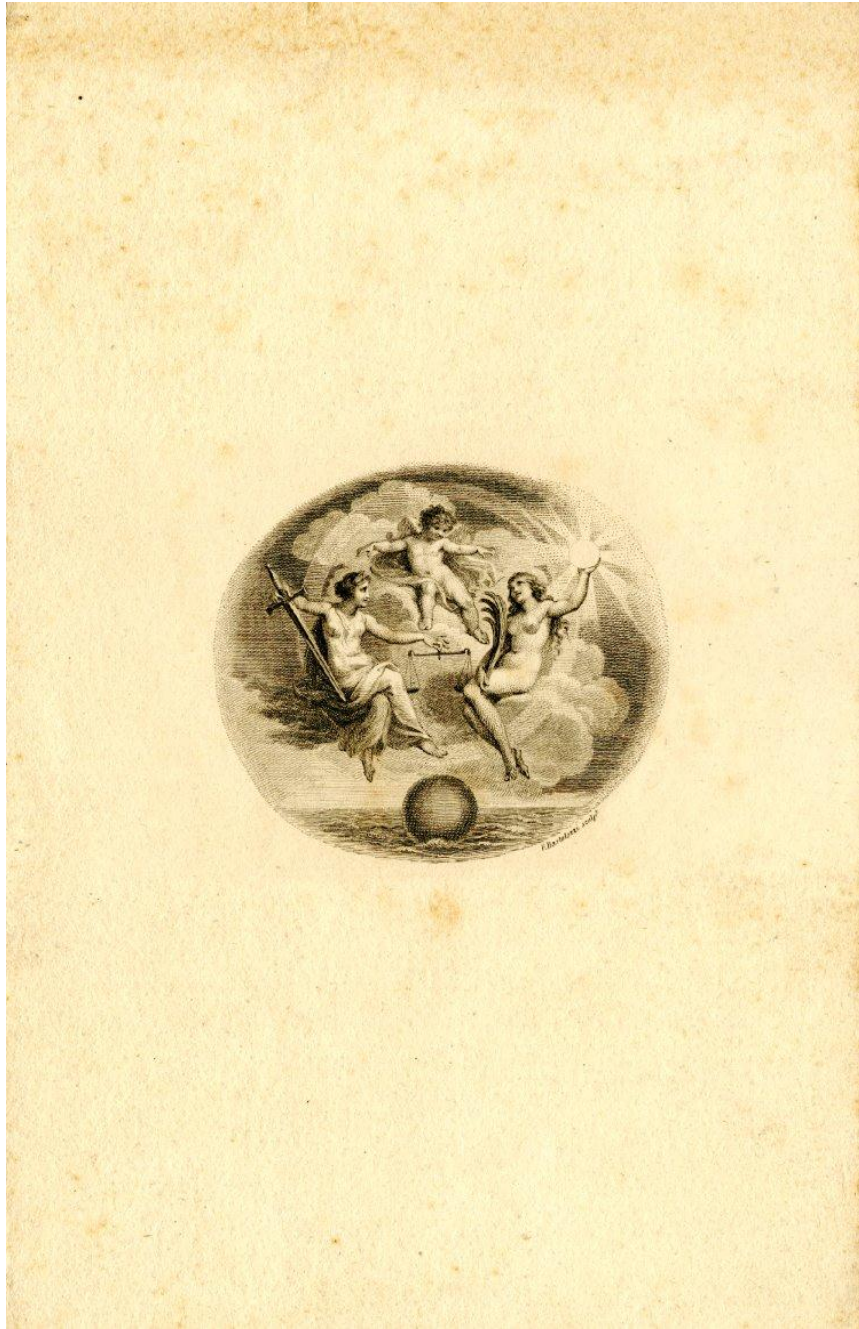
(Fig. 40). James Barry, *The Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland*, 1801, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Drawing, 70.9 cm x 52.4 cms.



(Fig. 41). Anonymous, *England/Ireland*, 1800, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Mezzotint, 25.7 x 36.2 cms.



(Fig. 42). Anonymous, *Britannia or, an Emblem of England*, 1798, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Mezzotint, 35 x 25.2 cms.



(Fig. 43). Francesco Bartolozzi, *Justice and Veritas*, 1793, British Museum Prints and Drawings Department, London. Etching and Engraving, 22 x 14.3 cms.

