THE CONSUMPTION OF CHOCOLATE, TOBACCO AND PERFUME: GENDER AND SOCIAL IDENTITY IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor

of Philosophy in Literature and Arts

University of Oxford

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Trinity Term 2026

Number of words: 99,966

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates how the consumption of chocolate, tobacco and perfume shaped conceptions of masculinity and femininity among the English elites and, increasingly, the 'middling sorts', *c.*1650–*c.*1800. Drawing on treatises, trade cards, newspaper advertisements, recipe collections, household accounts, satirical art and literature, business records, and objects such as snuff boxes, perfume bottles and chocolate cups, it traces these goods from medical prescription to everyday leisured consumption. Case studies include the third earl of Egremont's perfume expenditure, Bath's male and female perfumers, and the chocolate houses of Elizabeth White in St James's and Grace Tosier in Blackheath.

The thesis argues that commerce helped to make gender norms rather than merely reflecting them — by creating the distinctions it sold, in the case of snuff and perfume, and by legitimising existing practice, in the case of chocolate — and that these three commodities changed their gendered meanings by different routes and at different speeds.

Men and women manipulated the codes attached to these goods deliberately rather than passively, and competing models of masculinity and femininity coexisted at any one moment. As access widened, middling consumers adapted elite habits rather than simply imitating them, and social distinction shifted from price to blend, vessel and setting rather than disappearing. Women's commercial work, visible in billheads, wills and provincial advertisements, as well as directories and letters, is largely absent from the records designed for display. Finally, the thesis shows that practices that appear liberating from

one perspective may reveal constraint from another, making such ambiguity central to understanding how gender and social identity were negotiated.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am greatly indebted to my supervisors, Dr Jonathan Healey and Dr Hannah Smith, for their support, inspiration and counsel. It has been a great pleasure working with them, from start to finish, and I thank them both for their enthusiasm and professionalism.

I am also indebted to Dr William Tullett, Dr Angela McShane, Dr Amy Lim, Dr Christopher O'Kane and Dr Matthew Green who generously shared their expertise with me.

I owe thanks to the staff at the British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings; the Victoria and Albert Museum, Prints Department; the City of Westminster Archive Centre; the East Sussex Record Office; the West Sussex Record Office; the Lincolnshire Archives; the Wellcome Collection; the Holkham Hall Archives; the National Archives; and the Museum of Freemasonry.

On a personal level, I would also like to thank my extraordinarily supportive children Olivia, Arthur and Arabella in whose Oxford University footsteps I follow. My inspiring mother, who died just as I was embarking on this adventure, was also instrumental in getting me firing on all cylinders and for encouraging me to be brave. My proud father, who died as my viva approached, was a huge and vocal support, and I only wish he could have lived long enough to see me to the very end. I would also like to thank Dominic Spacie for his unflagging interest in, and support of, my thesis from the very beginning, and for 'steadying the Buffs' when required. Pete Howard de Walden also deserves my thanks for his patience and for his sense of humour throughout.

Finally, I am extremely grateful for the scholarship funding that I have received from the University of Oxford.

Introduction

This thesis investigates how the consumption of perfume, chocolate and tobacco shaped evolving notions of gender and social identity among England's eighteenth-century elites and, as the century progressed, the aspirational 'middling sorts'. Beginning with treatises from the second half of the seventeenth century, it traces how these products were often initially prescribed along gendered lines and then how, once established, the marketing strategies and satirical representations both reinforced and challenged these gender ideals. Through these commodities, it argues that consumers actively manipulated the codes attached to luxury goods rather than passively accepting them, that the gendered associations of the three goods shifted by different routes and at different speeds, and that commerce helped to make gender norms, rather than merely reflecting them. This study explores both public and private consumption, as well as the experiences of sellers, of these luxury goods. Using case studies, it examines those who bought, sold, gifted and received these products in London, Bath and beyond. Examining elements of the material culture associated with these products, it reveals how they became tools for expressing, contesting and challenging prescribed gender norms.

During the long eighteenth century, the elites' relationship with luxury goods – specifically chocolate, tobacco (particularly in the form of powdered snuff) and perfume – contributed to a re-evaluation of elements of traditional gendered behaviour. While aristocratic consumption patterns initially set the tone, the widening accessibility of these products by mid-century meant that norms were negotiated across and between different social strata, with the 'middling sorts' adapting rather than simply imitating elite practices (a distinction

developed below, in relation to McKendrick's 'trickle down' model and Weatherill's critique of it). These products helped facilitate genteel society's construction of contemporary ideals of masculinity and femininity. Consumption was highly gendered: in public, pipe tobacco and chocolate were predominantly associated with men in the early decades of the eighteenth century. However, the use of snuff by both sexes as the century progressed, and the spread of chocolate into the household, suggest a gradual blurring of gender boundaries and newly emergent forms of social identity and self-presentation.

The rationale for treating chocolate, snuff and perfume as a coherent analytical group rests on more than their shared status as expensive imports: contemporaries themselves frequently discussed these commodities as interchangeable instances of a single phenomenon — novel, sensory luxuries that acted directly and dangerously upon the body. Daniel Duncan's *Wholesome Advice Against the Abuse of Hot Liquors* (1706), for instance, collapses chocolate and perfume into a single moral category, warning of the 'delightful Imposter called Pleasure [...] in Chocolate, and sweet Perfumes,' through which 'this charming Enemy lays these fatal Snares for us.'[1] This discursive pairing was not incidental: all three goods were marketed through overlapping retail networks, discussed in shared medical literature on the dangers of ingested and inhaled substances, and mobilised by moralists as evidence of a broader crisis of bodily and social discipline. Yet the strength of this association was not constant across the century. Early moralist and medical commentary, exemplified by Duncan, treated chocolate and perfume as near-synonymous

[1] Daniel Duncan, *Wholesome Advice Against the Abuse of Hot Liquors* (1706), pp.22–23. The gendered dimensions of this passage — particularly Duncan's personification of pleasure as a 'cheating Female' — are examined in Chapter 1.

vectors of the same corrupting sensory excess; by contrast, as the century progressed, each commodity developed an increasingly distinct social trajectory — chocolate's gradual domestication into a fashionable and then everyday beverage, snuff's emergence as a marker of urbane sociability among both sexes, and perfume's entanglement with evolving codes of bodily hygiene and sensibility.

Consumption is a valuable lens for understanding gender as it illuminates how men and women adopted and adapted these chameleon products for their own purposes. This thesis highlights new opportunities and ongoing challenges for both genders as the century progressed, in single-gender and mixed-gender settings. It builds upon the work of revisionist social and cultural historians, such as Amanda Vickery, Hannah Barker and Robert Shoemaker, who have moved away from characterising eighteenth-century social structures as rigid hierarchies or separate spheres. Instead, it considers the potential for multi-layered interaction between different social and gendered groups, and the underlying importance of individual agency in constructing identity.

There are inherent challenges in this study's subject matter. Though 'gender' is a cultural construct that varied across time and social context, and 'sex' is a biological term, they are used interchangeably here as primary and secondary literature often fails to distinguish consistently between the two. Similarly, class distinctions remain imprecise: terms such as 'the elites', 'genteel society' and 'the privileged' are also used interchangeably here to refer to the aristocracy and gentry, though significant differences existed within these groups. Social rank remained defined by whether one's wealth derived from land or trade, with impoverished members of the gentry class generally commanding more social prestige

than wealthy merchants. Yet differences and tensions existed within ‘the elites’: certain expressions of masculinity, such as high-stakes betting, were more acceptable and customary for rich aristocrats than for gentlemen from humbler backgrounds.

Similar imprecision attends 'the middling sorts', a category at least as unstable as 'the elites'. It encompassed wholesale merchants worth several thousand pounds and shopkeepers one bad debt from insolvency, alongside clergymen and physicians whose status derived from their professional standing rather than trade; the shorthand used here for convenience flattens such distinctions. The middling category presents an evidential difficulty as well as a definitional one. Elite consumption left abundant traces — household accounts, correspondence, objects of high craftsmanship preserved precisely because they were valued — whereas middling consumers rarely recorded their purchases and seldom owned goods deemed worth keeping. This thesis therefore reaches them obliquely, through sources in which their consumption becomes incidentally visible. Probate inventories chart the steady spread of equipment for hot drinks (including chocolate) from the early eighteenth century, while Old Bailey proceedings, in recording thefts of chocolate, sugar and tea, disclose patterns of sub-elite ownership that no diary preserves – discussed in Chapter 2. The trade cards and newspaper advertisements examined in that chapter, increasingly pitched in language and price at industrious customers, reveal whom retailers believed themselves to be addressing; and the modest cost of a dish of chocolate (typically 3–6 pence) indicates the point at which public chocolate culture admitted comparatively humble consumers. None of these sources recovers middling consumption with the intimacy that letters and account books afford for the elites but, taken together,

they allow its contours — what was bought, at what price, and in which settings — to be traced with reasonable confidence from mid-century onwards.

This thesis adopts a comparative analysis of chocolate, snuff and perfume, drawing on literature, art and material culture, and treating gender as a dynamic process unfolding across diverse spaces and times. Each of these approaches has precedents within eighteenth-century studies; what is distinctive here is their combination, applied to three commodities traced in parallel across the long eighteenth century. Studies of a single commodity or a single sense cannot show how the gendered meaning of one good shifted while that of another held, nor how competing models of masculinity and femininity operated at the same moment across different goods and spaces. It is this combination that makes the following three contributions possible.

First, this thesis demonstrates that men and women constructed gendered identities through the active manipulation of the codes attached to these commodities — neither passive emulation of elite norms nor straightforward transgression of them. This is evidenced in women's recipe manuscripts and published authorship (Lady Ann Fanshawe, Hannah Glasse and Elizabeth Raffald – Chapter 4); in female commissions and bequests (Anne Houblon's chocolate cups, the duchess of Portland's friendship box – Chapter 3); in trading careers conducted within and around coverture (Grace Tosier, Mary Purdie, Elizabeth Mackinnon – Chapter 6); and in male self-fashioning through the same goods, from the self-presentation of Elihu Yale's tobacco box to the third earl of Egremont's perfume accounts (Chapters 3 and 4).

Secondly, by tracing the three commodities in parallel across the century, the thesis documents how their gendered associations changed: gradually, unevenly and by different routes for each good. Marketing shifted from medical prescription to lifestyle appeal as treatises gave way to trade cards (Chapters 1–2); chocolate advertising routinely named women among its expected customers from the 1760s and, by the late 1780s and 1790s, sometimes addressed them as a distinct market with needs of their own, even as chocolate houses remained predominantly male preserves; snuff crossed gender lines among the elites from the century's first decade, becoming widely acceptable for women by the 1720s; and perfume, worn by both sexes in 1700, was increasingly coded as feminine by its close. These trajectories show gender ideology evolving without rupture, retaining underlying structures of meaning even as the practices attached to individual products changed — a pattern of documented, commodity-specific change rather than either stasis or transformation.

Thirdly, the comparative evidence base demonstrates that multiple, often competing, models of masculinity and femininity coexisted at any single moment: the fop excluded from the tobacco card's sociable table alongside the man of feeling accommodated within it (Chapter 2); the gamester, the polite gentleman and the macaroni sharing the chocolate house (Chapter 5); the 'strident' public woman and the domestic manager judged by the same commentators (Chapters 4–5). This multiplicity, visible only when several commodities and spaces are examined together, complicates historiographical accounts that treat eighteenth-century gender ideology as a stable or binary framework.

This thesis combines conventional written sources — such as tradesmen's bills, treatises, diaries and letters — with close analysis of artefacts including paintings and prints. While promotional materials and material objects inevitably carry certain limitations as historical sources, such as the gap between marketing intent and consumer reception, they nonetheless offer a compelling prism through which to explore gender. Personal possessions such as tobacco boxes and chocolate cups can be viewed as significant markers of individual and group identity, making them valuable in their own right.

The long eighteenth century provides an ideal time-frame for this study, as it traces the trajectory from the initial introduction of some of these substances into England (particularly chocolate) to their eventual widespread consumption. It was the moment when their properties were most vigorously contested and their uses shifted from primarily medicinal to predominantly recreational. This period was marked by both continuity and change in English gender identity, shaped by the proliferation of foreign trade in luxuries, the expansion of the British empire, the growth in urban leisure opportunities, as well as the emergence of political movements such as abolitionism.

London is the geographical focus of this study. No other British city approached the capital in size, in wealth, or in the density of its luxury trades, and it was there that these commodities were most abundantly sold, most conspicuously consumed and most fully documented. Its resident population rose from around 575,000 in 1700 to some 900,000 by 1800, driven by rural-to-urban migration and sustained by political and religious stability at home. That figure understates the city's reach, since each Season brought aristocratic and gentry families into temporary residence, and the metropolitan tastes they adopted

travelled back with them to the provinces.[2] Growth on this scale was matched by extensive building — assembly rooms, shops, warehouses and pleasure gardens — which hastened the circulation of these three luxuries. Bath, examined in Chapter 6, offers a deliberate counterpoint rather than an exception: a provincial spa-town whose luxury trades were substantial enough to sustain perfumery businesses of their own, and whose relationship to metropolitan fashion is one this thesis tests rather than assumes.

The origins of tobacco, perfume and chocolate

Snuff

Tobacco reached England in the later sixteenth century, at first largely through Spanish-American supplies and, from the 1610s, increasingly from Virginia, and later still from the English Caribbean colonies.[3] Across the Americas, it had long been used ceremonially and recreationally. In England, it was initially promoted as a preventative fumigant against disease, quickly gaining popularity. This enthusiastic uptake occurred despite King James I's diatribe, *A Counterblaste to Tobacco* (1604), which denounced it as 'hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, [and] dangerous to the lungs.'[4] Though some tobacco shops were operating in London by 1605, it was not until the 1650s that its use became widespread.[5] At this stage, it established itself as a staple commodity, accounting for as much as a third of some grocers' sales.[6] Though heavily taxed, it remained immensely popular and was

[2] Jerry White, *London in the Eighteenth Century: A Great and Monstrous Thing* (London: Bodley Head, 2012), pp.3, 79–80.
[3] Jordan Goodman, *Tobacco in History*: *The Cultures of Dependence* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.143, 147.
[4] James I, King of England, *A Counterblaste to Tobacco* (London: 1604), p.13.
[5] Catherine Molineux, 'Pleasures of the Smoke: 'Black Virginians' in Georgian London's Tobacco Shops', *William and Mary Quarterly,* 64.2 (April 2007), 327–76, (338).
[6] Hoh-Cheung Mui and Lorna Mui, *Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth–Century England* (Ontario and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), p.9.

'drunk' in pipes by men, women and children across the social spectrum from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards.[7]

Snuff-taking, by contrast, developed as a distinct and more exclusive method of tobacco consumption, with references to the practice appearing as early as 1609 in Thomas Dekker's writing.[8] Though one of the earliest surviving English snuff boxes was produced in 1653 by Virgo, a Sheffield cutler, it remained a marginal practice at this stage.[9] The habit of taking snuff only became fashionable among the aristocracy in the early eighteenth century. It was then that it came to signal refinement and loyalist affiliation, particularly through the decoration on snuff boxes (described in Chapter 3). Snuff was well-liked partly because it offered a less intrusive alternative to pipe-smoking, which was increasingly associated with alehouse culture, moral laxity and the labouring classes. Snuff was produced by fermenting, drying, blending and grinding tobacco leaves before (generally) mixing them with herbs, spices, or perfumed oils such as jasmine, orange blossom, clover, ambergris and rose. It was then compressed into blocks and grated into a fine powder, ready for nasal inhalation.[10]

The catalyst for the widespread adoption of snuff in England was the British capture of Spanish vessels at Vigo in 1702. The seized supplies, marketed as 'Spanish' or 'Vigo' snuff, circulated across social boundaries: finer blends were sold at higher prices by naval officers

[7] Angela McShane, 'Tobacco-Taking and Identity-Making in Early Modern Britain and North America', *Historical Journal,* 65.1 (2021), 108-29 (111).
[8] Lauren Working, 'Tobacco and the Social Life of Conquest, 1580–1625', *Historical Journal*, 65.1 (2021), 30–48.
[9] Victoria and Albert Museum, snuff box, accession no. W.1-1956 (see bibliography).
[10] Marcy Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures: A History of Tobacco and Chocolate in the Atlantic World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), p.187.

to elite consumers, while sailors sold poorer-quality stock more cheaply in port towns.[11] As Emily Friedman has argued, this moment both 'democratised' snuff and reinforced its status as a fashionable aristocratic pursuit.[12] From early on, the practice thus carried distinctly layered class associations.

The Treaty of Utrecht (1713) further expanded British trading rights, facilitating increased imports of high-quality snuff from Central and South America, Spain and Portugal. The volumes were vast: British tobacco imports increased from 38 million lb. in 1700 to 100 million lb. every year from 1771 to 1775.[13] As Catherine Molineux observes, tobacco remained Britain's second most important colonial crop — surpassed only by sugar — throughout the eighteenth century.[14] This ubiquity, and the contrasting social meanings attached to smoking and snuff-taking, make tobacco (and especially snuff) an invaluable lens for exploring questions of identity among the elites throughout the period.

Perfume

Perfume, derived from the Latin words '*per fumum'* ('through smoke'), was first used in England as incense in ecclesiastical and domestic contexts, where burning was believed to release fragrances that were both evocative and purifying. Its reputation as a protective

[11] Charles Lillie, *The British Perfumer*, ed. by Colin MacKenzie, 2nd ed. (London: J. Souter, 1822), pp.295-6. Lillie wrote that '[b]efore the year 1702, snuff-taking was very rare, and, indeed, little known in England.'
[12] Emily C. Friedman, *Reading Smell in Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (Lanham, MD: Bucknell University Press, 2016), p.26.
[13] Kenneth Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), pp.152–153.
[14] Molineux, 'Pleasures of the Smoke', p.338.

agent was reinforced during the Great Plague of London (1665–1666), when it was deployed to cleanse 'diseased' air. In the Plague's aftermath, however, perfume's function shifted: it was no longer confined to fumigating spaces and became increasingly associated with the desirable scenting of objects and people. Unlike chocolate or snuff, perfume's novelty lay not in its introduction but in the transformation of its uses: a substance once valued for masking and neutralising foul odours came to be prized for its appealing qualities — with floral and musky notes worn by both men and women at the start of the eighteenth century. This transition was uneven, as older medicinal and hygienic applications persisted alongside decorative uses well into the eighteenth century. An advertisement in *The Spectator* in 1711, for example, promoted perfume as a remedy for 'Diseases of the Head and Brain' and simultaneously as drops for scenting 'Linnen.'[15] These multiple uses reveal how perfume bridged the gap between older medical applications and newer ideals of sensory refinement. In doing so, they connected concerns about health with questions of fashion and gender.

Surviving seventeenth-century recipes suggest the home distillation of scented waters and oils from garden flowers and herbs was widespread, despite being labour-intensive.[16] As techniques advanced, perfumes became less concentrated and increasingly suitable for direct application to the skin rather than being confined to pomanders worn at the waist — advances that transformed fragrance into a portable and intimate marker of social identity. By the early eighteenth century, the medical legitimacy of scents had largely

[15] *The Spectator*, no.175, 20 September 1711, *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection*,< link.gale.com/apps/doc/WYASTB342315540/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&pg=2&xid=48c8290d> p.2.
[16] Margaret Willes, *The Domestic Herbal: Plants for the Home in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2020), p.77-79.

receded but, as William Tullett notes, their cultural significance deepened.[17] Perfume assumed new symbolic and social functions, becoming a way of expressing taste, sophistication, masculinity or femininity. In particular, the layering of scents across the body and on clothing reflected the growing importance of smell in shaping social presence. Fragrance could not only mask bodily odours through scented waters used for washing, but its use also extended to wigs, handkerchiefs, gloves (sold by scent as well as colour and size), fans, books and letters.[18] Smelling bottles containing favoured fragrances were also used to revive flagging spirits. Elite consumers carried around their own bottles which could be refilled at fashionable establishments such as Floris Perfumers, in London's Jermyn Street, later in the century (Figs. 0.1a and 0.1b).[19] Perfume thus operated simultaneously as a way of presenting oneself, and as a marker of collective belonging.



Figure 0.1a: Interior of Floris Perfumers in Jermyn Street, London SW1, (photograph: author's own, 2025).[20]

[17] William Tullett, *Smell in Eighteenth-Century England: A Social Sense* (Oxford: OUP, 2019), p.3.
[18] Friedman, *Reading Smell*, p.88.
[19] Floris, founded by Minorcan Juan Famenias Floris, is still located at its original Jermyn Street premises.
[20] In the eighteenth century, the Floris shop would have had a functional interior reflecting its artisanal use. The premises today retains its nineteenth-century façade while the interior integrates preserved Victorian features with contemporary design.



Figure 0.1b: Exterior of Floris Perfumers in Jermyn Street, London SW1, (photograph: author's own, 2025).

At the same time, perfumery emerged as both an art form and a commercial enterprise, with perfumers now establishing a professional identity distinct from apothecaries.[21] These developments were closely tied to imperial expansion and global trade, which introduced a greater abundance of exotic ingredients from beyond Europe, including sandalwood from the East Indies, jasmine from India and Egypt, vanilla from Mexico, and civet derived from the perineal secretions of African and Asian civet cats. Civet-scented perfumes — and civet-scented snuff — were regarded as the height of luxury in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, with Charles Lillie, the celebrated London perfumer, becoming renowned for his orange water and violet-scented civet perfume.[22] By later in the eighteenth century, however, lighter floral fragrances grew in popularity while civet fell

[21] Holly Dugan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), p.143.
[22] Christopher Plumb, *The Georgian Menagerie* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p.94.

out of favour, increasingly criticised for its associations with excessive luxury and problematic effeminacy[23] — a shift legible in the vessels and quantities in which perfume was carried (Chapter 3), and in the terms on which perfumers such as Richard Warren advertised their stock (Chapter 6). This shift marked a turning point in the cultural perception of perfume, as 'masculine' men distanced themselves from wearing scents linked to effeminacy, though not from buying them. Men continued to dominate the public face of the fragrance trade, even as its image grew steadily more feminine.

Chocolate

Chocolate, the third product examined here, was dubbed *Theobroma Cacao* ('food of the gods') by the Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus (1707–1778). It was cultivated throughout Mesoamerica (Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Costa Rica), where it had been imbibed for centuries. The Aztecs, in particular, valued it highly, apparently using it as a substitute for blood in sacrifices, while cacao[24] beans were also used as a form of currency.[25] After the Spanish conquest of Mexico in 1521, Spanish monks and *conquistadors* embraced chocolate, with the first shipment of cacao beans from the New World making its way into Catholic Europe in 1585. Initially relished here as a post-prandial beverage or as a dip for sweet wig bread, it became firmly established in Spain and Italy before spreading more widely throughout Europe.[26] Cromwell's forces captured Jamaica from the Spanish in 1655, bringing the island into England's expanding colonial

[23] *Ibid*., p.92.
[24] 'Cacao' is the name used to describe beans before being processed.
[25] The Mayans used cacao in some form from *c.* 600–400 BC.
[26] Wig bread with made with mace, cloves, nutmeg and caraway seeds.

sphere and increasing its later importance to the cacao trade. Two years later, in June 1657, the first English advertisement for chocolate appeared in London's *The Publick Adviser*: 'In *Bishopsgate-Street* in Queen's-head Alley, at a Frenchman's House, is an Excellent *West India drink* called CHOCOLATE, to be sold, where you may have it ready at any time, and also unmade at reasonable rates.'[27] Chocolate entered England through the apothecary's shop before becoming a fashionable commodity increasingly sold by grocers, at chocolate houses and, as seen in this 1657 advertisement, on the street.

The complexity of early chocolate processing ensured that, for more than a century after its introduction into England, it remained largely a luxury for the wealthy (despite the promise above of 'reasonable rates'). Production began with the harvesting of ripe cacao pods (Fig. 0.2) and the removal of 'wet' beans with the pulp still attached (Fig. 0.3). These wet beans were fermented and dried before being winnowed to remove the husks (Fig. 0.4). The nibs were then roasted before being ground on a heated *metate* (a traditional, slightly concave slab) using a grinding stone called a *mano* (Fig. 0.5) into a paste. Finally, this paste was set in wax paper and sold as 'cakes', pastilles or in blocks (Fig. 0.6). To prepare the drink, the hardened cakes were dissolved in liquid (water, orange water, milk, sherry, port, brandy or claret) and combined with sugar from loaves, spices (such as chilli, cinnamon or vanilla), nuts (often almonds), and perfumes (rose, civet, musk or ambergris).[28]

[27] *The Publick Adviser*, no. 5 (16–22 June 1657), p.80.
[28] These very ingredients were also used in perfume recipes of the period, such as the 'Rich Perfume' recipe in *The Accomplish'd Female Instructor* (1704), p.153. Ambergris is a secretion from the intestines of sperm whales.



Figure 0.2: Ripe cacao pods before being harvested at Belmont Estate, Grenada, W.I., (photograph: author's own, 2024).



Figure 0.3: Removal of 'wet' beans with the pulp still attached at Belmont Estate, Grenada, W.I., (photograph: author's own, 2024).



Figure 0.4: Fermented and dried beans, Belmont Estate, Grenada, W.I., (photograph: author's own, 2024).



Figure 0.5: A *metate* (slab) and *mano* (stone) used for grinding. (Image © Mission Chocolate Recipes, 2026).



Figure 0.6: Circular 'cakes' of chocolate on wax paper. (Image © Historic Royal Palaces).

Developments in processing techniques transformed chocolate's availability and uses. In 1725 James Workman patented a machine for producing chocolate 'with greater Expedition and Cleanliness'.[29] This was followed by Walter Churchman's invention of an engine for more refined preparation.[30] In 1761, Joseph Fry bought Churchman's patent and business, and in 1795 Joseph Storrs Fry patented a method of grinding cacao beans using the Watt steam engine.[31] From 1828, following Coenraad van Houten's patent in the Netherlands, hydraulic presses were used to remove cocoa butter, which produced a lighter, more digestible form of cocoa. These innovations made production faster, cleaner and less labour-intensive, paving the way for the diversification of chocolate into a variety of forms and, ultimately, the Fry firm's creation of the first solid chocolate bar in 1847.

[29] *Daily Post*, 29 December 1725, Issue 1925, 'Advertisements', 1b.
[30] The National Archives, SP 36/15/138 (7 October 1729).
[31] Sophie D. Coe and Michael D. Coe, *The True History of Chocolate* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2013), p.243.

Although tea and coffee have received far greater scholarly attention as seventeenth- and eighteenth-century hot beverages, possibly deservedly so as they were more common, chocolate occupied a distinctive cultural space that intersected with both.[32] Coffee houses were male-dominated arenas of public sociability, whereas tea was closely associated with domestic rituals and female consumption.[33] Chocolate, however, straddled both spheres. John E. Wills emphasises this duality, noting that chocolate was linked to all-male elite chocolate houses initially but also became 'associated with the pleasures of domesticity.'[34]

Its social meaning was further shaped by its cost. By comparing the price of chocolate, tea and coffee, it is evident that it was initially a hot drink for the affluent: at the start of the eighteenth century, coffee was priced at 4–7 shillings per pound, while tea reached upwards of 10–12 shillings depending upon blend. Prepared chocolate, by contrast, cost around 10–15 shillings per pound, making it, along with tea, the preserve of those with the deepest pockets. Tea became more affordable during the latter half of the eighteenth century, while chocolate remained relatively expensive because more of the raw commodity was needed to make each cup. However, these prices conceal important variations in quality with cheaper varieties (often adulterated versions) becoming available by mid-century. Access to chocolate through chocolate and coffee houses offered an alternative to home consumption: for the price of a dish (typically 3–6 pence), even

[32] Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Markman Ellis, *The Coffeehouse: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2004); Steve Pincus, 'Coffee Politicians does Create': Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture', *Journal of Modern History* (1995); Laura C. Martin, *A History of Tea: The Life and Times of the World's Favourite Beverage* (Vermont: Tuttle Publishing, 2018); Victor H. Mair, *The True History of Tea* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009).

[33] The first British coffeehouse opened in Oxford in 1651.

[34] John E. Wills, Jr., 'European Consumption and Asian Production' in John Brewer & Roy Porter (eds.) *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993), 133-147 (p.142).

relatively modest consumers could participate in public chocolate culture. By the 1770s, the expansion of the grocery trade and improvements in supplies meant that chocolate had filtered down permanently to prosperous tradespeople and professionals, though the middling consumer's cheaper version dissolved in water and drunk from earthenware, occupied a different register from the elite household's silver chocolate pot and imported porcelain. All three commodities, and chocolate in particular, were subject to punitive duties. The 1728 household accounts of James Brydges' Cannons estate in Edgware illustrate this: six pounds of unprepared chocolate cost him £1 13s, with the duty alone amounting to £4 16s, nearly three times the purchase price.[35]

Luxury, refinement and gender in contemporary debate

Contemporaries themselves linked sensory refinement to social standing. In *A Discourse of Trade* (1690), Nicholas Barbon argued that sensory refinement shaped behaviour, claiming that gratification increased in direct proportion to cultivation and sophistication. He reasoned that:

> […] Man naturally Aspires, and as his Mind is elevated, his Senses grow more refined, and more capable of Delight; his Desires are inlarged, and his Wants increase with his Wishes, which is for everything that is rare, can gratifie his Senses, […] and promote the Ease, Pleasure, and Pomp of Life.[36]

[35] Sam Bilton, *The Philosophy of Chocolate* (London: British Library, 2023), pp.68–69.
[36] Nicholas Barbon, 'A Discourse of Trade', in *Commerce, Culture, and Liberty: Readings on Capitalism Before Adam Smith,* ed. by Henry C. Clark (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2003) pp.66–99, (p.74).

Although primarily concerned with what would be defined as economics today, Barbon's treatise demonstrates that, by the close of the seventeenth century, refined sensory experience was already associated with elite identity and an ever-growing appetite for novel pleasures. The wearing of perfume and fine clothing, alongside the ritualised consumption of exotic beverages such as chocolate, or the sniffing of snuff, functioned as sensory markers of refinement and status. Satirical critiques of consumer culture often targeted its superficial excesses.

By mid-century, shopping for pleasure had become an established component of the *beau monde's* recreational activities, with exclusive shops emerging wherever the affluent gathered. This expansion in luxury retail is examined in Chapter 6, through case studies of Bath's perfumery businesses, which catered to the whims of the fashionable set. Shopping habits were shaped by a range of factors, including the accessibility of shops, the selection of merchandise, prevailing fashions, marketing strategies such as trade cards (see Chapter 2) and individual purchasing power (see Chapter 4 which highlights the examples of the third earl of Egremont and Sir John Nelthorpe). Gender shaped these habits too: as Vickery[37] and Finn[38] demonstrate, consumption and shopping were often understood through gendered distinctions, with particular goods and practices strongly associated with one sex or the other.

In mid- to late-eighteenth-century urban society, there were consistent concerns that over-refinement and commercialisation were threatening to destabilise the traditional markers

[37] Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors,* p.128.
[38] Margot Finn, 'Men's Things: Masculine Possession in the Consumer Revolution', *Social History*, 25.2 (2000), pp.133–55 (p.142).

of masculine virtue — military prowess, physical resilience and plain speaking — as new ideals of politeness, sensibility and consumer sophistication gained ground. This shift generated a paradox for men: they were expected to acquire sufficient refinement to enjoy polite mixed-gender sociability while avoiding the charge of effeminacy, which threatened their masculine credibility. Luxury goods such as chocolate, snuff and perfume became particularly contested sites in this negotiation, with critics warning that excessive indulgence in sensory pleasures could erode masculine vigour.

These concerns found extensive expression in contemporary literature, print culture and art (much of it satirical, as explored in Chapter 5). Jonathan Swift exemplified the ambivalence about mixed company: he acknowledged that male conversation degenerated without female company, yet in a 1728 essay he warned that effeminacy reduced men's reproductive capacity.[39] Joseph Addison and Richard Steele also lampooned fops and *beaux* in *The Spectator* and *The Tatler* for their extreme effeminacy, while David Hume praised mixed-gender sociability while worrying about the over-refinement of male manners.[40]

Distinct masculine 'types' emerged as shorthand for these anxieties. The fop, defined in 1735 by Thomas Dyche as 'a whimsical empty fellow, one whose mind is totally taken up with modes and fashions', epitomised male frivolity.[41] From the 1760s, the macaronis

[39] Jonathan Swift, 'Hints Toward an Essay on Conversation', in Thomas Roscoe (ed.), *The Complete Works of Jonathan Swift*, 2 vols (1869), II, p.294; Jonathan Swift, 'The Intelligencer', no.9 (6–9 July 1728), James Woolley (ed) *The Intelligencer* (Oxford: OUP, 1992), pp.123–124.
[40] David Hume, 'Of Refinement in the Arts and Sciences', ed. by Eugene F. Miller, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary* Parts I and II, (1742-52; 1777 edition) (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987), pp.274–275.
[41] Thomas Dyche, *A New General English Dictionary* (London: C. and R. Ware, 1735), p.340.

emerged — heterosexual men who, having returned from Grand Tours in Italy and France, dressed flamboyantly in the latest Continental fashions (examined in Chapter 5). Though subtly different, labels such as 'fop' and 'macaroni' were often used interchangeably, with both sparking real fears around 'unmanly' vanity. Effeminacy, associated with softness, narcissism and untamed emotional expressiveness, carried negative connotations, especially in an imperial context where men were expected to embody reason, strength and martial capability. Literature (from treatises to novels, plays and poetry), as well as satirical art, reinforced the association of effeminate men with moral corruption and social inadequacy, particularly their supposed inability to lead, uphold patriarchal authority or reproduce.

Gendered consumption patterns

Much like chocolate, the consumption of snuff in eighteenth-century England both reflected and influenced prevailing gender, social and class norms. Among men, snuff-taking was associated with worldly masculinity, power, sociability and elite refinement, and it was often a codified ritual performed in all-male company, reinforcing ideals of homo-sociability, camaraderie and gendered expectations. The snuff box, too, became more than just a practical item — it evolved into a powerful social instrument.[42] These small containers enabled male and female owners to signal their political loyalties, display their social status, affirm bonds with family and friends, cultivate broader social and commercial

[42] McShane, 'Tobacco-Taking', 112-8.

connections (for example with fellow freemasons) and communicate personal sentiment (particularly while courting).

Yet elite women took up snuff within a few years of its becoming fashionable in 1702, and by the 1720s, as McShane shows, it had become an acceptable female practice. This development should not be read simply as the imitation of male behaviour but as an active renegotiation of gendered boundaries. In some contexts, women's consumption of snuff symbolised a shared cultural and social capital with men, blurring the lines of expected gendered behaviour. As McShane argues, '[w]hile respectable women were largely excluded from the public sociability surrounding alcohol and coffee drinking, they could participate equally with men in all the rituals surrounding snuff-taking, whether in public or private.'[43] For women, snuff consumption became what McShane describes as the 'primary source of feminine cultural capital', a marker of refinement, sociability and inclusion, within elite culture.[44] The addictive nature of this stimulant further contributed to its widespread adoption and habit formation across gender lines.[45]

Nevertheless, women's use of snuff inevitably attracted criticism from contemporaries who regarded this practice as improper, unfeminine or even impertinent – notwithstanding Queen Charlotte (1744–1818) being affectionately nicknamed 'Old Snuffy' and 'Snuffy

[43] McShane, 'Bad Habits and Female Agency: Attending to Early Modern Women in the Material History of Intoxication', in Merry Wiesner-Hanks (ed.), *Challenging Women's Agency and Activism in Early Modernity* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021), pp. 25-64 (p.48).
[44] *Ibid.,* p.35.
[45] D.F.N. Harrison, 'Snuff – Its Use and Abuse', *British Medical Journal,* 2.5425 (1964), 1649–51, (p.1649) <https://doi: 10.1136/bmj.2.5425.1649>.

Charlotte' for her well-known addiction to the powder.[46] Indeed, critics argued that the very act of women taking snuff, which required assertiveness and confident self-possession, conflicted with recommendations of modest femininity, typically characterised by delicacy and restraint.[47] The practice of snuff-taking thus provides a valuable prism for examining the fluidity and performativity of gendered behaviour, while also exposing the tensions between prescription and the lived experience.[48]

Perfume consumption, as was the case with chocolate and tobacco consumption, carried complex and shifting gendered associations throughout the eighteenth century. Unlike snuff and chocolate, however, by the latter years of the century, women had become the primary wearers of perfume, using it to enhance their personal allure in accordance with societal expectations around refined femininity, beauty and elegance. Yet perfumery was never an exclusively female domain: effeminate men, particularly fops and macaronis, made conspicuous use of scented pomades and powders as part of their elaborate grooming rituals. As John Strachan explains, 'perfumer' was a term most commonly applied to barbers who had expanded their businesses into the manufacturing and selling of grooming and beautification products including scented shaving soaps, skin lotions, toothpastes and hair oils, with hair lotions, dyes and tonics being the most lucrative aspect of their trade.[49]

[46] Andrew Roberts, *George III: The Life and Reign of Britain's Most Misunderstood Monarch* (London: Allen Lane, 2021), p.79.
[47] *The Tatler*, no.34, 28–30 June 1709, p.1.
[48] *The Spectator*, no.43, 19 April 1711, p.2.
[49] John Strachan, *Advertising and Satirical Culture in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), p.204.

Literature Review

This section considers the existing scholarship on chocolate, tobacco and perfume as luxury commodities in eighteenth-century society and their influence on gender dynamics and identity formation. It traces the emergence of sensory history, the historiography of consumption and luxury, and the history of gender, before considering where these fields meet and what a study of these three commodities can add.

I

The sensory experience

The field of sensory history owes a foundational debt to Alain Corbin's *Le Miasme et la Jonquille* (1982), translated into English as *The Foul and the Fragrant* (1986). Corbin shows that, from the middle of the eighteenth century, the French came to find everyday smells increasingly offensive and intolerable. Deodorised aristocratic and bourgeois bodies were defined against the stench of the labouring poor, while femininity was recoded through the lightening of perfume, as heavy animal musks gave way to floral waters.[50] Historians working on England, however, have suggested a rather different picture: William Tullett in particular argues that smell remained a medium of sociability rather than becoming primarily a mark of social exclusion.[51]

In the decades since Corbin's publication, the history of the senses has become an established approach to understanding how people experienced and interpreted the past. Its rise is evident not only in textual output but also in the rising number of museum

[50] Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odour and the French Social Imagination*, trans. by Miriam L. Kochan, Roy Porter and Christopher Prendergast (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1986), pp.142–60, 176–99.
[51] Tullett, *Smell in Eighteenth-Century England,* pp.1–16.

exhibitions in England dedicated to sensory history.[52] This reflects the recognition that sensory evidence, despite its ephemeral nature, can illuminate subtleties of gender, class and national identity. It also demonstrates a broader interest in how sensory experience itself has changed over time, revealing that what people saw, heard, tasted, touched and smelled was shaped by the social and material worlds in which they lived. David Howes terms this shift in scholarly direction a 'sensorial revolution'.[53] He and Constance Classen position the senses as more than mere biological functions, arguing that sensory experiences are culturally and socially constructed.[54] By analysing the senses across art, medicine, law, politics and the marketplace, they show how the practices of smelling, tasting and touching helped to shape ongoing debates over national and gender identity.

Mark M. Smith's *Sensing the Past* (2007) provides an introductory survey of all five senses in relation to gender, race, colonialism and class, reflecting the substantial body of scholarship that had developed since 1982.[55] Emily Cockayne's *Hubbub* (2007) lays a broader groundwork for urban sensory experience in England, cataloguing the filth, noise and stench of the early modern town.[56] The fullest recent intervention in the field is William

[52] Recent exhibitions exploring sensory themes include 'The Chocolate House, Greenwich: Society, Intellect and Chocolate in 1700s Greenwich' at the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich; 'Hogarth and the Art of Noise' at the Foundling Museum, London; 'Feast and Fast: The Art of Food in Europe 1500–1800' at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; and the ongoing olfactory reconstruction of Viking life at the Jorvik Viking Centre, York. Most recently, the V&A's exhibition (Spring 2026) on Marie Antoinette incorporated a multi-sensory element, inviting visitors to smell both the perfume she might have worn and the scents she would have encountered in daily life.
[53] David Howes, 'Charting the Sensorial Revolution', *The Senses and Society*, 1.1 (2006), 113–128, pp.113-4.
[54] David Howes and Constance Classen, *Ways of Sensing: Understanding the Senses in Society* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp.1–5.
[55] Mark M. Smith, *Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching in History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), pp.1–17. Smith's account is avowedly introductory and his richest examples are drawn from the nineteenth-century United States, so its value here is primarily orientational rather than evidential.
[56] Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise and Stench in England 1600*–1770 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), pp.1–14.

Tullett's *Smell in Eighteenth-Century England* (2019). Using sources including medical treatises, advertisements, diaries and literary texts, Tullett argues that English olfactory culture is not best understood as a story of nuisance, medicalisation and deodorisation, but as one in which smell acquired new significance within sociable spaces.[57] He notes that the eighteenth century was marked by unprecedented sensory stimulation, much of it driven by expanding imperial trade: ships brought sweet and spicy chocolate, perfumed snuff, musky and floral fragrances – commodities that restyled everyday life while broadening the scope of consumer desire. He demonstrates how smell functioned as a mechanism for establishing social boundaries. For example, his discussion of the macaronis at Vauxhall shows how conspicuous perfume-wearing could mark status, while his concepts of 'sensory privacy' and 'asocial sociability' describe the negotiation of personal space within public settings.[58]

Single-commodity studies straddle these categories; Kate Loveman's work on chocolate and Angela McShane's on tobacco, which emphasise retail practice, sociability and material objects, are therefore considered below under consumer culture.

II

Consumption, luxury and material culture

The historiography of consumption offers a second framework. Historians have variously framed consumer culture as an evolutionary extension of pre-industrial practices,[59] as a

[57] Tullett, *Smell in Eighteenth-Century England,* pp.1–16, 124–125.
[58] *Ibid.*, pp.2–3, 8–9.
[59] Lorna Weatherill, 'Consumer Behaviour and Social Status in England, 1660–1750', *Continuity and Change,* 1.2 (1986), 191–3.

revolutionary rupture driven by colonial and imperial expansion,[60] or as a consequence of changing economic mechanisms such as credit and retail expansion.[61] The historiography of consumption has developed considerably since the foundational work of the 1980s and 1990s. McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb claimed for eighteenth-century England a 'consumer revolution' to match the industrial one, arguing that demand (rather than production) drove economic change and that fashionable goods spread downward through the ranks; the social and urban surveys of Porter, Borsay and Langford then made consumption central to accounts of social change.[62]

Within that revolutionary account, three explanations recur: emulation of elite patterns by the middling ranks and later the labouring classes; the lure of novelty; and the social dynamics accompanying consumption. Of these, McKendrick's social-emulation model, on which the 'middling sorts' mimicked elite habits, has been widely challenged.[63] Lorna Weatherill's analysis of probate inventories, diaries and household accounts demonstrates that middling consumption cannot be explained by emulation alone, reflecting instead an interaction of economic opportunity, cultural aspiration and the appeal of novelty,[64] while Carole Shammas emphasises the changing availability and affordability of imported

[60] Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985), p.68.
[61] Margot Finn, *The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture, 1740–1914* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), pp. 95-8, 280-6; Mui and Mui, *Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth-Century England*, pp.18-19.
[62] Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Europa, 1982); John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: HarperCollins, 1997); Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, rev. edn (London: Penguin, 1990); Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660–1770* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727–1783* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).
[63] McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb, *Birth of a Consumer Society*, pp.14–15, 20–2, 71–2.
[64] Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660–1760*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.137–90.

groceries and their increasing place within household consumption.[65] Maxine Berg, meanwhile, has shown how consumer goods both mirrored and moulded aspirations across the social spectrum.[66]

The 'culture of improvement' that emerged in 1680s England, as Paul Slack has demonstrated (2014), promoted dual values: industrious productivity, alongside a growing appetite for consumer comfort and pleasure.[67] This cultural shift gained additional momentum after the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), which intensified these dynamics by flooding domestic markets with foreign goods. This influx sparked vigorous debate around luxury consumption, particularly its moral hazards, its effects on national character, and its role in reshaping the social order. The coexistence of improvement ideals and luxury consumption created palpable tension between celebrating material progress and grappling with its social consequences.

As John Sekora has observed (1977), luxury became 'the greatest single commonplace' of the eighteenth century. He notes that between 1721 and 1777, more than 460 books and pamphlets were published on the subject.[68] This discourse on luxury peaked at the time of the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) when critics such as John Brown warned (in 1757) that elite men's growing interest in fashionable commodities, such as perfume, threatened

[65] Carole Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp.79–85.
[66] Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), p. 246.
[67] Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement: Information and Material Progress in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: OUP, 2014) pp.205–8, 231–2.
[68] John Sekora, *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p.75.

both England's masculinity as a whole and her national strength specifically.[69] This contrasts with Bernard Mandeville's earlier argument in *The Fable of the Bees* (1714) that conspicuous consumption was a positive force in that it fuelled economic prosperity.[70]

Within this broader field, studies of individual commodities have proved especially productive. In an important 2013 article, 'The Introduction of Chocolate into England: Retailers, Researchers, and Consumers, 1640–1730', Kate Loveman traces how chocolate entered English commercial life alongside coffee and tea, sold through overlapping retail networks and often by the same coffee-house proprietors.[71] Loveman shows that early promotion leaned heavily on medical claims — that chocolate could fortify the body, cure illness and heighten desire — met by repeated cautions about safe consumption, warnings that anticipate the didactic tone later adopted by writers such as Daniel Duncan.[72] She also demonstrates how contemporary plays and periodicals cast women as indulgent consumers while depicting chocolate houses as debauched venues for men's gambling, and recovers women's agency as authors of chocolate recipes.[73] The same article opens onto an Anglo-Spanish and imperial frame, reconstructing from the manuscripts of the first Earl of Sandwich how information about chocolate's manufacture was gathered in the 1660s, at a moment when English interest in the trade intersected with colonial ambition in Jamaica.[74]

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[69] John Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times,* 2nd edn (London: L. Davis and C. Reymers, 1757), Section 2, 'Of the National Capacity'.
[70] Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (London: J. Tonson, 1725) <https://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/permalink/44OXF_INST/ao2p7t/cdi_hathitrust_hathifiles_hvd_hw3pyo> [accessed 24 June 2023], pp.129, 420.
[71] Kate Loveman, 'The Introduction of Chocolate into England: Retailers, Researchers, and Consumers, 1640-1730', *Journal of Social History*, 47 (2013), 27–46 (30).
[72] *Ibid.,* pp.29–30.
[73] *Ibid.,* pp.36–37.
[74] *Ibid.,* pp.32–35.

Angela McShane's study of tobacco follows a similar path. She traces how snuff-taking, once associated with problematic femininity and foreignness, became a much more acceptable female practice among the elites by the 1720s.[75] She demonstrates how tobacco boxes functioned as expressive objects, carrying names, initials and imagery that articulated status, sociability and emotions as well as personal, political and national allegiance. Her praxeological approach (especially her concept of the 'gendering of tobacco box identities') offers a theoretically sophisticated account of female agency, in contrast to the more descriptive approaches adopted by sensory historians such as Brant and Tullett.

Tullett's detailed attention to scent-related objects such as pomanders, perfume bottles and tobacco boxes demonstrates how changing olfactory practices reflected broader social refinement. However, his fairly cursory examination of the designs, materials and ownership of these artefacts misses certain opportunities to analyse how the elites used these objects not only as markers of wealth and refinement but also as tools for constructing their personal gendered identities.

III

Gender

The history of gender, which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, gave historians a foundation for examining how societies constructed and negotiated masculinity, femininity and the

[75] Angela McShane, 'Tobacco-Taking', 117.

relationship between them. Margot Finn's 'Men's Things' (2000) challenged the assumption that shopping was a feminine activity. Drawing on the diaries of a Sussex shopkeeper, two clergymen and a Yorkshire schoolmaster, she showed that men took an active part in household provisioning and personal purchasing, buying everything from fish and potatoes to lace, china and clocks. She also showed that they used gifts to build and maintain social relations. [76] Finn's diarists were middling and provincial. For elite men in the capital, the image of gentlemen parading outside Berry Brothers in St James's Street (Fig. 6.1) suggests that shopping could also be a form of public display.

Helen Berry's 'Polite Consumption' (2002) shows how shopping was conducted at the upper end of the market. Elite women typically shopped in female company, often with chaperones, and for them shopping was both a sociable and a ceremonial occasion. Practices such as shopkeepers serving tea while customers examined new stock turned simple transactions into refined social occasions. Shopkeepers, for their part, were expected to master both politeness and salesmanship, and price negotiation, usually left until late in the transaction, formed part of the ritual.[77] Taken together, Finn's and Berry's work unsettles the pairing of passive female consumers with active male providers: men and women alike used shopping to display their social status and gendered identity.

The intersection of gender and material culture has recently become a significant field of historical inquiry. Amanda Vickery's *Behind Closed Doors* (2009) demonstrates how

[76] Margot Finn, 'Men's Things: Masculine Possession in the Consumer Revolution', *Social History*, 25.2 (2000), 133–55 (pp.134–7, 141–4).
[77] Helen Berry, 'Polite Consumption: Shopping in Eighteenth-Century England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 12 (2002), 375–94 (pp.379–83).

domestic goods both echoed and fashioned gender identities among the 'middling sorts'.[78] Drawing on a diverse range of household objects including wallpaper, Vickery presents the home as a site of spousal collaboration rather than division**,** suggesting that gender roles were more co-operative than traditionally assumed. Importantly, she also widens her focus beyond married couples to include bachelors, spinsters, widows and widowers, revealing what she calls a 'colourful universe of gender negotiation.'[79]

Further contributions reinforce the significance of material culture in shaping gendered experience. *Gender and Material Culture in Britain since 1600* (2016), edited by Hannah Greig, Jane Hamlett and Leonie Hannan, assembles valuable case studies ranging from an eighteenth-century jug to a twentieth-century powder puff.[80] The volume is avowedly a methodological primer for students rather than a sustained argument, however, and across four centuries and 165 pages the eighteenth century is thinly served. Helen Berry's *Gender, Society and Print Culture in Late-Stuart England* (2003) is more tightly focused, taking the commercial print of the 1690s (rather than objects) as its material.[81] Her reading of John Dunton's *Athenian Mercury* (1691–97), the question-and-answer periodical of the coffee-house world, shows how the consumption of print became a medium through which gendered identity was contested in public debate among the 'middling sorts'.

[78] Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (London: Yale University Press, 2009).
[79] *Ibid*., p.300.
[80] *Gender and Material Culture in Britain since 1600,* ed. by Hannah Greig, Jane Hamlett and Leonie Hannan, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp.1–12.
[81] Helen Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture in Late-Stuart England: The Cultural World of the Athenian Mercury* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp.1–20.

Historians have also revised their accounts of women's roles. Earlier interpretations, notably that developed by Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, emphasised the emergence of distinct gendered spheres within the middling sort, but subsequent scholarship has questioned the extent to which eighteenth-century gender relations can be understood through such a rigid division.[82] As John Tosh argues, 'gender permeates all cultural and social forms and all human experience;' eighteenth-century gender relations were therefore inevitably complex.[83] Vickery (1993), in particular, has challenged the over-reliance on prescriptive texts, demonstrating that elite women not only entered into, but thrived in, diverse forms of public sociability, from salons and masquerades to Bluestocking circles.[84] She argues that 'far from being eclipsed as the eighteenth century progressed, the public profile of privileged […] women had never been higher.'[85] As well as demonstrating significant changes in gendered behaviour between 1650 and 1850, Robert Shoemaker also finds notable continuities in gender roles and social practice over these two centuries.[86] Understanding this tension between change and continuity requires the examination of both femininity and masculinity as distinct yet interrelated phenomena.

The recent historiography of masculinity highlights its instability. Hitchcock and Cohen's *English Masculinities, 1660–1800* (1999), for example, approaches masculinity not as a fixed category but through the varied identities, behaviours and social expectations

[82] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), pp.13-17.
[83] John Tosh, 'The Old Adam and the New Man: Emerging Themes in the History of English Masculinities, 1750–1850' in *English Masculinities 1660–1800* ed. by Michèle Cohen and Tim Hitchcock, (London: Longman, 1999), pp.217–238 (p.217).
[84] Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History' *The Historical Journal,* 36.2 (1993), 383–414, (p.397).
[85] Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), p.10.
[86] Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society,* pp.313–18.

associated with English men.[87] Michèle Cohen's contribution further demonstrates how ideas of manliness and effeminacy were shaped by changing conceptions of English national character and relations with France.[88] The same elusiveness shapes varied interpretations of effeminacy.[89] Jeremy Gregory defines effeminacy as a failure to embody 'manly religion',[90] whereas Elizabeth Foyster associates it with excessive politeness.[91] Philip Carter links effeminacy to irresponsibility while highlighting the distinction between the performative effeminacy of overly refined but heterosexual fops, and homosexual mollies.[92] Conversely, Randolph Trumbach more narrowly links effeminacy to same-sex desire.[93]

With shifting social and political pressures on both national and international fronts, masculine respectability demanded continual recalibration. In *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society: Britain, 1660–1800* (2001), Philip Carter traces the changing relationship between politeness, manliness and masculinity over the eighteenth century.[94] He identifies politeness with ideals of refinement, sociability and moral conduct, while showing how the later ideal of sensibility placed greater emphasis on feeling and emotional responsiveness.

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[87] Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen (eds), *English Masculinities, 1660–1800* (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 1–22.

[88] Michèle Cohen, 'Manliness, Effeminacy and the French: Gender and the Construction of National Character in Eighteenth-Century England', in *English Masculinities, 1660–1800* ed. by Hitchcock and Cohen (London: Longman, 1999), pp.44–62.

[89] *Ibid*., p.5.

[90] Jeremy Gregory, 'Homo Religious: Masculinity and Religion in the Long Eighteenth Century' in *English Masculinities*, ed. by Hitchcock and Cohen, pp.85–110.

[91] Elizabeth Foyster, 'Boys Will Be Boys? Manhood and Aggression, 1660–1800' in *English Masculinities* ed. by Cohen and Hitchcock , pp.151–66.

[92] Philip Carter, 'Men about town' in Hannah Barker, Elaine Chalus (eds), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations, and Responsibilities* (Harlow: Longman, 1997), pp.31-57, (p.33).

[93] Randolph Trumbach, 'The Birth of the Queen: Sodomy and the Emergence of Gender Equality in Modern Culture 1660-1750', in Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus and George Chauncey (eds.), *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York: New American Library, 1989), pp.129–40

[94] Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society: Britain, 1660–1800* (Harlow: Longman, 2001), pp. 23–31, 70–75, 90–107.

A notable strength of Carter's work is his ability to identify both the masculine ideals that persisted and those that were modified over time, although he does not consistently examine the causes of these shifts in masculine identity. Alexandra Shepard (2005) similarly argues that while different forms of masculinity gained prominence at various points during the early modern period, significant continuities persisted in masculine ideals between 1500 and 1700.[95]

Appropriate displays of masculinity increasingly required a careful balance between polite sociability and the need to exercise self-regulation and honour. Inevitably, many men struggled to keep up with these evolving ideals, as illustrated by the Vauxhall Affray (1773). This incident, sparked by a dispute over gendered conduct between rival groups of men at Vauxhall Gardens, began as a display of masculine posturing and escalated into physical violence, revealing the fragility of shifting masculine norms. Particularly pertinent here is Miles Ogborn's 'Locating the Macaroni: luxury, sexuality and vision in Vauxhall Gardens' (1997) which links luxury consumption to sexuality through the phrase 'luxurious effeminacy'.[96] He reads gender roles against the backdrop of the Vauxhall Affray setting the effeminate, conspicuously fashionable and highly perfumed macaronis against a traditional masculine ideal grounded in chivalry, restraint and the protection of female virtue. He demonstrates how pleasure gardens such as Ranelagh and Vauxhall became highly visible arenas in which competing models of masculinity were displayed and challenged.

[95] Alexandra Shepard, 'From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, c.1500–1700', *Journal of British Studies*, 44.2 (2005), 287–95.
[96] Miles Ogborn, 'Luxury, Sexuality and Vision in Vauxhall Gardens', in Mary Peace and Vincent Quinn (eds.), 'Luxurious Sexualities'*, Textual Practice,* 11.3 (Winter 1997), p.449.

Beyond public spaces, masculine identity was also negotiated within the domestic realm, particularly through marital and paternal roles. There is evidence that, at least in some cases, patriarchal family relationships gave way to more companionate forms of marriage in the eighteenth century, as ideals of affection and sensibility gained greater prominence — an argument associated particularly with Lawrence Stone.[97] Yet the extent of this transformation remains contested. Wendy Moore's account of Mary Eleanor Bowes, for example, illustrates the complex interplay of affection, wealth, property and personal choice within elite marriage.[98] Amanda Vickery, too, demonstrates that genteel women in Lancashire exercised considerable autonomy in marriage and household management, while outward displays of female deference could coexist with substantial authority within the household.[99] Vickery thus challenges simplistic accounts of patriarchal dominance.

Marital arrangements varied widely, and Trumbach examines this complexity, arguing that egalitarian marriages sometimes produced greater differentiation in gender roles. Men became concerned that equality would make them more effeminate and, therefore, to avoid tumbling into effeminacy, they felt the need to reassert their masculinity in the public sphere.[100] Shoemaker similarly argues that husbands and wives 'had to sort out the distribution of authorities and responsibilities in the relationship. […] In theory, and even

[97] Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), pp.361-74.
[98] Wendy Moore, *Wedlock* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2009), pp.44–63.
[99] Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter,* pp.127–28, 161–68.
[100] Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp.325–9.

more in practice, a number of different approaches to the marital relationship were available.'[101]

Fatherhood, too, reflected these shifts. Anthony Fletcher highlights the increasing emotional expressiveness of fathers under the culture of sensibility.[102] However, as Henry French and Mark Rothery have argued, fatherhood in a patriarchal society embodied inherent tensions: while the sharing of luxury goods allowed men to display refinement and generosity, maintaining the family's social position through excessive consumption could also strain the financial resources needed to secure the economic standing of future generations (explored in Chapter 3).[103]

In eighteenth-century England, women's experiences also varied significantly based upon their socio-economic status, with privileged women in particular gaining unprecedented social and intellectual opportunities. As Paul Langford demonstrates, the emergence of polite society created new spaces for women to interact with men, both in domestic settings and public venues, thereby expanding women's opportunities for social and cultural participation and influence.[104] This evolution was particularly evident in Bluestocking circles and mixed-gender literary salons, where select groups of women engaged in intellectual discussion and challenged the traditional dichotomy between private and public spheres. As Elizabeth Eger notes, 'the original Bluestockings inhabited a

[101] Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650–1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (London: Routledge, 2013), p.101.
[102] Anthony Fletcher, *Growing Up in England: The Experience of Childhood 1600–1914* (London: Yale University Press, 2008), pp.129–32.
[103] Henry French and Mark Rothery, *Man's Estate: Landed Gentry Masculinities c.1660–1900* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), pp.212–33.
[104] Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People* (Oxford: OUP, 1989), pp.310–16.

world in which intellectual women could shine and even dazzle.' [105] This group gained influence during an era when women, especially in terms of education, faced severe restrictions and discrimination.[106] Supporting this development, Fletcher notes that in certain social circles, women's 'moral, intellectual, and spiritual qualities' came to be increasingly valued.[107] Enlightenment discourse debated women's intellectual capabilities, with Mary Wollstonecraft mounting a significant challenge to conventional femininity through her advocacy for women's education in 1792, though she notably still upheld the importance of traditional domestic duties for women.[108]

Building upon these broader changes in women's public engagement, women also exercised economic agency through trade, particularly shopkeeping, although such commercial activity had important precedents in earlier periods.[109] While societal norms predominantly still confined women to domestic roles, many carved out commercial occupations for themselves, particularly in the perfumery trade and in hospitality — although in many cases it was widows continuing or expanding their late (or absentee) husbands' enterprises.

[105] Elizabeth Eger, (ed.), *Bluestockings Displayed: Portraiture, Performance and Patronage, 1730–1830,* (Cambridge: CUP, 2013), p.1.
[106] *Ibid.,* pp.3–4.
[107] Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England*, p.412.
[108] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. by Miriam Brody (1792; Harmondsworth: Pelican Classics, 1978), pp.230–241.
[109] Nicola Phillips, *Women in Business, 1700–1850* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), pp.1–18, 45–67.

IV

The senses and gender

Compared with the more recent field of sensory history, gender history offers a longer historiographical tradition, yet the two approaches can be productively combined, and some historians have begun to do so. Howes and Classen, as noted above, tie the senses to debates over gender identity, while Tullett examines the role of the senses in the formation of gendered identities more directly than either Smith or Cockayne, arguing that sensory experience was integral to the processes through which masculinity and femininity were articulated and embodied.[110]

Studies of individual commodities have pressed the connection further. Clare Brant offers a narrower but insightful account of English olfactory culture, focused on perfume.[111] She shows how certain smells reinforced gender roles and expectations. However, her emphasis on perfume's role in destabilising sexual identity, arguing that 'perfume was reviled because it crossed gender lines', gives less attention to the wider sensory and material culture through which perfume acquired its gendered meanings, including changing practices of sociability, consumption and refinement.[112] Nevertheless, her claim that fragrances could challenge traditional gender norms remains compelling. Yet these studies largely concentrate on a single sense or commodity.

[110] Tullett, *Smell in Eighteenth-Century England,* pp.140-7.
[111] Clare Brant, 'Fume and Perfume: Some Eighteenth-Century Uses of Smell' *Journal of British Studies*, 43.4 (2004), 444–63.
[112] *Ibid.,* 459.

v

The contribution of this study

Bringing the two approaches together proves especially illuminating for analysing eighteenth-century anxieties around gender performance, as expressed through both sensory and material culture. This thesis argues that eighteenth-century English gender identities are best understood by examining how multiple senses and their associated material cultures intersected in specific spaces at specific times. Howes and Classen's methodology is particularly relevant for understanding how the eighteenth-century consumption of chocolate, perfume and snuff affected behaviour in society's higher echelons. Their framework highlights how the enjoyment of perfumed snuff, spiced chocolate and exotic fragrance was not simply personal but cultural, operating across multiple senses simultaneously to construct social identities.

The studies surveyed above also leave specific gaps. Vickery's emphasis on the middling ranks in *Behind Closed Doors* leaves little space for elite consumers, or for the comparative movement between ranks attempted here; nor does she analyse changes in the use and decoration of the same objects over time. Loveman's reconstruction of retail networks and promotional literature grounds this thesis's own account of chocolate's commercial infrastructure, but her chronological focus closes around 1730, just before chocolate's wider social diffusion, leaving unexplored both its later domestication among the 'middling sorts' and questions of female commercial agency that this thesis develops through the case of Grace Tosier. McShane's broad comparative scope, spanning both England and America, comes at the expense of a comprehensive analysis of the specific urban contexts within which these practices developed in England. Tullett's treatment of

scent-related objects leaves similar room: a more detailed analysis of these objects helps clarify how men and women alike employed material culture to blur or reinforce gender boundaries.

This thesis sides substantially with Weatherill: the middling adoption of chocolate, snuff and perfume traced in the chapters below reveals selective adaptation (cheaper blends, consumption shifted from chocolate houses to homes, and the same goods were deployed to different social ends) rather than straightforward emulation, though the aspirational pull of elite practice remains visible in the trade cards examined in Chapter 2. Berg's argument is likewise qualified here: widening access did not erase social differentiation but reconfigured it, with the mode and context of consumption assuming the distinguishing work that price alone had once performed.

In its approach to gender, this thesis follows Vickery in challenging simplistic accounts of patriarchal dominance. Like Shepard and Carter, it adopts a focused chronological and thematic approach, using material objects to trace subtle yet significant shifts in gendered identity. The changes in masculine ideals that Carter identifies are traced through the changing imagery on tobacco trade cards targeted at men (Chapter 2), and the complexities of effeminacy through satirical representations of men in the public sphere (Chapter 5).

Thesis structure

The central contention of this thesis, then, is that commerce in chocolate, snuff and perfume helped to make eighteenth-century gender norms rather than merely reflecting

them. This study argues that while these exotic commodities were often marketed initially along gendered lines, their actual consumption frequently transcended such boundaries, revealing the dynamic nature of gender identity across genteel and, increasingly, middling English society. To examine these dynamics systematically, this study proceeds through six thematic chapters that trace these products as they moved from medical prescription to everyday leisured consumption.

Chapter 1 examines the gendered medicinal prescription of these newly arrived products in treatises from *c.*1650 to *c.*1710, analysing claims about reproduction, health and gendered responsibility, and showing how this discourse established associations that persisted well beyond therapeutic use. Chapter 2 turns to trade cards and newspaper advertisements from *c.*1700 to *c.*1800, reading their gender-targeted imagery and language as these products moved from elite to more widespread consumption — a broadening that was legible in the advertisements themselves, which increasingly courted middling customers alongside the nobility and gentry.

The middle chapters shift to private, domestic spaces. Chapter 3 considers design-led objects (*c.*1680–*c.*1805) — snuff and tobacco boxes, snuff handkerchiefs, chocolate cups, perfume bottles — asking how they expressed individual and collective identities, and how the same fashions adapted across the social scale in cheaper materials such as pressed horn. Chapter 4 examines gifting and recipe-sharing (*c.*1700–1800), using case studies to explore reciprocation, home consumption and the maintenance of social networks; it also contrasts the third earl of Egremont's (1751–1837) perfume expenditure with the more conventional spending of the Lincolnshire landowner Sir John Nelthorpe (1744–1799).

The final chapters trace gender and consumption in public. Chapter 5 analyses satirical and idealised representations of chocolate consumption (c.1710–c.1800), focusing on anxieties around male effeminacy, 'unfeminine' females and transgressive behaviour in chocolate houses, pleasure gardens and bedchambers. Chapter 6 examines the lived commercial experience through case studies of Bath perfumers (c.1760s–90s) and the chocolate houses of Elizabeth White in St James's and Grace Tosier in Blackheath, showing how economic participation intersected with gendered identity, and how luxury retailers — middling shopkeepers serving elite clients — navigated deference and commercial authority. It demonstrates that commercial spaces created distinct opportunities for female agency while exposing the particular constraints faced by foreign male traders.

In tracing the journey of these exotic commodities from elite novelties to increasingly widespread pleasures, this thesis argues that the very act of consumption became a means of expressing or negotiating what it meant to be a man or woman — first within genteel society, and by the century's close across the middling ranks as well, where wider access reconfigured social distinction rather than erasing it. Gender norms, therefore, did not emerge in isolation: commerce helped to make them, within a social world stratified by class that both informed and constrained how consumption could be interpreted.

CHAPTER 1

Prescription

This chapter examines how chocolate, perfume and tobacco were prescribed and promoted to men and to women, in treatises published in England between *c.*1650 and *c.*1710. These texts reveal not only how early modern English society conceptualised gendered differences in health, but also how it negotiated the cultural impact of newly imported consumer goods. Written predominantly by men — physicians, moralists and entrepreneurs — these treatises illuminate certain contemporary expectations of masculinity and femininity.[113] Their claims for these products range from promises of miraculous cures and enhanced vitality to warnings of corruption, idleness and decline in social discipline. In doing so, they exposed the ways in which anxieties about the body, mind and morality were entangled with emerging consumer habits and colonial trade.

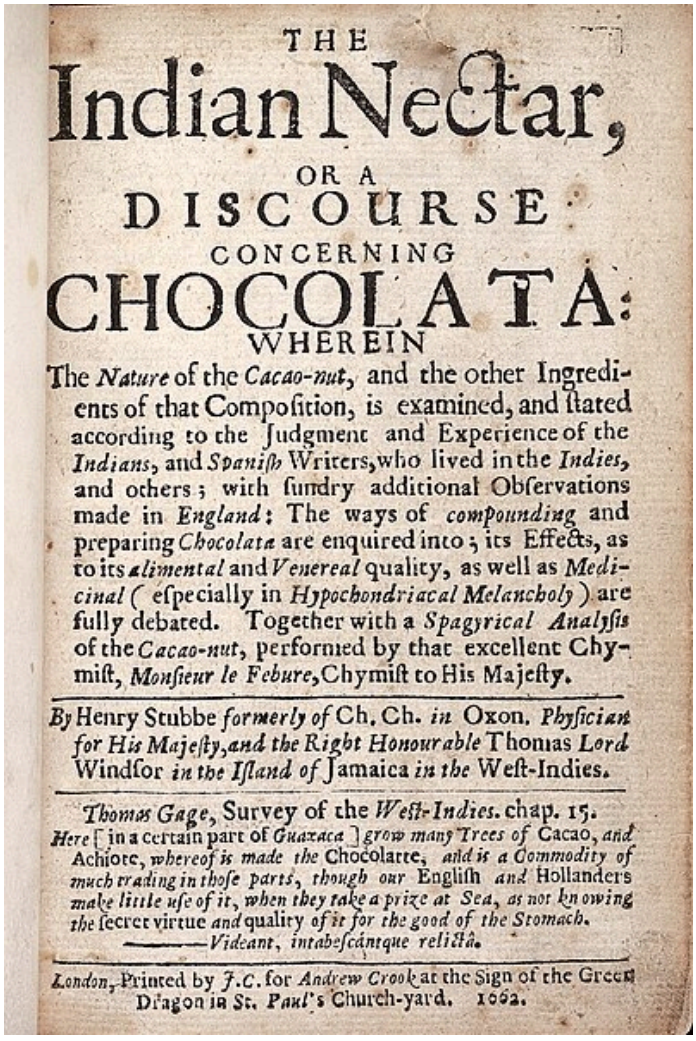
Medical understanding in seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century England remained grounded in humoral theory, inherited from Hippocrates and Galen, which held that the balance of four humours (blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm) determined health, disease and temperament; practitioners had only a rudimentary awareness of infection and disease transmission. Medical treatises of the period reflected this limited biological knowledge, often making sweeping claims about the healing properties of a broad range of substances. A notable example includes John Quincy's *Pharmacopoeia Officinalis and Extemporanea* (1718), which advocated the use of honey for 'hooping [sic] cough' and

[113] No treatises written by women on these products appear to have survived.

baldness.[114] Treatises for chocolate, perfume and tobacco should be interpreted within this broader epistemological context of extensive therapeutic claims and competing expertise**.**

The arrival of these foreign commodities on English shores — chocolate from Central America, tobacco from the West Indies and Virginia, and fragrances predominantly from Asia and Africa (as well as France) — initially provoked deep suspicion among English non-consumers.[115] They were frequently represented as potential threats to both individual propriety and collective social order. Chocolate aroused distrust on multiple grounds: religious (its association with Catholicism via Spanish *conquistadors* and monks unsettled English Protestants); cultural (the Aztecs' ceremonial practices involved the sacrificial drinking of chocolate in place of blood); gustatory (its unfamiliar hot temperature and bitter, oily taste led to it being described as '[m]ore suited for pigs than for men');[116] and social (moralists feared chocolate consumption would usher in a collapse in community mores, due to its perceived aphrodisiacal properties making women promiscuous and men depraved). Tobacco faced comparable opposition on moral, health, economic and social grounds in the seventeenth century.

[114] John Quincy, *Pharmacopoeia officinalis [et] extemporanea: or, A complete English dispensatory …* (London: 1782; first publ. 1718), pp.127, 250.
[115] Loveman, *'The Introduction of Chocolate'*; Matthew Green, 'How the Decadence and Depravity of London's eighteenth-century elite was fuelled by Chocolate,' *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 March 2016.
[116] Girolamo Benzoni, *Historia del Mondo Nuovo* (Venice, 1565), translated and quoted in Daniela Bleichmar, *Visual Voyages: Images of Latin American Culture from Columbus to Darwin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), p.60.



THE
Indian Nectar,
OR A
DISCOURSE
CONCERNING
CHOCOLATA:
WHEREIN
The *Nature* of the *Cacao-nut*, and the other Ingredients of that Compoſition, is examined, and ſtated according to the Judgment and Experience of the *Indians*, and *Spaniſh* Writers, who lived in the *Indies*, and others; with ſundry additional Obſervations made in *England*: The ways of *compounding* and preparing *Chocolata* are enquired into; its Effects, as to its *alimental* and *Venereal* quality, as well as *Medicinal* (eſpecially in *Hypochondriacal Melancholy*) are fully debated. Together with a *Spagyrical Analyſis* of the *Cacao-nut*, performed by that excellent Chymiſt, *Monſieur le Febure*, Chymiſt to His Majeſty.

By Henry Stubbe *formerly of* Ch. Ch. *in* Oxon. *Phyſician for His Majeſty, and the Right Honourable* Thomas *Lord* Windſor *in the Iſland of* Jamaica *in the* Weſt-Indies.

Thomas Gage, Survey of the *Weſt-Indies*. chap. 15.
Here [in a certain part of *Guaxaca*] *grow many Trees of* Cacao, *and* Achiote, *whereof is made the* Chocolatte, *and is a Commodity of much trading in thoſe parts, though our* Engliſh *and* Hollanders *make little uſe of it, when they take a prize at Sea, as not knowing the ſecret virtue and quality of it for the good of the Stomach.*
——*Videant, intabeſcántque relicta.*

London, Printed by *J.C.* for *Andrew Crook* at the Sign of the Green Dragon in St. *Paul's* Church-yard. 1662.

Figure 1.1: Title page of Henry Stubbe, *The Indian Nectar* […],
(London: J.C. for Andrew Crook, 1662). The Wellcome Collection, London, EPB/A/50138.
(Image courtesy of Wellcome Collection CC BY 4.0).

At the outset, it is important to distinguish between prescription and practice. As Amanda Vickery notes, it cannot be assumed that 'women (or men) mindlessly absorbed a particular didactic lesson like so many pieces of blotting paper.'[117] Nevertheless, in an era of deadly and poorly understood diseases, the promise of a curative product was likely to have garnered a receptive audience. As Ken Albala argues, 'encomia […] served as a powerful

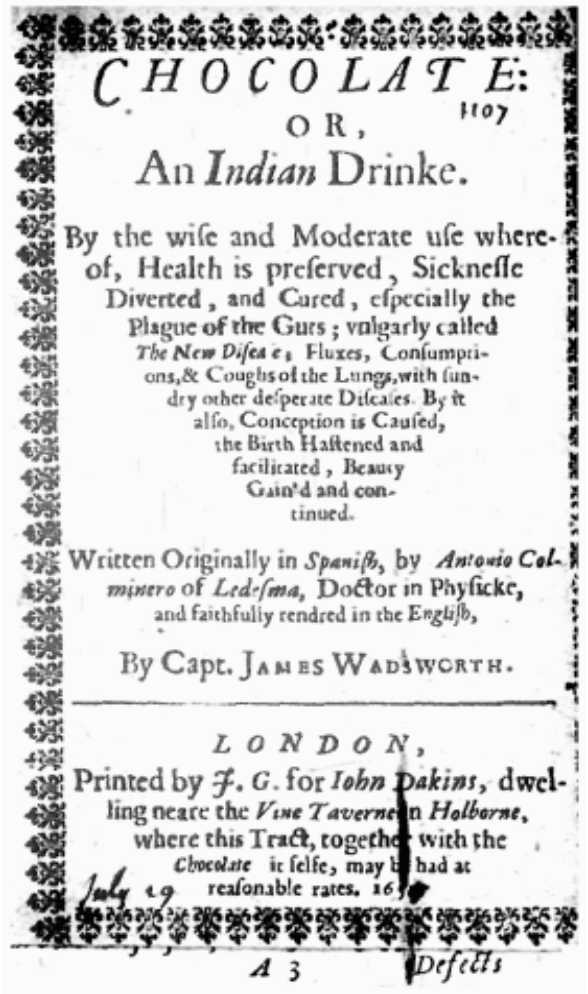
[117] Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres?', *Historical Journal*, 36.2 (June 1993), 383–414, (p.408).

advertisement inducing people to indulge.'[118] While the contemporary reception of these treatises cannot be precisely determined, surviving evidence suggests they achieved meaningful circulation. Approximately twelve English chocolate treatises, by different authors, survive from 1650 to 1690, excluding Wadsworth's 1640 translation. Antonio Colmenero de Ledesma's *Curioso Tratado de la Naturaleza y Calidad del chocolate* (1631) was translated into English by Captain James Wadsworth within a decade of its Spanish publication, and the commercial appetite for the text is suggested by its reissue twelve years later under the title of *Chocolate: or, An Indian Drinke* (1652). This version became the standard point of reference for subsequent English writers on chocolate. Henry Stubbe's *The Indian Nectar* (1662) (Fig. 1.1) survives in at least five libraries today.[119]

Authors' motives varied. Many entrepreneurs and businessmen capitalised on the economic opportunities these novel products presented, seeking to establish their authority and credibility through medical, experiential or religious claims. The title page of the second edition of James Wadsworth's treatise on chocolate (Fig. 1.2) demonstrates that, in 1652, it was possible to purchase '[his] Tract together with the chocolate itself' for 'reasonable rates.' This was a shrewd joint commercial venture by bookseller Dakins and Wadsworth. As Loveman notes, 'booksellers often sold medicines and Dakins, who had a line in publishing continental translations, seems to have judged that chocolate, as a Spanish-associated, medicinal import would appeal to his clientele.'[120] Wadsworth further

[118] Ken Albala, 'The Use and Abuse of Chocolate in 17th Century Medical Theory', *Food and Foodways*, 15.1–2 (2007), 53—74, (p.67) <https://doi.org/10.1080/07409710701193381> [accessed 19 September 2023].
[119] Copies are held at the Bodleian Library, Oxford (x2), The Wellcome Collection, London; Biodiversity Heritage Library, Washington DC; Newberry Library, Chicago; National Library, Canberra.
[120] Loveman, 'The Introduction of Chocolate', 29.

courted readers through humour: a risqué satirical poem (examined below) and the playful arrangement of words on his 1652 title page to resemble a chocolate cup (Fig. 1.2).



CHOCOLATE:
OR,
An *Indian* Drinke.

By the wiſe and Moderate uſe where-of, Health is preſerved, Sickneſſe Diverted, and Cured, eſpecially the Plague of the Guts; vulgarly called *The New Diſeaſe*, Fluxes, Conſumpti-ons, & Coughs of the Lungs, with ſun-dry other deſperate Diſeaſes. By it alſo, Conception is Cauſed, the Birth Haſtened and facilitated, Beauty Gain'd and con-tinued.

Written Originally in *Spaniſh*, by *Antonio Col-minero* of *Ledeſma*, Doctor in Phyſicke, and faithfully rendred in the *Engliſh*,

By Capt. JAMES WADSWORTH.

LONDON,
Printed by *F. G.* for *John Dakins*, dwel-ling neare the *Vine Taverne* in *Holborne*, where this Tract, together with the *Chocolate* it ſelfe, may be had at reaſonable rates. 16

A 3 Defects

Figure 1.2: Title page of Antonio Colmenero, *Chocolate: Or an Indian Drinke*, trans. by Capt. James Wadsworth (London: John Dakins, 1652). British Library, 447.a.7. (Image © British Library Board).

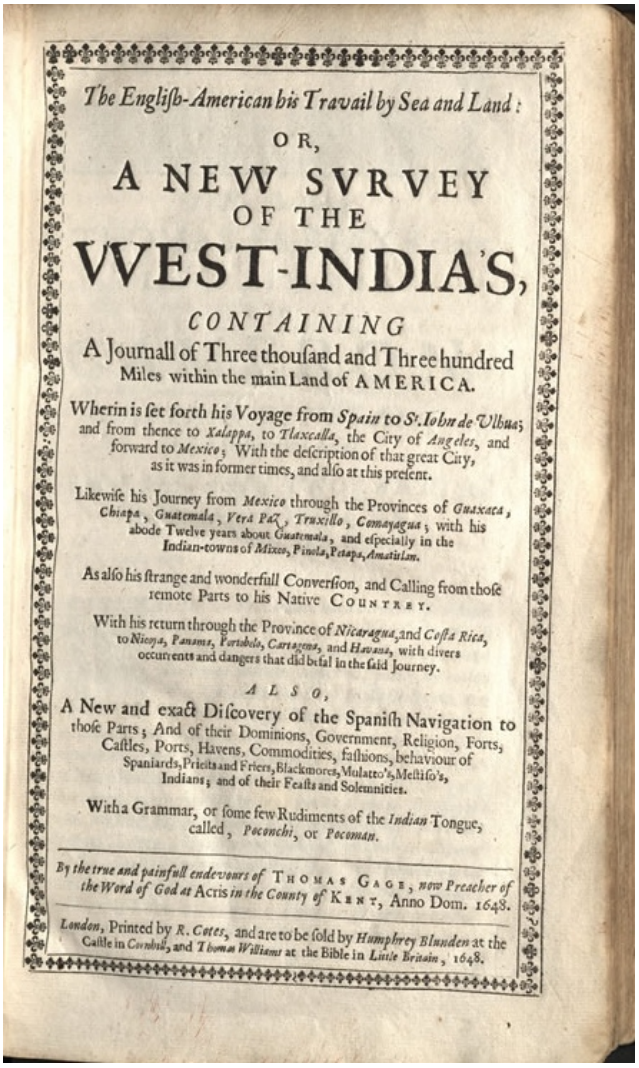
Each author promoted chocolate from a different angle. As Albala observes, maintaining chocolate's medicinal reputation made financial sense for medical or proto-medical practitioners, who were incentivised into prescribing it. For them, it was important to clearly articulate its therapeutic benefits in order to discourage indiscriminate use.[121] Stubbe's *The Indian Nectar* (1662) combined first-hand observations from Jamaica with

[121] Albala, 'The Use and Abuse of Chocolate', p.54.

theoretical knowledge to substantiate his claims regarding chocolate's beneficial effects. He bolstered his own standing by aligning himself with prominent medical figures such as Thomas Willis, William Harvey and Robert Boyle — while simultaneously invoking royal authority.[122]

Some traders and travellers, such as Thomas Gage in his survey of the West Indies (1648), emphasised their first-hand knowledge of these substances in their native contexts.[123] Gage, identifying himself on his cover page as '[t]he English-American' (Fig. 1.3), claimed he drank around ten cups of chocolate a day '[a]nd with this custom [he] lived twelve years in those parts healthy without any obstructions or oppilations,[124] not knowing what either ague or fever was.'[125] In 1672, William Hughes similarly sought validation from medical authorities, asserting that cacao-based medicines had been 'approved of by Learned Physicians, and sufficiently recommended to the world.'[126]

[122] Henry Stubbe, *The Indian Nectar*: *Or a Discourse Concerning Chocolate,* (London: 1662), Introduction, Sig. A2r.
[123] Thomas Gage, *A New Survey of the West India's: Or, the English-American his Travail by Sea and Land* (London: 1648), p.161.
[124] An oppilation is a blockage, especially of the bowels.
[125] Gage, *A New Survey of the West India's* (1648), p.156.
[126] William Hughes, *The American Physician or a Treatise of the Roots, Plants, trees, Shrubs, Fruit, Herbs &c Growing in the English Plantations in America* (London: 1672), section on 'name' in the chapter 'Of the Cacao-Tree and Fruit.'



The Engliſh-American his Travail by Sea and Land:

OR,

A NEW SVRVEY OF THE WEST-INDIA'S,

CONTAINING

A Journall of Three thouſand and Three hundred Miles within the main Land of AMERICA.

Wherin is ſet forth his Voyage from *Spain* to *St. Iohn de Vlbua*; and from thence to *Xalappa*, to *Tlaxcalla*, the City of *Angeles*, and forward to *Mexico*; With the deſcription of that great City, as it was in former times, and alſo at this preſent.

Likewiſe his Journey from *Mexico* through the Provinces of *Guaxaca*, *Chiapa*, *Guatemala*, *Vera Paz*, *Truxillo*, *Comayagua*; with his abode Twelve years about *Guatemala*, and eſpecially in the Indian-towns of *Mixco*, *Pinola*, *Petapa*, *Amatitlan*.

As alſo his ſtrange and wonderfull Converſion, and Calling from thoſe remote Parts to his Native COUNTREY.

With his return through the Province of *Nicaragua*, and *Coſta Rica*, to *Nicoya*, *Panama*, *Portobelo*, *Carthagena*, and *Havana*, with divers occurrents and dangers that did befal in the ſaid Journey.

ALSO,

A New and exact Diſcovery of the Spaniſh Navigation to thoſe Parts; And of their Dominions, Government, Religion, Forts, Caſtles, Ports, Havens, Commodities, faſhions, behaviour of Spaniards, Prieſts and Friers, Blackmores, Mulatto's, Meſtiſo's, Indians; and of their Feaſts and Solemnities.

With a Grammar, or ſome few Rudiments of the *Indian* Tongue, called, *Poconchi*, or *Pocoman*.

By the true and painfull endevours of THOMAS GAGE, *now Preacher of the Word of God at* Acris *in the County of* KENT, Anno Dom. 1648.

London, Printed by *R. Cotes*, and are to be ſold by *Humphrey Blunden* at the Caſtle in *Cornhill*, and *Thomas Williams* at the Bible in *Little Britain*, 1648.

Figure 1.3: Title page of Thomas Gage, *The English-American his travail by Sea and Land,* (London: R. Cotes, 1648), British Library, W64/0929. (Image © British Library Board).

Fewer critical treatises survive (suggesting fewer were written) probably because there was less financial inducement to write them. Nevertheless, detractors voiced a consistent threefold warning against chocolate: it damaged one's health; it led to a surge in immorality; and it resulted in indolence and reduced productivity.[127] Each substance also attracted distinct anxieties shaped by its sensory properties, origins and perceived effects.

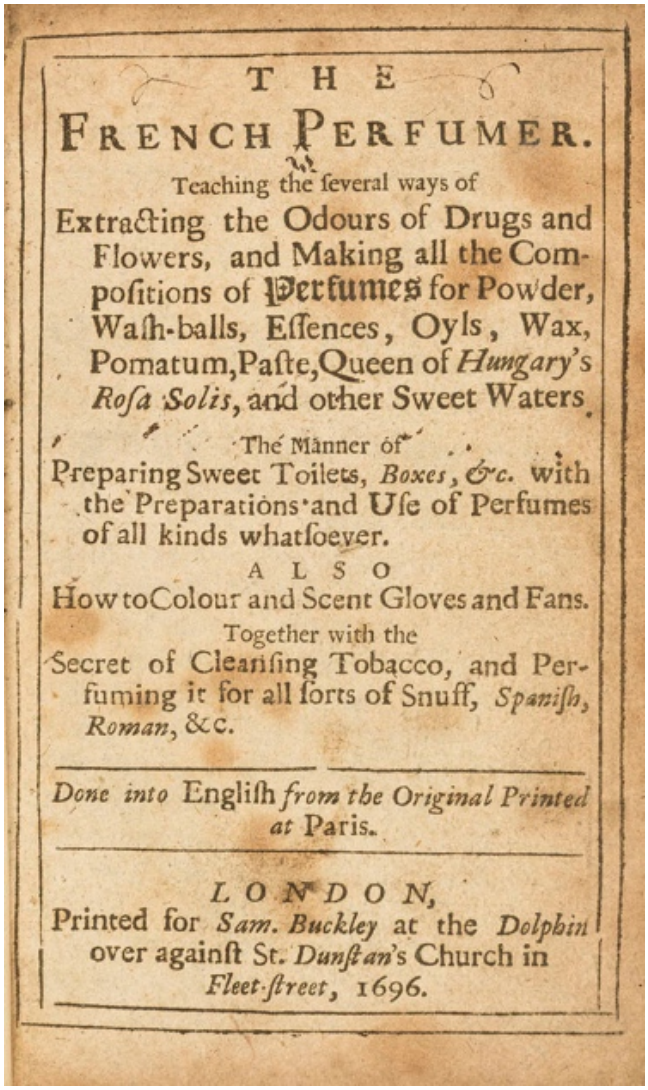
[127] These warnings were made by William Hughes, *The American Physitian*, pp. 127–9 and Thomas Gage, *The English-American*, pp.238-48; see also *By the King. A Proclamation for the Suppression of Coffee-Houses* (London: 1675) pp.1–2, which prohibited the retail of coffee, chocolate, sherbet and tea and complained that tradesmen 'mis-spend much of their time' that might otherwise be employed about their lawful callings.

Chocolate's exotic origins and stimulating qualities were associated with excess, suspected of inflaming bodily humours and sexual passions more directly than other consumables; its nutritive richness made it a site for debating fertility. Perfume was targeted for encouraging vanity and masking natural odours, but also attracted criticism on religious grounds. Preaching at Chiswick on 21 August 1603, in the midst of plague, Lancelot Andrewes attributed the epidemic to divine wrath and dismissed the aromatic remedies then in general use as 'inventions' of pagan or Catholic origin — a condemnation grounded in idolatry rather than in any claim of physiological harm.[128] Perfume's association with sensory pleasure made it more contentious still where women's virtue was concerned. Tobacco, meanwhile, provoked concerns focused on idleness and economic waste, with King James I's renowned *Counter-Blaste to Tobacco* highlighting its 'filthie noveltie' and the idle brain it encouraged; its stimulating yet potentially debilitating effects enabled competing claims about masculine productivity and virility.[129] All three products were united by broader anxieties surrounding luxury consumption.

Authors actively defended these products by appealing to various forms of authority. The Frenchman Simon Barbe's 1693 treatise *Le Parfumeur François* (Fig. 1.4) was translated anonymously in 1696 as *The French Perfumer,* despite England's ongoing war with France.[130] Barbe's work was particularly resonant within the English religious context, where questions surrounding ceremonial forms of worship and the use of incense

[128] Lancelot Andrewes, *Ninety-Six Sermons*, 5 vols. (London, 1629–31; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1967), V, pp.227–238.
[129] King James I, *A Counter-Blaste to Tobacco* (1604; repr. Edinburgh: E&G Goldsmid, 1885) p.32.
[130] Simon Barbe, *The French Perfumer: Teaching the Several Ways of Extracting […]* (London: 1696).

remained contentious among Anglicans in the unsettled aftermath of the Glorious Revolution (1688–9).[131]



THE
FRENCH PERFUMER.
Teaching the ſeveral ways of
Extracting the Odours of Drugs and Flowers, and Making all the Compoſitions of Perfumes for Powder, Waſh-balls, Eſſences, Oyls, Wax, Pomatum, Paſte, Queen of *Hungary*'s *Roſa Solis*, and other Sweet Waters.
The Manner of
Preparing Sweet Toilets, *Boxes*, *&c.* with the Preparations and Uſe of Perfumes of all kinds whatſoever.
ALSO
How to Colour and Scent Gloves and Fans.
Together with the
Secret of Cleanſing Tobacco, and Perfuming it for all ſorts of Snuff, *Spaniſh*, *Roman*, &c.
Done into Engliſh *from the Original Printed at* Paris.
LONDON,
Printed for *Sam. Buckley* at the *Dolphin* over againſt St. *Dunſtan*'s Church in *Fleet-ſtreet*, 1696.

Figure 1.4: Title page of Simon Barbe, *The French Perfumer* (London: Sam Buckley, 1696). British Library, 1651/216. (Image © British Library Board).

Barbe, Stubbe and Daniel Duncan all employed biblical precedent as a strategy for legitimising contested products, although with varying degrees of plausibility. Barbe countered criticisms of perfume by reminding readers that 'those who are read in the Holy

[131] *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, II: Establishment and Empire,* 1662–1829, ed. by Jeremy Gregory (Oxford: OUP, 2017), pp.292-300.

Scriptures' could not disapprove of his book, since 'there was in the Old Testament an Altar whereon they burnt nothing else but perfumes'.[132] He further reminded readers that perfume and incense had been used in sacred ceremonies for centuries, citing both Mary Magdalene's anointing of Jesus's feet and the frankincense presented by the Magi at the Nativity.[133] Barbe's appeal to biblical precedent was particularly pertinent within an English religious culture in which questions of ceremony remained contentious. Prominent Protestant divines such as Thomas Tenison continued to characterise 'papist' ceremonial practices in terms of idolatry and superstition, making Barbe's appeal to Scripture a potentially important means of distinguishing legitimate perfume and incense from Catholic ritual.[134] Barbe thus legitimised a contested practice through Scripture rather than Church tradition, a strategy potentially more persuasive to Protestant readers, just as Stubbe and Duncan (1706) invoked biblical passages to lend authority to their arguments in favour of chocolate consumption. Yet scriptural appeals were necessarily more tenuous in the case of chocolate, which, unlike perfume and incense, had no direct biblical precedent.

Treatises on chocolate, perfume and tobacco regularly deployed gendered language as a deliberate marketing device but historians have treated these texts as evidence of cultural identification without fully addressing these gendered dimensions. Sophie and Michael Coe's account of chocolate's European diffusion summarises treatises written by William Hughes, Philippe Dufour, Antonio Colmenero de Ledesma, Henry Stubbe and Thomas

[132] Barbe, *The French Perfumer*, Preface.
[133] *Ibid.*, Preface.
[134] Thomas Tenison, *Of Idolatry: A Discourse* (London: 1678), pp. 176-302.

Gage, without analysing their gendered language or intended readership.[135] Similarly, Philip K. Wilson and W. Jeffrey Hurst examine the therapeutic claims made for chocolate in the works of Colmenero, Stubbe, Hughes and Gage, but do not make gender a sustained category of analysis.[136] Holly Dugan's study of early modern English perfume and olfaction provides important contextual background, particularly in its examination of smell as a culturally situated sensory experience and its relationship to everyday life, social position and luxury consumption, although gender is not the principal focus of her analysis.[137] William Tullett's *Smell in Eighteenth-Century England* (2019) incorporates treatises on tobacco and perfume into a broader history of English olfactory culture, examining their social, sensory and material implications, but does not make gender a sustained organising category.[138] Robert Muchembled's detailed discussion of Barbe similarly situates perfume, tobacco and other aromatics within changing patterns of social consumption, but again gives limited attention to their gendered dimensions.[139] This chapter therefore contributes a specifically gendered analysis of these commodities, placing gender at the centre of the enquiry rather than treating it as a secondary consideration.

The remainder of this chapter examines the medical and social concerns repeatedly highlighted in treatises produced between *c.*1650 and *c.*1710 and their intersection with broader cultural anxieties relating to fertility, moral virtue and imperial service.[140] For

[135] Coe and Coe, *The True History of Chocolate* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), pp.125–178.
[136] Philip K. Wilson and W. Jeffrey Hurst, *Chocolate as Medicine: A Quest over the Centuries* (Cambridge: Royal Society of Chemistry, 2012), pp. 44–89.
[137] Holly Dugan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume. Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), pp. 6–17, 105, 126–52.
[138] Tullett, *Smell in Eighteenth-Century England,* pp. 130–53, 154–78, 179–200**.**
[139] Robert Muchembled, *Smells: A Cultural History of Odours in Early Modern Times*, trans. by Susan Pickford (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020), pp.105–8, 117–8.
[140] Referenced in the treatises of Wadsworth (1652), Hughes (1672) and Lémery (1704). See also Albala, 'The Use and Abuse of Chocolate,' pp.53–74.

women, treatises most often focused on issues around reproduction (especially libido, fertility and conception) and mental fragility, with aesthetic concerns centred upon the desirability of pale skin and on body size, reflecting how ideals of female beauty were tied to virtue and status. For men, the primary issues dealt with in this literature focused upon improving physical endurance, intellectual capacity, emotional composure and sexual potency. For both genders, the concerns surrounding acceptable sexual behaviour — both within marriage and extra-maritally — loomed large. Analysed comparatively, these themes show how consumption was understood as a gendered practice shaping bodies, behaviour and moral character, while reinforcing broader social and national anxieties. One absence should be acknowledged at the outset: the 'middling sorts' scarcely figure in this chapter, and deliberately so. The treatises assumed a genteel readership — Barbe addressed women with country seats and the leisure time to distil; Stubbe courted 'London Gentlemen' — and the products themselves remained, at seventeenth-century prices, beyond most middling households. Middling access to these commodities was a development of the eighteenth century, and its emergence is traced in the chapters that follow.

Reproduction

From its earliest introduction into England, chocolate was deliberately marketed to both sexes, with particular attention paid to women as consumers. In the second edition of *Chocolate: Or An Indian Drinke* (1652), Captain James Wadsworth explicitly acknowledged

this gendered appeal.[141] He noted that his first translation of Colmenero's work had been 'thirsted after by people of all Degrees (especially those of the Female Sex) either for the pleasure therein naturally Residing, to Cure and divert Diseases; or else to supply some Defects.'[142] His comprehensive catalogue of benefits specifically addressed female concerns, particularly conception, childbirth, beauty and libido — the latter a reminder that in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries women, as much as men, were seen as inherently lustful.[143] As Karen Harvey has observed, 'sexual appetite in women which was satisfied in appropriate ways was condoned' and seen as healthy.[144] Wadsworth's translation promised that chocolate would help with all these concerns:

> The vertues thereof are no lesse various, then [sic] Admirable. […] it vehemently Incites to Venus, and causeth Conception in women, hastens and facilitates their Delivery. […] It quite takes away the Morphew [discoloured skin]. […] But I shall not assume to enumerate all the vertues of this Confection: for that were Impossible, every day producing New and Admirable effects in such as drinke it.[145]

Chocolate treatises were not singular in explicitly targeting female audiences. Barbe's treatise (Fig. 1.4) was one of the earliest dedicated to perfumery and, despite his prestigious position as personal perfumer to Louis XIV, he penned this work for the 'Publick Good' or non-professionals.[146] In particular, he wrote about making perfume for 'The Fair

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[141] Capt. James Wadsworth, *Chocolate: Or, an Indian Drinke, by the Wise and Moderate Use Whereof, Health is Preserved, Sicknesse Diverted, and Cured, Especially the Plague of the Guts …* (London: 1652), title page.
[142] *Ibid*., Sig. A3r.
[143] Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society* (London: Routledge, 2013), p.63.
[144] Karen Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), p.111.
[145] Wadsworth, *Chocolate: Or, an Indian Drinke* (1652), Sig. A4r.
[146] Barbe, *The French Perfumer*, preface.

Sex [whom he hoped would] find enough in [his] Treatise to gratifie their Curiosity.'[147] Barbe directed his work toward wealthy women with the means to cultivate flowers at their country seats and use them to make fragrances. This activity not only provided his affluent readers with an enjoyable and virtuous pastime but also helped them avoid 'the expense of buying [perfume] at extravagant rates in shops.'[148]

By the middle of the seventeenth century, medical treatises increasingly linked sexual pleasure to successful conception in ways that both reinforced and complicated traditional gender hierarchies, and this framework legitimised discussions of pleasure and desire under the guise of physiological inquiry. *Aristotle's Masterpiece* (1684) (Fig. 1.5), an anonymous sex manual and midwifery book, drew on sixteenth-century texts, explicitly encouraging husbands to ensure their wives' pleasure, advising that '[w]hen the Husband cometh into his Wives chamber, he must entertain her with all kind of dalliance, wanton behaviour, and allurements to Venery. [...] he must cherish, embrace and tickle her [...].'[149] While this guidance placed responsibility for female pleasure firmly with the husband, supporting Patricia Crawford's argument that sexuality could reinforce male authority within marriage, it also acknowledged female sexual desire as legitimate and presented female pleasure as important for successful conception.[150]

[147] *Ibid.*
[148] *Ibid.,* Sig. A2v.
[149] *Aristoteles Master-piece, or, The Secrets of Generation Displayed in All the Parts Thereof* (London: printed for J. How, 1684), ch.37, p.189.
[150] Patricia Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp.159-61.



The Effigies of a Maid all Hairy, and Infant that was Black, by the Imaginati of their Parents.

ARISTOTLE's
MASTER-PIECE:
OR THE
Secrets of Generation
Diſplay'd in all the Parts thereof;
CONTAINING
1. The Signs of Barrenneſs. 2. The way of getting a Boy or Girl. 3. Of the likeneſs of Children to Parents. 4. Of the Infuſion of the Soul into the Infant. 5. Of monſtrous Births and the Reaſons thereof. 6. Of the benefit of Marriage to both Sexes. 7. The Prejudice of unequal Matches. 8. The diſcovery of Inſufficiency. 9. The cauſe and cure of the *Green-ſickneſs*. 10 A Diſcourſe of *Virginity*. 11. How a Midwife ought to be quali-fied. 12. Directions and Cautions to Midwives. 13. Of the Organs of Generation in Women. 14. The Fabrick of the Womb, 15 The uſe and action of the *Genitals*. 16. *Signs of Conception, and whether of a Male or Female*, 17. To diſcover falſe Conception. 18, Inſtructions for Women with Child. 19. For preventing Miſcarriage 20. For Women in Childbed, 21. Of ordering new-born Infants; and many other very uſeful Particulars, *To which is added, A word of Ad-vice to both Sexes in the Act of Copulation, and the Pictures of ſeveral Monſtrous Births.*

Very neceſſary for all Midwives, Nurſes and Young-Married-Women.

London, Printed for *W. B.* and to be ſold by moſt Bookſellers in *London* and *Weſtminſter*. 1704.

Figure 1.5: Frontispiece and contents page of *Aristotle's Masterpiece, or, The Secrets of Generation Displayed in All the Parts Thereof* (London, 1704; first publ. 1684)
British Library, 1606/753. (Image © British Library Board).

Medical discourses linking pleasure and physiology created fertile ground for marketing consumable goods according to their bodily effects. Wadsworth's 1652 translation of Colmenero's treatise on chocolate exemplifies this through the inclusion of a satirical poem, signed by Wadsworth's pseudonym 'Diego de Vades-Forte' that played on English anxieties during the Interregnum. Describing chocolate as a catholicon or panacea, this supplementary poem addressed discrete audiences in each of its twenty-two stanzas: from 'hen-pecked' men to barren women. Written in rhyming couplets of iambic tetrameter, the poem flows naturally when read aloud, its metre closely aligned with the cadences of English speech – thereby giving the treatise a distinctly English character. Each stanza ends with the word 'chocolate', a repetition that functions as a mnemonic refrain, anchoring the

product as a remedy for physical, moral and sexual malaise alike. In particular, Wadsworth challenged age-based restrictions on female sexuality by promising that:

> 'Twill make Old women Young and Fresh
> Create New-Motions of the Flesh
> And cause them long for you know what
> If they but Tast [sic] of Chocolate.[151]

Within this promotional verse, at least, sexual vitality in older women is presented as desirable rather than merely permissible — a rare, printed acknowledgment of such desire, though one designed to sell chocolate rather than to reform attitudes.

The verse must be read within the wider pamphlet literature of the Interregnum, which registered growing male unease about female sexual independence. Texts such as *The Parlament of Women* (1656) framed female autonomy as one symptom of a world turned upside down, part of the broader anxieties provoked by mid-century political and religious upheaval.[152] The ambitions of Puritan reform sharpened those anxieties. As Keith Thomas showed, the Independent and sectarian congregations of the 1640s and 1650s gave women unprecedented spiritual prominence.[153] Puritan moralists also rejected the sexual double standard in principle, even as their theology continued to underwrite patriarchal authority.[154] Reform in practice, however, was neither uniform nor simply imposed. Bernard Capp has shown that the godly programme of the 1650s was contested and negotiated at parish level, and that it met widespread evasion and resistance.[155] His earlier

[151] Wadsworth (as 'Diego de Vades-Forte'), *Chocolate: Or, an Indian Drinke*, Introduction, (1652), stanza 18.
[152] *The Parlament of Women* (London: 1656), Wing P506.
[153] Keith Thomas, 'Women and the Civil War Sects', *Past & Present*, 13 (1958), 42–62 (pp.46–57).
[154] Keith Thomas, 'The Double Standard', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 20 (1959), 195–216 (p.212).
[155] Bernard Capp, *England's Culture Wars: Puritan Reformation and its Enemies in the Interregnum, 1649–1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.110–131.

work demonstrates that ordinary women were far from passive subjects of sexual regulation: they used gossip, slander and neighbourhood networks to police male as well as female reputation.[156] The same decade saw a marked growth in sexualised print, particularly in London, which Capp reads as deliberately provocative, designed to mock godly sensibilities.[157]

Seen in this light, Wadsworth's overtly sexualised verse, despite the euphemism of 'long for you know what', reads as cultural provocation rather than political dissent. Its register is that of the print Capp describes: mockery of Puritan sensibility rather than argument against it. What the poem does with chocolate is nonetheless striking. It converts an exotic commodity into an erotic stimulant, and in doing so presents female desire, including that of older women, as something to be aroused rather than contained. Wadsworth may have intended a critique of moral regulation, or he may simply have calculated that titillation would sell books. Either way, the verse put a claim about female appetite into print at a moment when such claims carried political charge. That charge is legible across the print of these years. John Playford's *The English Dancing Master* (1651) appeared with tunes such as 'Cuckolds all a Row' and 'Up Tails All', whose bawdy titles sat uneasily beside official moral reform.[158] Meanwhile, the Adultery Act of May 1650 had made adultery with a married woman a capital offence for both parties.[159] The Act was rarely enforced to the

[156] Bernard Capp, 'The Double Standard Revisited: Plebeian Women and Male Sexual Reputation in Early Modern England', *Past & Present*, 162 (1999), 70–100 (pp.72–74); see also Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
[157] Capp, *England's Culture Wars*, pp.59–84.
[158] John Playford, *The English Dancing Master: Or, Plaine and Easie Rules for the Dancing of Country Dances, with the Tune to Each Dance* (London: Thomas Harper, 1651).
[159] 'An Act for suppressing the detestable sins of Incest, Adultery and Fornication' (10 May 1650), in *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–1660*, ed. by C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, 3 vols (London: HMSO, 1911), II, 387–89; Keith Thomas, 'The Puritans and Adultery: The Act of 1650 Reconsidered', in *Puritans and*

letter, since juries proved reluctant to convict, and that reluctance only underlines the gap between godly aspiration and popular practice. Wadsworth's verse belongs to this moment: a decade in which the state sought to regulate sexual conduct with unusual severity, and in which print pushed back.

Wadsworth's treatise should therefore be understood as part of a broader cultural conversation on sexuality, morality and governance during a period of shifting sexual regulation. Though the abolition of the church courts had reduced prosecutions for illicit sex (even as penalties for adultery specifically became more severe), the policing of sexual behaviour persisted through social rather than institutional means. The regulation of sexuality — through societal ostracism, public shaming, gossip and reputational damage for those who transgressed gender norms — was mirrored by the moral scrutiny applied to acts of consumption, and chocolate became a metaphorical site for contesting the boundaries between virtue and pleasure.

Stubbe's *The Indian Nectar* (1662) further extended this discussion by reframing female sexuality through medical argument. He contended that sexual desire was natural in both men and women, asserting that '[t]he use of Venery is [as] natural, as for a Man to blow his nose […] moderate Venery eases the Chest […] contributes much to the cure of many Diseases in both Sexes.'[160] Stubbe further claimed that sexual abstinence —whether voluntary or enforced — could precipitate illness in women, citing physicians' observations of nuns suffering from 'Hysterical fits, […] Love-melancholy, Atrophy, […] Spermatical

Revolutionaries: Essays in Seventeenth-Century History Presented to Christopher Hill, ed. by Donald Pennington and Keith Thomas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 257–82.

[160] Stubbe, *The Indian Nectar*, pp.130–31.

Fevers […].'[161] This underlying premise was hardly novel: the notion that celibacy endangered young women's health was a commonplace of the 'green sickness' literature, discussed in medical treatises and familiar enough to furnish material for early seventeenth-century comedy.[162] What was provocative was Stubbe's application of this framework to nuns in particular, positioning female sexual satisfaction as essential to health and thereby implicitly challenging the Church's control over institutionalised celibacy — with chocolate conveniently on hand as the remedy.[163]

Stubbe also embedded biblical references throughout his treatise. He argued that Rachel, Jacob's second wife, would not have needed to purchase mandrake roots had she known of chocolate's ability to stimulate lust, thereby positioning female sexual desire within marriage as biblically sanctioned.[164] Later, Stubbe remarked that 'Adam in Paradise, before the Fall, could have erected at pleasure […] but since the fall of Adam, those amorous inclinations are less constant to men,' suggesting that male sexual 'performance anxiety' had theological roots.[165] Yet Stubbe's embrace of chocolate's aphrodisiac properties was not only pragmatic. It reflected the anticlericalism of a former radical Independent: he celebrated its venereal qualities and mocked puritanical objections to sensual pleasures.[166]

[161] *Ibid*.
[162] Winfried Schleiner, 'Early Modern Green Sickness', *Early Science and Medicine*, 14.5 (2009), pp.661–76.
[163] Mary E. Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), pp.68–70.
[164] Emma Vickers, 'The English Perception of Chocolate: from invigorating remedy to exotic indulgence, *c*. 1660–1760', *Vides,* 8, (Spring 2020), 36–44, (38).
[165] Stubbe, *The Indian Nectar*, pp.135–36.
[166] James R. Jacob, *Henry Stubbe: Radical Protestantism and the Early Enlightenment* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983), pp.45–48.

Stubbe extended his medical arguments to male sexuality, claiming from personal observation that men who experienced brief separations from their wives suffered from 'Swelling of the Testicles, or an unusual paleness, and stupidity of Brain' — symptoms, he argued, that were invariably cured by resuming sexual intimacy with their spouses.[167] This anecdote reflects Thomas Laqueur's concept of an emerging medical epistemology, in which sexual health became understood as integral to overall wellbeing.[168] By grounding this claim in physical observation, Stubbe reinforced marriage as the proper outlet for sexual expression. At the same time, he implicitly challenged the moralists' insistence on restraint over indulgence. Medical discourse could thus serve as a vehicle for social and religious dissent, particularly for a former radical navigating Restoration England's complex religious landscape.

Colonial imports such as chocolate thus generated new commercial and ideological opportunities surrounding sexual potency that both reinforced and destabilised traditional masculinity. Stubbe declared that chocolate was 'provocative to lust,' addressing this claim directly to 'London Gentlemen,' suggesting that masculine sexual performance was increasingly viewed as something that could — and perhaps should — be enhanced through chocolate consumption.[169] John Chamberlayne echoed this sentiment in 1682, recommending chocolate as a stimulant superior to other fashionable foods such as anchovies, 'Cullies and Jellies', or 'Bononia Sawsages.'[170]

[167] Stubbe, *The Indian Nectar,* pp.131–32.
[168] Thomas Laqueur, 'Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology', *Representations,* 14 (1986), 1–41 (p.1).
[169] Stubbe, *The Indian Nectar*, p.129.
[170] John Chamberlayne, *The Natural History of Coffee, Thee, Chocolate, Tobacco* (London: 1682), p.18.

The period's medical literature reflected anxieties over female infertility, frequently attributing it to insufficient sexual activity. *Aristotle's Masterpiece* (1684) (Fig. 1.5) attributed barrenness to a cold and obstructed womb, recommending a warming confection for cases 'where cold or obstructions of the Vessels do occasion weakness in the Womb'[171] This emphasis on sexual intercourse as essential to health reflects a broader framework that positioned regular sexual activity as vital for well-being, while disproportionately locating reproductive responsibility within female bodies.

While chocolate was associated with enhancing sexual desire and potency, other imports — including tobacco — generated anxieties about their effects on marital relationships and sexual performance. The anonymous *Women's Complaint Against Tobacco* (1675) denounced tobacco by appealing to male concerns over virility, lamenting husbands rendered impotent by 'this Devil, Tobacco.'[172] It belongs to a Restoration vogue for mock petitions in a female voice, most famously *The Women's Petition Against Coffee* (1674), which claimed that coffee made men 'as unfruitful as those desarts [sic] whence that unhappy berry is said to be brought.'[173] Historians have generally read such texts as satirical ventriloquism rather than authentic female protest, and the *Complaint*'s bawdy framing suggests it should be read the same way. Appropriating a female voice strengthened the anti-tobacco message by raising the spectre of marital discord — weaponising women's voices to police male behaviour. Even seemingly radical passages,

[171] *Aristoteles Master-piece,* p.87. *Early English Books Online* <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/A25812.0001.001> [accessed 4 September 2025].
[172] Anonymous, *The Women's Complaint Against Tobacco Or, An excellent help to multiplication pespicuously [sic] showing the annoyance that it brings to Mankind* (London: 1675). p.2.
[173] Anonymous, *The Women's Petition against Coffee, Representing to Publick Consideration the Grand Inconveniences Accruing to Their Sex from the Excessive Use of That Drying, Enfeebling Liquor* (London: 1674). p.2.

such as complaints about sexual infrequency ('What is once in three Weeks?')[174] or suggestions that wives might seek satisfaction 'from somebody else',[175] functioned as calculated threats designed to shock male readers into renouncing tobacco by mobilising anxieties about cuckoldry, lineage and household stability.

The contrasting reputations of chocolate (as fertility-enhancing) and tobacco (as fertility-diminishing) reveal how colonial commodities became integrated into domestic medical and cultural discourse. As foreign consumables that literally entered English bodies, they had profound implications for what might otherwise be considered 'private' aspects of life and, as Loveman argues, the reception of these consumables was deeply entangled with evolving ideas around pleasure, procreation and gendered power dynamics in seventeenth-century England.[176] These debates surrounding chocolate and tobacco use, and their effects, reflect broader negotiations about the proper place of sexual pleasure in married life, and the construction of normative masculine and feminine identities.

For women, the consumption of chocolate and the use of perfume promised them enhanced fertility, reinforcing the conflation of femininity with reproductive capacity. Jane Sharp's influential manual, *The Midwives Book* (1671), exemplifies this assumption, asserting that 'there is in women so great a longing to conceive with child.'[177] Elizabeth Foyster has also shown that a woman's inability to conceive — particularly a male heir —

[174] *The Women's Complaint Against Tobacco* p.2.
[175] *Ibid*., p.6.
[176] Loveman, 'The Introduction of Chocolate,' 35-8,
[177] Jane Sharp, *The Midwives Book, Or, The Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered* (London: 1671), pp.93–4.

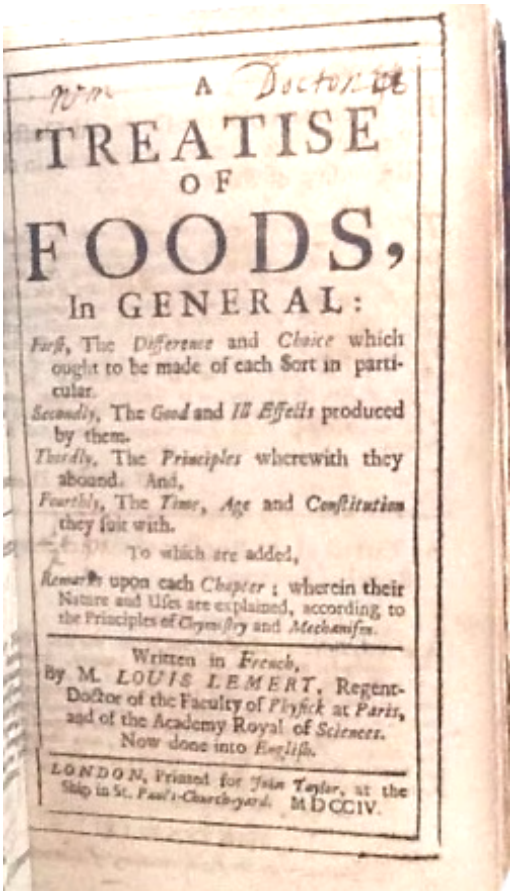
provoked profound anxiety among elite couples.[178] Crawford emphasises that 'gentlewomen knew that they were expected to bear sons to inherit names, titles and estates.'[179] Inevitably, such pressures were intensified by high infant and maternal mortality rates, which rendered rapid conception an urgent social expectation. Helen Berry's analysis of correspondence to *The Athenian Mercury* (1691–97) further demonstrates an 'enduring curiosity, and an underlying anxiety about the control exerted by women over the processes of reproduction,' highlighting the extent to which fertility worries permeated social conversation into the 1690s.[180]

Wadsworth's claim that barrenness could be cured with 'a Lick of Chocolate' epitomises this fusion of commerce and reproductive ideology. He reassured his readers that:

> Nor need the Women longer grieve
> Who spend their Oyle, yet not conceive,
> For 'tis a Helpe-Immediate
> If such but Lick of Chocolate.[181]

The image of women who 'spend their Oyle, yet not conceive' again encapsulates the belief that infertility was a female defect, for which chocolate was offered as both a cure and commodity.

[178] Elizabeth Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage* (London: Longman, 1999), pp.65–67.
[179] Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England*, p.93.
[180] Helen Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture,* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.9.
[181] Wadsworth, *Chocolate: Or, an Indian Drinke*, Introduction, stanza 14, (Sig. A4r).



A
TREATISE
OF
FOODS,
In GENERAL:
First, The *Difference* and *Choice* which ought to be made of each Sort in particular.
Secondly, The *Good* and *Ill Effects* produced by them.
Thirdly, The *Principles* wherewith they abound. And,
Fourthly, The *Time*, *Age* and *Constitution* they suit with.
To which are added,
Remarks upon each *Chapter*; wherein their Nature and Uses are explained, according to the Principles of *Chymistry* and *Mechanism*.
Written in *French*,
By M. *LOUIS LEMERT*, Regent-Doctor of the Faculty of *Physick* at *Paris*, and of the Academy Royal of *Sciences*.
Now done into *English*.
LONDON, Printed for *John Taylor*, at the Ship in St. *Paul's-Churchyard*. MDCCIV.

Figure 1.6: Title page of Louis Lémery, *A Treatise of Foods in General,* (London: John Taylor, at the Ship in St Paul's Church Yard, 1704). British Library, 1651/1160. (Image © British Library Board).

This belief that chocolate could enhance fertility persisted into the early eighteenth century. Louis Lémery's *Treatise of Foods in General* (1704) (Fig. 1.6), translated from French into English, sought to provide scientific validation through case studies. It notably described Dr Mundy's account of a couple who conceived after incorporating regular chocolate into their diet — the wife having 'accustomed herself to sup Chocolate with him, bore afterwards several Children, though she was looked upon before as not capable of having any.'[182] This case positioned chocolate as a transformative substance capable of rehabilitating the 'deficient' female body and affirming the link between femininity and fertility.

[182] Louis Lémery, *A Treatise of All Sorts of Foods* (London: 1704), p.183.

Although medical texts placed responsibility for infertility overwhelmingly on women (except in the case of tobacco smokers), the social implications of childlessness also threatened masculine identity. As Berry observes, while 'the textbooks taught that barrenness was a failure of the female anatomy, in practice early modern men were anxious that a childless wife would cast aspersions on their manhood.'[183] The consequences could be severe: 'men who were unable or unwilling to impregnate their wives underwent a form of public shaming which could be as damaging to their reputations as cuckoldry.'[184] Dudley Ryder's diary entry (1716) poignantly illustrates this anxiety, in which he states that '[t]here was one thing troubled me extreamly [sic] and lay heavy upon my mind, and that was the apprehension I was under that I was not capable of getting my wife with child if I had one.'[185] Such concerns inevitably fuelled a market for products promising to restore masculine virility.

Perfume was also believed to enhance fertility, further reinforcing the consumption-based construction of gendered bodies. As Jennifer Evans shows, seventeenth-century medical self-help literature frequently recommended aromatic substances as remedies for female infertility, whether through suffumigation (fumes, smoke or vapour) or ointment. Scents such as musk, civet and ambergris were believed to stimulate the reproductive system by heightening sexual desire, restoring humoral balance, and improving general health.[186]

[183] Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture,* p.153.
[184] *Ibid*., p.238.
[185] Dudley Ryder, *The Diary of Dudley Ryder, 1715–1716,* ed. by William Matthews (London: Methuen, 1939), 19 July 1716 entry, p.279.
[186] Jennifer Evans, 'Female Barrenness, Bodily Access and Aromatic Treatments in Seventeenth-Century England', *Historical Research*, 87.237, (August 2014), 424–43, (436–443).

They were marketed specifically to address female 'coldness' or 'dryness'— humoral qualities associated with barrenness. By consuming these products, women were imagined to embody the warmth and moisture deemed essential for conception.

Together, these texts on chocolate, perfume and tobacco register a long transformation in attitudes toward female sexuality. From the sixteenth century and throughout much of the seventeenth, dominant medical and moral discourse cast women as the more carnal and naturally lustful sex. This model was subsequently inverted: as Shoemaker notes, '[t]he early modern view that lust was a fundamentally (though not exclusively) feminine vice was transferred to men, and women were increasingly seen as sexually passive […].'[187] By the mid-eighteenth century the reversal was substantially complete, as 'only then did the complementary notions of female sexual passivity and an all-powerful male libido become the received wisdom of educated society.'[188] The texts examined here, published between *c.*1650 and 1712, belong to the transitional decades between the two: they register the older assumption of female appetite even as they anticipate the anxieties that would harden into the passivity model. Historians have located the drivers of this transition in the successive upheavals of the period — the disruptions of the Civil War and Interregnum, the reactive libertinism of the Restoration court, and the later consolidation of middling moral values.[189] Read in this light, the commodity literature does not just reflect a shift already accomplished elsewhere; it was one of the sites on which the renegotiation was conducted.

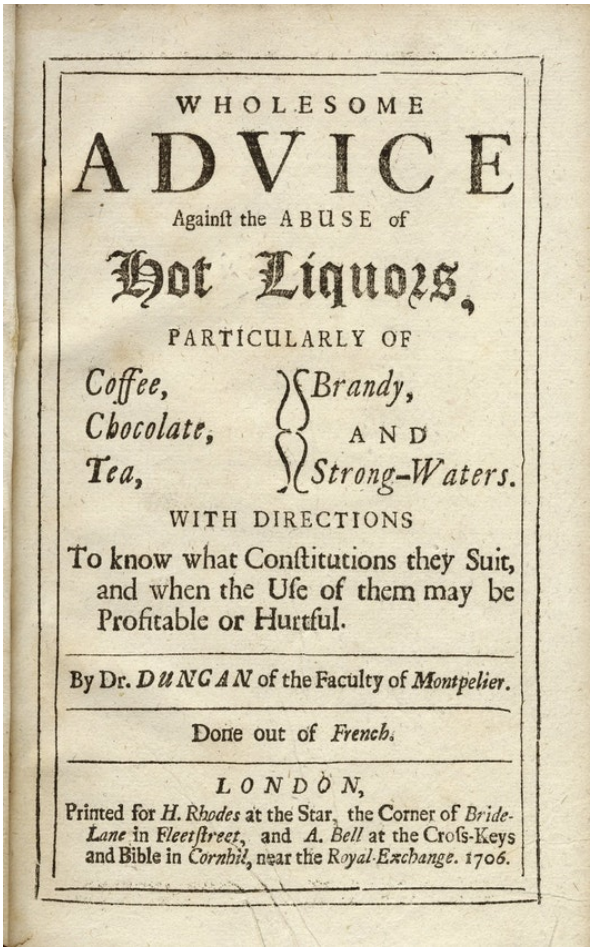
[187] Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, p.9.
[188] John Tosh, 'The Old Adam' in *English Masculinities 1660–1800*, ed. by Hitchcock and Cohen (London: Longman, 1999), p.226.
[189] Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*, pp.8-23.

Mental disorders

Early-modern treatises for these substances articulated a gendered hierarchy of cognition. Substances such as chocolate and tobacco were commonly credited with enhancing reason and judgement in ways coded as masculine: sharpening men's intellectual faculties for the rational thought required in business, scholarship and governance. In contrast, when writers discussed their effects on women, they were more often framed in terms of regulating emotional excess: calming hysteria, moderating passions or restoring equilibrium to bodies imagined as inherently volatile. The cognitive benefits attributed to these commodities thus reinforced the distinction contemporaries drew between male intellect and female emotion, naturalising women's exclusion from intellectual and public life by positioning their minds and bodies as fundamentally inferior to men's.

Chocolate exemplifies this divide. Stubbe[190] (1662) and Hughes[191] (1672) specifically recommended its consumption to women suffering from 'hypochondriac melancholy,' framing it as a palliative for excessive female emotion. Stubbe simultaneously emphasised its utility for pursuits coded as masculine, arguing that it strengthened acuity and sharpened judgement — qualities deemed essential for men as professionals.[192] Thus, the same substance was imagined as calming women's excessive melancholy but conversely as a stimulus to male rationality and authority.

[190] Stubbe, *The Indian Nectar*, p.152.
[191] Hughes, *The American Physician,* section on 'name' in the chapter 'Of the Cacao-Tree and Fruit.'
[192] Stubbe, *The Indian Nectar*, p.11.



WHOLESOME

ADVICE

Against the ABUSE of

Hot Liquors,

PARTICULARLY OF

Coffee, *Chocolate,* *Tea,* } *Brandy,* AND *Strong-Waters.*

WITH DIRECTIONS

To know what Conſtitutions they Suit, and when the Uſe of them may be Profitable or Hurtful.

By Dr. *DUNCAN* of the Faculty of *Montpelier.*

Done out of *French.*

LONDON,

Printed for *H. Rhodes* at the Star, the Corner of *Bride-Lane* in *Fleetſtreet*, and *A. Bell* at the Croſs-Keys and Bible in *Cornhil*, near the *Royal-Exchange.* 1706.

Figure 1.7: Title page of Dr Daniel Duncan, *Wholesome Advice Against the Abuse of Hot Liquors*, (London: H. Rhodes, 1706), Wellcome Collection, London, EPB/B/21185/1.
(Image courtesy of Wellcome Collection CC BY 4.0).

Tobacco's medicinal role was similarly complex and no less gendered. It was often prescribed for women's 'hysterical passions,' while excessive use was believed to promote 'melancholy' in both sexes. In 1706, Daniel Duncan's treatise (Fig. 1.7) warned that tobacco could disturb the spirits and induce downheartedness, especially in those of a 'phlegmatick' disposition.[193] Chamberlayne's 1682 endorsement of pipe smoking further underlined its professional utility for men, particularly 'in their Journeys and Labours,' emphasising its capacity to increase alertness and sustain activity.[194] By contrast, women's

[193] Duncan, *Wholesome Advice*, p.58.
[194] Chamberlayne, *The Natural History of Coffee* (London: 1682), pp.20–25.

use of tobacco was more often associated with regulating emotional excess than with enhancing intellectual or physical performance. This gender-specific approach to medicinal substances persisted into the eighteenth century. At the same time, some practitioners prescribed snuff without reference to the sex of the patient, citing its benefits across a wide range of ailments.[195] These competing claims reveal both continuity and flexibility: medical discourse continued to reinforce gendered frameworks of health, yet also contained spaces in which those boundaries could be blurred.

Feminine beauty

Seventeenth-century treatises on chocolate also illuminate the intersection of beauty standards, social class and emerging racial theories. As Britain's empire expanded, beauty ideals were further complicated by encounters with different cultures and peoples from the mid-seventeenth century onward. The writings of Stubbe (1662) and Hughes (1672) on Jamaica demonstrate how colonial experiences actively reshaped English understanding of racial difference. As Edmund Campos observes, there existed 'an emergent concern over the maintenance of racial integrity in tropical locales' and consequently, the marketing of chocolate became a vehicle for articulating deeper anxieties about race, ethnic purity and colonial identity.[196] Those racial anxieties are traced in later chapters; in the treatises themselves complexion functioned chiefly as a visible marker of status, with fair skin signalling both beauty and elevated social rank.

[195] See Simon Paulli, *A Treatise on Tobacco, Tea, Coffee, and Chocolate*, trans. by Robert James (London: 1746), pp.34-9.
[196] Edmund Campos, 'Thomas Gage and the English Colonial Encounter with Chocolate', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 39.1 (2009), 183–200 (p.194).

This connection is explicit in Wadsworth's 1652 poem which promised transformation through a sip of chocolate:[197]

> The Nut-Browne-Lasses of the Land
> Whom Nature vayl'd in Face and Hand,
> Are quickly Beauties of High-Rate
> By one small Draught of Chocolate.[198]

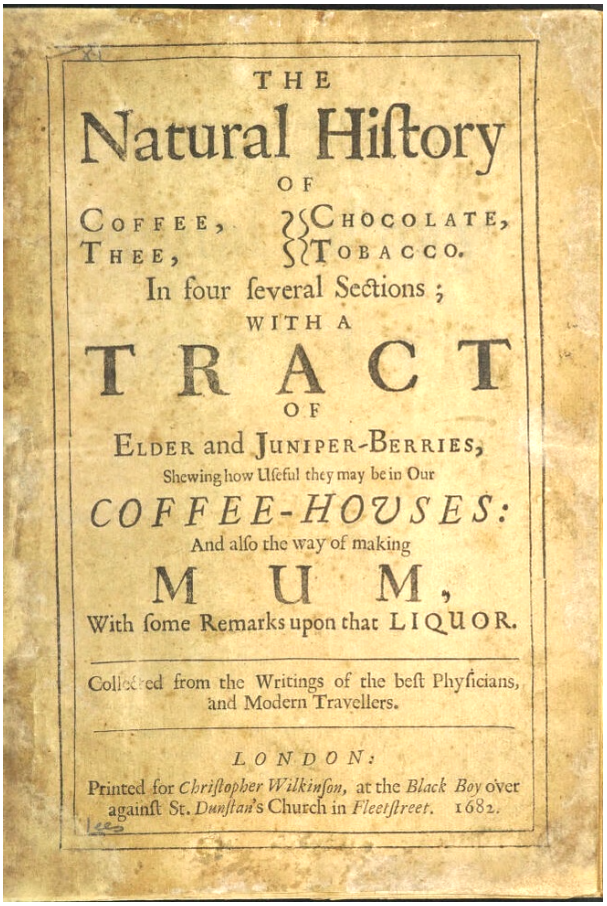
By singling out the 'Nut-Browne-Lasses' in his twelfth stanza, Wadsworth establishes fair skin as a quintessential marker of English beauty. In late seventeenth-century England, tanned or darker skin typically indicated exposure to manual outdoor toil, marking out its bearer as less refined. Chocolate therefore promised not only cosmetic enhancement but also social mobility. This perception of chocolate reveals how shifting bodily ideals also shaped social identity. In early modern Europe, chocolate was actively promoted for making consumers 'Fat and Corpulent, Faire and Amiable' — qualities that embodied beauty standards of the period where plumpness signified good health, fertility, prosperity and elevated social standing.[199]

Military applications

While chocolate and other colonial goods were marketed to women primarily through promises of beauty enhancement and emotional regulation, these same substances were simultaneously presented to men through notably different narratives that emphasised masculine strength, endurance and proficiency. Britain's global expansion was sustained not only by military force but by the symbolic and physical sustenance of colonial goods —

[197] Wadsworth, *Chocolate; Or, An Indian Drinke,* title page.
[198] *Ibid*., stanza 12.
[199] *Ibid.,* Preface A4r.

substances that came to symbolise masculine resilience and imperial authority. Stubbe's 1662 account of English soldiers in Jamaica surviving solely on 'Cacao nut made into paste with Sugar' during military campaigns linked chocolate consumption directly to military effectiveness.[200] This dietary observation carried ideological weight: it constructed a narrative in which the disciplined consumption of colonial goods enabled loyal soldiers to not only withstand the harsh Jamaican climate but also remain fit for military service. Chocolate thus became symbolically intertwined with masculine stamina and imperial self-sufficiency, reinforcing English identity as both all-conquering and controlled.



THE
Natural Hiſtory
OF
COFFEE, THEE, CHOCOLATE, TOBACCO.
In four ſeveral Sections;
WITH A
TRACT
OF
ELDER and JUNIPER-BERRIES,
Shewing how Uſeful they may be in Our
COFFEE-HOUSES:
And alſo the way of making
MUM,
With ſome Remarks upon that LIQUOR.
Collected from the Writings of the beſt Phyſicians, and Modern Travellers.
LONDON:
Printed for Chriſtopher Wilkinſon, at the Black Boy over againſt St. Dunſtan's Church in Fleetſtreet. 1682.

Figure 1.8: Title page of John Chamberlayne, *The Natural History of Coffee, Thee, Chocolate, Tobacco*, (London: Printed for Christopher Wilkinson, 1682), Wellcome Collection, EPB/B/59907. (Image courtesy of Wellcome Collection CC BY 4.0).

[200] Stubbe, *The Indian Nectar*, p.31.

The promotion of tobacco followed a similar trajectory. John Chamberlayne's 1682 treatise, *The Natural History of Coffee, Thee, Chocolate, Tobacco* […] *And also the way of making MUM*[201] (Fig. 1.8) cited Thomas Willis in recommending tobacco to soldiers because it could 'supply the want of Victuals, and make them insensible to the dangers, fatigues, and hardships, which do usually attend Wars and Armies.'[202] Thirty years later, in 1712, an anonymous treatise reiterated these claims, asserting that 'Armies have been enabled to undergo tedious Marches and Seamen long Voyages, with hardly any Provision, when well supply'd with [tobacco].'[203] These parallel claims reveal a consistent pattern: tobacco, like chocolate, was reimagined as a fuel of empire, transforming physical deprivation into proof of masculine vigour and self-discipline.[204]

Eighteenth-century trade cards (examined in Chapter 2) further reinforced these associations, frequently employing imagery of white Englishmen supervising black colonial labour. Tobacco in particular was framed as the embodiment of masculine vitality, imperial strength and racial hierarchy. This gendered bifurcation of consumption practices attempted to naturalise male dominance in colonial contexts while relegating women to the domestic arena, where consumption required careful management and restraint. The evidence from this literature thus reveals how seemingly neutral products became media for reinforcing gender hierarchies: men's consumption practices validated their 'natural' suitability for conquest and intellectual pursuits, while women's consumption required

[201] 'Mum' was a type of spiced beer, popular with sailors and merchants on long sea voyages.
[202] Chamberlayne, *The Natural History of Coffee, Thee, Chocolate, Tobacco*, p.24.
[203] Anonymous, *The Virtues and Excellency of the American Tobacco Plant, for cure of diseases, and preservation of health: and the noxious qualities of the tobacco growing in Northern countries* (1712), p.6.
[204] In reality, the provision of chocolate and tobacco did not protect British regiments from the ravages of disease such as yellow fever, malaria and dysentery.

surveillance and restriction — reflecting their presumed emotional and physical fragility. In this literature, consumption became a means of rehearsing imperial and patriarchal authority, a theme Chapter 2 develops.

Morality

The treatment of women in relation to these luxury goods reveals persistent anxieties about female agency and autonomy, despite the recasting in the eighteenth century of female sexuality as naturally modest. Duncan's *Wholesome Advice Against the Abuse of Hot Liquors* (1706) (Fig. 1.7) exemplifies this concern by launching a pointed attack on assorted luxury goods (including chocolate and perfume), deliberately comparing their allure to the deadly magnetism of mythological Sirens. This comparison portrays women as fundamentally duplicitous and dangerous, requiring constant patriarchal control. By specifically warning of luxury goods' potential to corrupt women's morals and disrupt social harmony, Duncan articulated a broader belief that female identity itself required constant scrutiny and guidance. Exotic substances and the female body are conceptually merged, with both depicted as destabilising forces unless tightly regulated.[205] This fusion of women and luxury goods reveals less about chocolate than about gender ideology. Duncan's emphasis on sensory seductiveness positions women as dangerous precisely because of their embodied femininity, and positions male authority as the guarantor of the stability their appetites threaten.

[205] Duncan, *Wholesome Advice*, p.23.

Men, too, were scrutinised, but in different terms. Duncan's warnings to male readers concern external temptation rather than inherent weakness: for women indulgence signified innate fragility, for men a lapse correctable by self-discipline.[206] This asymmetry reinforced a moral double standard in which masculinity was defined as rational while femininity was characterised as embodied and unstable. The language is gender-coded throughout. Duncan personifies the pleasure taken in chocolate and perfume (quoted in the Introduction) as a 'cheating Female' who 'promises all that's delicious, but never keeps her word'.[207] Masculine virtue is thus sound in itself but vulnerable to a feminised temptation figured as coming from outside it.

The 'Reformation of Manners' campaign of the 1690s institutionalised such scrutiny of personal morality. The concerns expressed about women's chocolate-drinking — and their delight in cosmetics, silks and other fashionable goods — betrayed fears about female vanity, idleness and extravagance, about their susceptibility to foreign influence, and their participation in commercial culture beyond the home.[208] The same vocabulary was turned on men, to different ends. Thomas Gordon's satire of 1720[209] censures the *beau* in terms conventionally reserved for women: 'it is worth while to see a whole Row of these *Beaus*

[206] *Ibid.* pp.23–4.
[207] *Ibid.* pp.22–3. This pairing of chocolate and perfume as a single category of sensory danger is discussed (in the Introduction) in relation to the thesis' broader rationale for treating chocolate, perfume and snuff as a coherent analytical group, and the shifting strength of that association across the century.
[208] Margaret R. Hunt, 'Women and the Fiscal-Imperial State in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries' in *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660–1840*, ed. by Kathleen Wilson (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), pp.29-47. Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp.1–15, 73–8.
[209] Although this chapter focuses primarily on treatises published between c.1650 and c.1710, Gordon's 1720 satire is included here as it directly extends the moral arguments advanced by earlier writers such as Duncan, demonstrating the persistence of anxieties around gendered luxury consumption into the early eighteenth century. Its inclusion is intended to illustrate continuity.

sit looking at one another, or at themselves; or if they do any thing else, 'tis only to swear and take Snuff'. [210] What condemns him is not that he takes snuff but that he does nothing else: consumption has become his whole occupation, as it was alleged to be women's. Male indulgence is censured as a lapse into femininity, female indulgence as the expression of a disposition.

Conclusion

The contradictions embedded within the medical discourse of these treatises expose the instability of gender categories themselves. When Stubbe prescribed chocolate to sharpen male rationality yet calm female melancholy, or when tobacco was simultaneously promoted for masculine productivity and female emotional regulation, authors were not documenting biological realities but actively fabricating them. These inconsistencies suggest that even as medical authority claimed to ground gender difference in observable bodily phenomena, practitioners struggled to maintain coherent distinctions. The inconsistencies within prescription itself — evident when the same substance promised contradictory effects — reveals how fragile the 'scientific' basis for gender hierarchy actually was.

The entanglement of these medical claims with political and religious disagreements demonstrates that consumer goods functioned as proxy battlegrounds for larger ideological conflicts. In particular, Wadsworth's sexualised verse mocked Puritan moral

[210] Thomas Gordon, *The Humourist: Being essays upon several subjects* (London: 1720), p.52.

regulation, and Stubbe's celebration of marital sexuality challenged ecclesiastical control over bodies. Colonial imports thus became vehicles through which authors contested not just health practices but fundamental questions about authority, pleasure and social order in this period of profound political instability.

Finally, the racial and imperial dimensions of these texts warrant synthesis. When authors positioned chocolate as fuel for military conquest, or when they promised that consumption would lighten skin shade and signal elite status, they wove together gender performance, colonial expansion and racial hierarchy into a single ideological fabric. Fair skin signified not just beauty but distance from outdoor labour, while masculine consumption of chocolate affirmed men's 'natural' fitness for imperial domination. These associations would acquire an explicitly racial dimension as Britain's colonial presence expanded.

By *c.*1710, the foundations were established: gender identity would be performed through consumption, medical authority would legitimise social hierarchy, and colonial goods would serve as both practical commodities and symbolic vehicles for negotiating power. The subsequent chapters of this thesis trace how these patterns evolved as chocolate, perfume and tobacco moved from elite novelties to widespread consumer practices, examining whether expanding access democratised or simply reconfigured the gendered meanings embedded in their consumption.

CHAPTER 2

The Circulation and Marketing of Tobacco and Chocolate: Ideals of Masculinity and Femininity

This chapter examines the evolution of chocolate and tobacco marketing through trade cards and newspaper advertisements between *c.*1700 and *c.*1800. Against a changing medical climate, shaped in part by the increasingly empirical approach associated with physicians such as Thomas Sydenham (1624–1689),[211] claims for the therapeutic benefits of these commodities became more open to scrutiny.[212] Although chocolate and tobacco continued to appear in medical writing, their established places as pleasurable goods enjoyed by both sexes increasingly complicated their earlier identities as medicines. Their medicinal reputations therefore gradually gave way, particularly in commercial advertising, to an emphasis on pleasure, sociability and consumption.[213] Advertisements shifted accordingly from extended medical justification towards presenting these substances as shapers of lifestyle and gendered identity. The form of that promotion changed with its content: text-heavy medical argument was increasingly supplemented by accessible, visually engaging trade cards that combined concise text with striking imagery. Some cards retained earlier associations, such as the link between physical stamina and masculinity; others reframed chocolate and tobacco as markers of refinement, civility and cultivated pleasure.

[211] Thomas Sydenham, *Observationes Medicæ* (London, 1676).
[212] Goodman, *Tobacco in History*, p.78.
[213] Juan R. Sanchez-Ramos, 'The Rise and Fall of Tobacco as a Botanical Medicine', *Journal of Herbal Medicine*, 22 (2020), 100374, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hermed.2020.100374> [accessed 15 September 2025].

As Loveman argues, the 1650s and 1660s were 'crucial decades' for the marketing and spread of chocolate in metropolitan society with the earliest advertisement appearing in *The Publick Adviser* in June 1657.[214] While seventeenth and early eighteenth century retailers frequently distributed printed works (from half-sheets to small books) explaining the benefits of chocolate, eighteenth-century trade cards and newspaper advertisements reached far broader audiences.[215] As Britain's imperial trade routes expanded, the supply of 'exotic' goods such as chocolate and tobacco both increased in quantity and improved in quality.[216] As Woodruff Smith observes, 'imported novelties required powerful promotion,' prompting the development of new advertising strategies to sell them.[217] Retailers deployed eye-catching imagery and persuasive language across trade cards and newspaper advertisements, calibrating their appeals to distinct demographics, above all along the lines of gender and class, as these products underwent processes of adaptation, assimilation and anglicisation.

Trade cards (also known as shopkeepers' or tradesmen's bills), tobacco papers and newspaper advertisements are the sources used here. Together, they trace how a powerful, commanding ideal of masculinity came to coexist with a more subtle blend of traditionally 'hard' masculine traits with an increased emphasis on 'softer' attributes such as sensibility and compassion, increasingly prominent in the latter half of the century. Simultaneously, these materials expose the ambivalent positioning of women within

[214] Loveman, 'The Introduction of Chocolate', 28–9.
[215] *Ibid.*, 29.
[216] Defined here as 'originating in distant lands'.
[217] Woodruff D. Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability,* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), p.165.

commercial discourse: traders alternately excluded them through the celebration of all-male sociability and targeted them directly as discerning customers. Collectively, these promotional materials reveal not monolithic ideals of masculinity or femininity, but rather multiple, overlapping constructions of gender that reflected the social and cultural complexities of elite, and increasingly middle class, English society, and their intersection with broader socio-cultural currents including segregated and mixed-sex sociability, and patriotic sentiment.

Trade cards have previously been examined from a variety of perspectives, including their aesthetic significance (Michael Snodin),[218] the symbolism of trade signs (Ambrose Heal),[219] their textual and persuasive strategies (Philip Carter),[220] and their representations of race (Elizabeth Kim).[221] This chapter builds upon that scholarship by examining how trade cards articulated and shaped gendered identities while drawing consumers into a visually stimulating world of global consumption. As Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford observe, trade cards encouraged customers to imagine themselves as participants in a global consumer network, with 'image and text [being] interdependent', although imagery often predominated.[222] They also identify trade cards as 'part of the culture and social display and entertainment of […] the print shop and the pleasure garden'.[223] Display was

[218] Michael Snodin, 'Trade Cards and English Rococo', in *The Rococo in England: A Symposium held at the Victoria and Albert Museum 17–19 May 1984,* ed. by Charles Hind (London: V&A Publications, 1984), pp.93–103.
[219] Ambrose Heal, *London Tradesmen's Cards of the XVIII Century: An Account of their Origin and Use* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1925), pp.18-25.
[220] Philip Carter, 'An "effeminate" or "efficient" nation? Masculinity and eighteenth-century social documentary', *Textual Practice*, 11.3 (1997), 429–43.
[221] Elizabeth Kim, 'Race Sells: Racialized Trade Cards in 18th-Century Britain', *Journal of Material Culture*, 7.2 (2002), 137–165.
[222] Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, 'Selling Consumption in the Eighteenth Century: Advertising and the Trade Card in Britain and France', *Cultural and Social History*, 4.2 (2007), 145–170, (147–9).
[223] *Ibid.*, p.166.

therefore central to their function: trade cards operated as miniature showpieces, enhancing both the appeal of products and the prestige of the shops that sold them. This chapter extends these approaches by placing gender at the centre of the analysis, examining how the imagery and language of chocolate and tobacco cards constructed, reinforced and sometimes complicated contemporary ideas of masculinity and femininity.

Eighteenth-century trade cards stand among the earliest forms of commercial advertising, evolving technically and stylistically throughout the eighteenth century. This chapter examines their production methods, design elements and commercial significance. Early examples relied upon simple woodcuts on paper (e.g. Figs. 2.6 and 2.8 and 2.10) but increasingly, from mid-century, copperplate engravings and etchings became the preferred choice (e.g. Figs. 2.11 and 2.13).[224] Both processes were labour-intensive: engravers cut lines directly into the copper with a burin, while etchers drew through an acid-resistant coating and let acid bite the lines; the plate was then inked, wiped and pressed onto paper to produce crisp, durable prints. The resulting images combined varied typefaces with carefully orchestrated compositions, yielding artefacts of remarkable polish and sophistication. As Berg and Clifford also note, '[t]he trade card, whether produced by a jobbing engraver or an established artist, was not cheap, and not all could afford them.'[225] Investing in their production, therefore, represented a deliberate strategy of commercial self-promotion.

[224] Certain trades such as chimney sweeps and nightmen tended to use woodblocks throughout the century, possibly on account of the relative cheapness of production.
[225] Berg and Clifford, 'Selling Consumption', 156.

Eighteenth-century trade cards were the flamboyant ancestors of today's business cards and served as powerful marketing tools. Shopkeepers distributed them freely, either directly to customers on leaving their shop, or within local neighbourhoods to potential clients. Unlike treatises which focused on the product, trade cards primarily acted as *aide-memoires* regarding the location and elegance of the shop, the exceptional service offered, and the superior quality of the goods sold (and often their competitive pricing).[226] They demonstrate the geographic clustering of specialised shops, chart the evolution of luxury markets, and reveal the range of merchandise sold in each shop. Moreover, they shed light on business operations: identifying proprietors and revealing whether transactions occurred wholesale or retail, in warehouses or shops, for cash or on credit. Tobacco papers served a similar dual purpose. Generally smaller, and printed on thinner paper, they closely resembled trade cards in style and were used for packaging loose tobacco for the customer to take home, but they also offered another opportunity to publicise the product.[227]

Their ordinariness is precisely what makes these ephemeral objects so revealing. As Ambrose Heal remarked in 1925, their 'common workaday purpose' meant their 'value as a record is so true.'[228] Analysis of these cards inevitably involves some conjecture, but in this chapter they are considered in context alongside comparable trade cards and are supplemented by other forms of visual culture, such as conversation pieces, to strengthen the conclusions drawn. It is also crucial to consider who collected and preserved them, and why, since a source shaped by conscious selection cannot bear the same weight as a random survival. As Berg and Clifford caution, '[t]here are many problems working with a

[226] Ambrose Heal, *London Tradesmen's Cards of the XVIII Century* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1925), p.2.
[227] Nigel Tattersfield, *Thomas Bewick: Graphic Worlds* (London: British Museum Press, 2014), pp.74–7.
[228] Heal, *London Tradesmen's Cards,* p.7.

source that cannot be classified as a random survival but is the result of particular collecting policies.'[229] The extant corpus was largely shaped by three collectors,[230] whose differing methods matter for its interpretation: Sarah Banks (1744–1818) assembled approximately 1,000 cards as an ephemera enthusiast; Sir Ambrose Heal (1872–1959) who identified 1720–1770 as the trade card's 'palmy days',[231] catalogued his collection by trade but selected, with a connoisseur's eye, the evocative and visually pleasing; and John Johnson (1882–1956) gathered over 500 cards 'more by chance than by design', as Julie Ann Lambert notes — a less subjective accumulation than Heal's.[232] This diversity of collecting practice, together with Samuel Pepys's earlier (limited) preservation of cards from 1650 to 1703, offsets some of the bias of any single collection, though the corpus cannot be treated as a random sample.[233] The cards examined here have additionally been selected for their similarities with other surviving examples in terms of design, wording and imagery, enabling more confident generalisations to be drawn.[234] Their survival beyond their intended commercial use also reflects the quality of their production and visual appeal, which could make them desirable objects in their own right.

Trade cards reached their zenith mid-century, but were increasingly supplemented by newspaper advertising, which offered greater reach and faster turnaround.[235] Table 2.1

[229] Berg and Clifford, 'Selling Consumption', 154.
[230] The British Museum holds the Heal and Banks collections (with some of Heal's cards held at the V&A), while the John Johnson Collection is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.
[231] Heal, *London Tradesmen's Cards*, (London: Batsford, 1925), p.11.
[232] Julie Ann Lambert, *A Nation of Shopkeepers: Trade Ephemera from 1654 to the 1860s in the John Johnson Collection* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2001) p.iv.
[233] Pepys' Collection is housed in the Pepysian Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge.
[234] Molineux, in 'Pleasures of the Smoke', calculates that the Heal and Banks collections in the British Museum contain fewer than 15,000 items, of which tobacco advertisements amount to roughly 400, p.330.
[235] The evidence presented here concerns newspaper advertising alone and does not measure any corresponding decline in trade card production; the relationship between the two media is one of supplementation rather than demonstrable displacement.

and Figure 2.A record advertisements for chocolate or cocoa in a sample of London newspapers at six points between 1710 and 1780, counting every insertion across every surviving issue of each title with a continuous run (using Gale Primary Sources). Several qualifications apply. The number of sampled titles rises from two to eight, so raw totals partly register the expansion of the press itself. Publication frequency also rose and since the method counts insertions rather than distinct advertisements, a standing advertisement generates roughly six times as many counts in a daily as in a weekly. The 1710 and 1720 figures rest on two titles apiece, so are indicative only; 1740 is omitted because its run is incomplete.

Raw totals rise from 69 advertisements in 1710 to 387 in 1780, a growth of roughly five and a half times which closely tracks the expansion of the press: stamp duty returns indicate that stamped sheets issued annually rose approximately fivefold between the 1710s and the 1770s.[236] Measured per sampled title, the figures fluctuate without clear direction — 35 in 1710, a peak of 67 in 1760, 48 in 1780. Chocolate makers placed advertisements in each new generation of titles as it appeared, following their customers into the medium those customers increasingly read, and the new dailies of the 1770s courted precisely the middling market this chapter traces.[237]

[236] Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695–1855* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), p.29–45. The stamp returns record duty accounted for rather than copies sold, and the closing of the half-sheet exemption in 1725 means that figures either side of that date are not strictly comparable; they are used here only to establish orders of magnitude.

[237] Household evidence points in a compatible direction for the earlier part of the period: Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660–1760*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1996), p.49, records a rising incidence of utensils for hot drinks between 1675 and 1725. Her sample does not extend into the second half of the century.

Table 2.1: Numbers of London newspaper advertisements for chocolate/cocoa, across the entire year, from 1710-1780.[238]

Year	Number of London newspaper advertisements for chocolate/cocoa	Titles contributing advertisements
1710	69	2
1720	104	2
1730	141	5
1750	142	3
1760	200	3
1780	387	8

Source: same as Figure 2.A below.

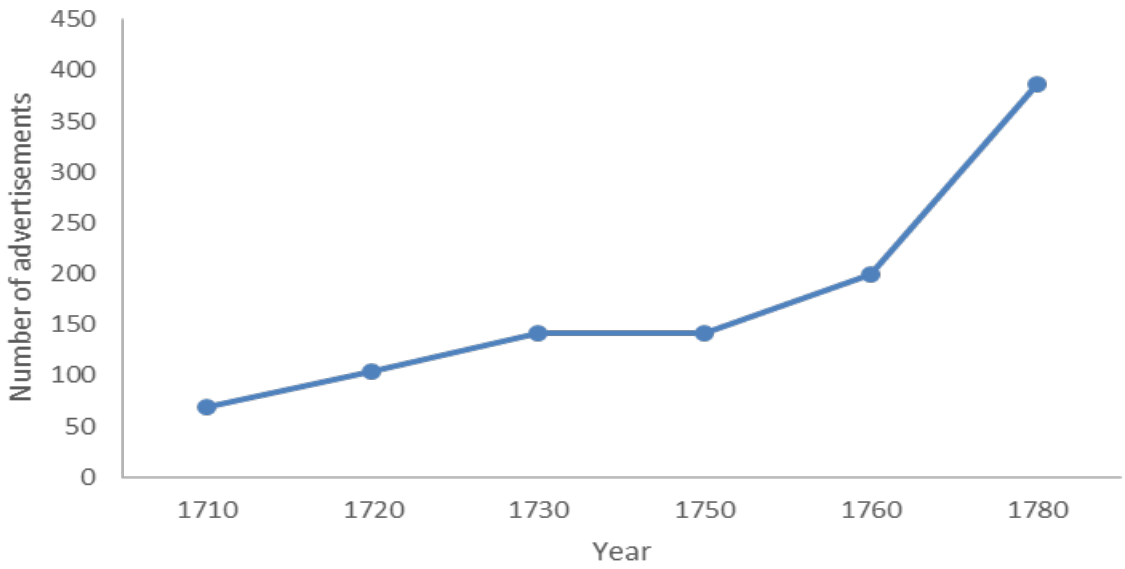


Figure 2.A: *Numbers of London newspaper advertisements for chocolate and/or cocoa, across the entire year, from 1710-1780. The numbers record advertisements in every surviving issue of each sampled title in a given year.*
Source: advertisement counts gathered from the Gale Primary Sources database across the following London newspapers, with years of publication in brackets: *The Daily Courant* (1702–1735); *The Post Boy* (1695–1728); *The Country Journal; or, The Craftsman* (1727–c.1750); *Fogg's Weekly Journal* (1728–1737); *The Weekly Register; or, Universal Journal*(c.1730–c.1735); *The General Advertiser* (1744–1752); *The Public Advertiser* (1752–1794); *The London Evening Post* (1727–1806); *Lloyd's Evening Post* (1757–c.1805); *St James's Chronicle* (1761–1866); *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (1764–1796); *The Morning Chronicle* (1769–1862); *The Morning Post* (1772–1937); *The Morning Herald*(1780–1869). Not all titles were in publication in every sample year; the number of titles contributing to each year's count is given in Table 2.1.

[238] The numbers record advertisements in every issue of every London newspaper listed in a given year.

The trade cards examined here each disclose some aspect of gender, either through their imagery, text or both. Although selection has necessarily been subjective, the chosen examples permit a broad exploration of gendered perception. Spanning the entire eighteenth century and focusing primarily on London-based operations — with the exception of S. Steel's trade card for his shop in North Yorkshire (Fig. 2.10) — they facilitate comparison while reflecting the capital's dominance within domestic and imperial trade networks.

This chapter's emphasis on tobacco trade cards highlights intersecting forms of masculinity (ranging from debauched homosocial camaraderie to refined sensibility), and their connection with imperial expansion, racial ideology and class distinction. The early cards visualised colonial conquest as an inherently masculine enterprise, as did certain treatises before them (chapter 1), demanding attributes such as physical power, mental resilience, courage and leadership. Colonial spaces thus functioned as key arenas for masculine identity formation, particularly in regions such as the South Pacific, where English women were absent until the late 1780s. Elsewhere, men were often supported in their imperial roles by women as wives and mothers, yet the distant peripheries of empire remained strongly coded as masculine domains — an impression especially apparent in trade card imagery (Figs. 2.6 and 2.7). These cards also reveal the uneasy interplay of racial ideologies and masculine constructs, often producing ambivalent and contradictory representations. Indigenous men were simultaneously depicted as effeminate — thereby justifying European dominance — and hypermasculine, requiring the 'civilising' influence of

Europeans. Remarkably, such opposing stereotypes could appear on the very same card, underlining the instability of imperial masculinity.

Unlike treatises that advanced prescriptive gender ideals, trade cards especially captured the marketing strategies that resonated with consumers' sensibilities. Ambiguity, in what follows, is accordingly treated not as an obstacle to interpretation but as part of the cards' commercial design. An image that could be read in more than one way extended that flattery to more than one customer: the patriot and the profiteer, the libertine and the man of feeling, could each find themselves confirmed by the same engraving. Polysemy widened the market, and it also engaged the viewer, since an image requiring decoding (a rebus, a double meaning, a scene of uncertain tone) converted the customer from passive recipient into active participant, and the pleasure of successful decoding attached itself to the product. Where multiple readings are identified below, they are offered not as rival scholarly hypotheses but as simultaneous invitations to differently positioned customers. The marketing of chocolate, for instance, demonstrates how shopkeepers deliberately appealed to elite and middling consumers of both sexes through symbolic imagery, careful vocabulary choices and strategic word order. In this sense, trade cards were not passive reflections of gender norms but were active agents in influencing and disseminating them through commercial culture — an aspect largely absent from seventeenth-century treatises, which tended to articulate theoretical ideals and prejudices rather than practices.

Chocolate

Following the Whitehall fire of 1698, the royal court relocated (the relatively short distance) to St James's Palace and the upper echelons of the elites followed, consolidating the West End into 'a container of frighteningly concentrated power.'[239] This process had begun in the 1630s with the development of Covent Garden, which anchored the elites' residences and places of sociability in the area. By the 1690s, chocolate houses clustered primarily around the aristocratic quarter of St James's, and chocolate makers such as Brunsden (Fig. 2.2), active in the 1750s, later congregated around Pall Mall, Covent Garden and Conduit Street. By the middle of the eighteenth century, chocolate makers had begun migrating eastward toward the City's expanding centres of wealth around Mansion House and the Bank of England, including Leadenhall Street, headquarters of the East India Company from 1648 to 1874.

Traditional all-male bastions of sociability endured throughout the eighteenth century, beginning in the chocolate houses and coffee houses, and later in the form of gentlemen's clubs such as White's and Brooks's, and (from 1717) freemasons' lodges. While some coffee-sellers' trade cards promoted ideals of 'civilised' and sociable masculinity (Fig. 2.1), the absence of comparable trade cards for chocolate houses suggests a deliberate reliance on social connections: rather than depending upon public advertising, chocolate houses appear to have sustained their status and numbers through elite social networks formed at schools and universities, within political circles, and through family and personal

[239] Peter J. Atkins, 'The Spatial Configuration of Class Solidarity in London's West End, 1792–1939', *Urban History,* 17 (1990), 36–66 (p.56).

relationships. Indeed, of the 45 chocolate trade cards examined here, none advertise chocolate houses *per se* (they advertise makers, grocers and warehouses).



Figure 2.1: *Trade card for Will's Best Coffee Powder at Manwarings* (*c.*1700), copperplate engraving on paper, John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Douce adds 138 (84).
(Image © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford)

Refinement, rococo and the female consumer

Trade cards themselves were often elaborate, as exemplified by R. Brunsden's example (Fig. 2.2) which combines elegant script with detailed imagery. Its rococo design was marked by asymmetry, theatrical flourishes and delicate ornament, appropriating French

aesthetic sophistication for English commerce. Despite contemporary English suspicion of French culture, rococo's association with pleasure and beauty may have made it well-suited to appeal to women who, by mid-century, had become significant chocolate consumers.[240] Michael Snodin has described such cards as 'ambassadors of the rococo style', contrasting with the more masculine austerity of the preceding baroque.[241] Anglicised by engravers for commercial purposes, rococo frames placed exotic imperial commodities (such as chocolate) within decorative cartouches, thereby linking imperial goods to metropolitan elegance.[242]

On his card, Brunsden carefully curates the presentation of his key merchandise (tea, coffee and chocolate) 'to adorn the brackets and branches, conveying a sense of both individuality and fashion to even the most mundane items.'[243] His card employs conspicuous calligraphy familiar from contemporary book design: varied, assorted fonts and flamboyant swirls guide the reader's eye to key information. In a development from earlier cards, the shopkeeper's name is prominent, in terms of size and positioning, as well as the rounded script. His trade is written directly below in smaller italics. Further down, 'LONDON' is written in spaced capitals possibly suggesting that Brunsden felt the London location of his shop added to its sophistication. The items sold are in a smaller type still, though 'CHOCOLATE' is written in capital letters, emphasising its commercial importance.

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[240] Melissa Hyde, *Making Up the Rococo: François Boucher and His Critics* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2006), Ch. 1: 'Boucher, boudoir, salon: cherchez la femme,' on eighteenth-century critics' association of the rococo with femininity.
[241] Snodin, 'Trade Cards and English Rococo', p.103. Examples of heavier Baroque cards include James Bartlett's card (1720) BM 1858.0417.609; and grocers Thomas and Samuel Noton's trade card (BM 68.91) (1748).
[242] Berg and Clifford, 'Selling Consumption', 155.
[243] *Ibid.,* 149.

The elegance of the script used for 'R. Brunsden' and 'Grocer and Oilman' convey style while the highly legible 'at the three Golden Sugar Loaves' presumably ensured customers could easily locate his establishment. The concluding phrase, 'at Reasonable Rates', acknowledged the competitive nature of the luxury retail trade, appealing directly to cost-conscious consumers (discussed further in Chapter 6).



Figure 2.2: Murray of London, *R. Brunsden's Trade Card* (*c.*1750–60), etching, ink on paper, 19.3 × 15.4 cm, Heal Collection, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, 68.45.
(Image © The Trustees of the British Museum)**.**

Brunsden's trade card not only advertised but also informed and cultivated consumers through a triptych of manufacturing vignettes at the bottom of the card, illustrating the complex process of chocolate preparation. On the left, a man is roasting beans in an oven;

the one in the centre is cracking open the shells with a stick in order to remove the nibs; and on the right, a worker is grinding the nibs using a horse-powered mill.[244] As Berg and Clifford argue, these cards 'offered the retailer the opportunity to educate his or her public, making the new familiar and therefore accessible.'[245] By illustrating the process of chocolate production, the card rendered it both comprehensible and desirable. The refined, 'feminine' rococo elements are carefully balanced by these depictions of strenuous 'masculine' labour — echoing earlier treatises that linked chocolate with male stamina and vitality. In this way, the card simultaneously appeals to male and female consumers, positioning chocolate as a product associated with both refinement and strength. Brunsden also claims he 'makes chocolate' on-site, suggesting freshness and purity though such assertions were not always true.[246] Again, this would have appealed to potential purchasers — chocolate might have become more widespread in Britain by the 1750s, but Brunsden is suggesting it is still a luxurious artisanal product. Despite its popularity, its exoticism and complex manufacture remained integral to its allure.

Class distinctions operated as a marketing device, reinforcing gendered modes of appeal. In flattering both cultivated men and women, the symbolism on Brunsden's card operated as a sophisticated visual text. The emblem of three sugar loaves crowning the design served as a universally recognised symbol of the grocer's trade, while the hanging gourds beneath demanded an educated eye to decipher — knowledge typically acquired through treatises, broadsheets and periodicals. London consumers familiar with contemporary natural-

[244] A similar device was used in tobacco trade cards, showing tobacco being ground down, rolled and processed (Heal 117.35; Banks D,2.3892; Banks D,2.3878).
[245] Berg and Clifford, 'Selling Consumption', 156.
[246] *Ibid.,* 161.

history publications may have recognised these motifs as visual echoes of works such as Sir Hans Sloane's *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica* (1707), including Everard Kickius's accompanying illustration of cacao pods (Fig. 2.3). Such subtle allusions would have resonated with cultivated consumers — whether the aristocracy, the gentry or the expanding 'middling sorts' — who possessed the cultural literacy needed to decode the imagery and, in doing so, to appreciate the full narrative of chocolate's global origins.



Figure 2.3: Everard Kickius, title page and botany sheet of Hans Sloane, *A Voyage to Jamaica* (London: 1707), 2 vols, vol. 1, line drawing (36.5 x 7.5cm), RCIN 1191558
(Image © The Trustees of the Royal Collection Trust)**.**

The marketing of chocolate and tobacco extended beyond the point of purchase through elaborately printed wrappers. The Twinings chocolate wrapper (Fig. 2.4), for instance, featured chain imagery: when folded around the chocolate, the paper's repeating pattern gave the impression of a product bound and sealed with a chain, perhaps intended to convey security and authenticity, at a time of widespread adulteration, though the motif may have been purely decorative. Traders' concern with authenticity is well attested:

George Henshaw felt compelled to take out a newspaper advertisement in 1713 after 'several covetous and malicious Persons of the same Trade' disparaged his goods as 'damag'd or decay'd'.[247] Similarly, Nicholas Sanders was also keen to emphasise his chocolate was 'unadulterated' in his 1775 newspaper advertisement.[248] So, too, were Stacye, Tompson and Flesher who advertised 'Neat unadulterated cocoa' in 1800,[249] as did Edward and John White on their 1812 trade card.[250] The Browne & Son chocolate wrapper of *c.*1780 (Fig. 2.5) also emphasised authenticity, displaying the full royal coat of arms to remind purchasers that Browne was 'Grocer to his Majesty'.[251] This strategy had been anticipated more than a century earlier by Stubbe's deployment of royal association in his treatise. By 1780, such endorsements had helped to anglicise chocolate.

[247] *The Post Boy*, 27 October 1713, issue 2890, 2a.
[248] *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 10–13 March, 1775, issue 2762, 3b.
[249] Stacye, Tompson, and Flesher trade card, British Museum, Heal Collection, 38.8.
[250] Edward and John White's trade card British Museum, Banks Collection, D,2.2382.
[251] Even as late as 16 March 1867, the *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, vol 127, issue 6537, 8g, stated that Cadbury's Cocoa was 'genuinely pure' and 'free from […] the numerous adulterations used to counterfeit it.'

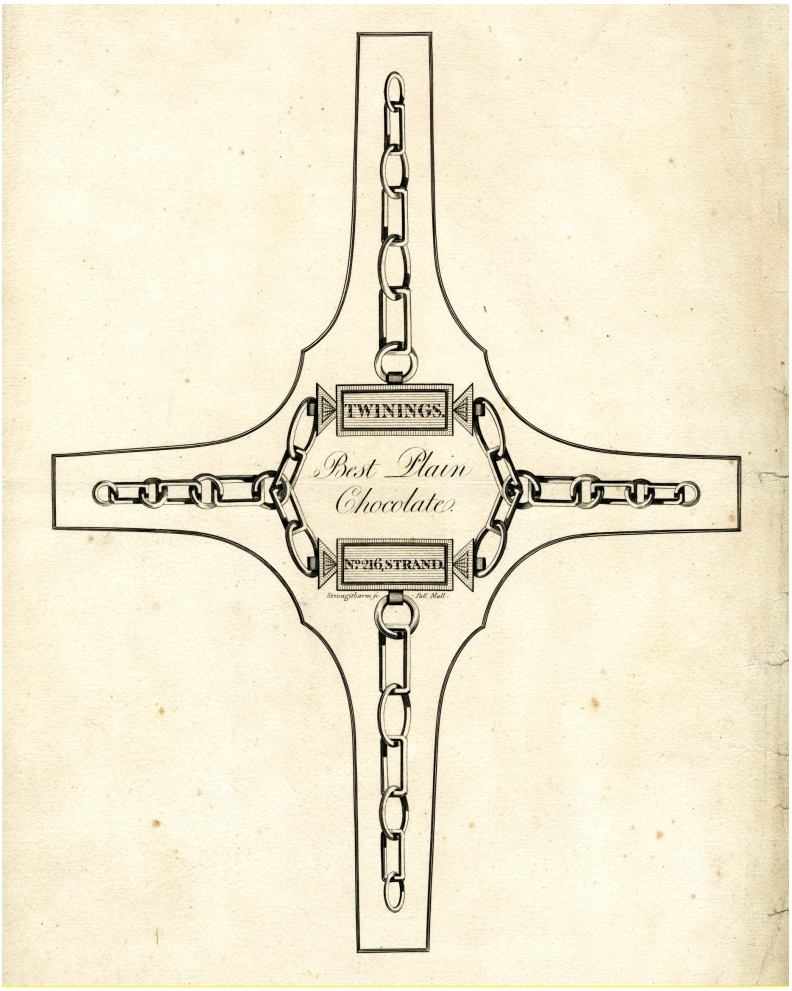

Figure 2.4: J. Strongitharm, *Twinings Best Plain Chocolate Wrapper* (*c.*1775–1818), engraving on paper, 384 × 290mm, British Museum, D,2.2315. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum)**.**

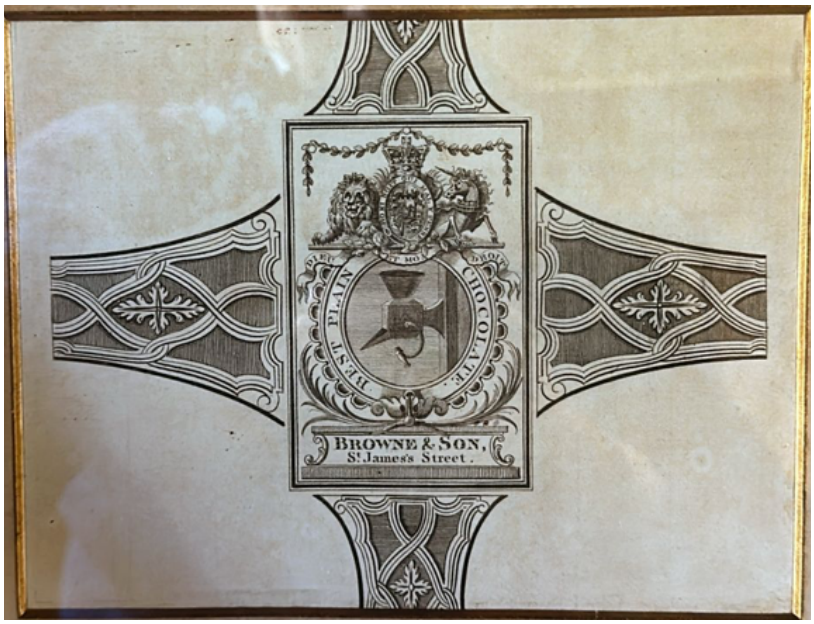

Figure 2.5: Anonymous, *Browne & Son Chocolate wrapper* (*c.*1780), engraving on paper, (Photograph: author's own, courtesy of Simon Berry, Berry Bros & Rudd, London).[252]

[252] In the 1780s, Joseph Browne of Browne & Son was employed as a caretaker to manage the grocery business in St James's that later became Berry Brothers & Rudd.

These two wrappers (Figs. 2.4 and 2.5) projected an image of authority while remaining deliberately gender-neutral, reflecting a shift in function: from persuasion to product authentication. Wrappers were not the only medium of verification, however. Old Bailey trial records from the 1740s to the 1770s indicate that manufactured chocolate blocks were also stamped with the maker's initials and often the private mark of the purchaser.[253] Such markings authenticated the product, enhanced its status and facilitated recovery in cases of theft. These precautions were not unwarranted: chocolate, sugar and tea accounted for approximately 16 per cent of all food thefts in London between 1743 and 1807, and the same proportion of thefts in Northern England between 1726 and 1829.[254]

Chocolate and the feminisation of luxury consumption

As the century advanced, women were increasingly positioned as active consumers in newspaper advertisements. Nicholas Sanders' notice of 1761 addressed both sexes explicitly:

> This is to acquaint the Nobility, Gentry and others that Nicholas Sanders, chocolate maker, has opened a warehouse for selling all sorts of chocolate wholesale and retail […] All such Noblemen, Gentlemen, Ladies and Others as please to favour me with their commands […].[255]

Sanders' warehouse sold wholesale as well as retail yet his notice retained the polite formulae of elite exchange ('This is to acquaint'; 'please to favour me with their

[253] Old Bailey Proceedings Online, <www.oldbaileyonline.org>, trial of Rachel Palmer, January 1744 (t17440113–18); trial of Ann Summerayse, September 1771 (t17710911–9) [accessed 15 May 2023].
[254] Shelley Tickell, *Shoplifting in Eighteenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2018), p.108.
[255] *Public Advertiser*, 19 September 1761, issue number: 8386, 2a.

commands'), sustaining chocolate's prestige even as it became more widely available. Such salutations were conventional, and no single instance proves much but their cumulative distribution does. Islington Spa promised in 1760 that 'Ladies and Gentlemen may depend on having the best […] Chocolate, with due Attendance, and the most civil and obliging Treatment'.[256] A Morning Herald advertiser opened his appeal in the same way in 1782, offering '[…] Chocolate of best qualities. Should any Lady, Gentleman or others chuse to make trial, they will find truth in the Advertiser'.[257] Eagleton meanwhile asked 'Ladies and Gentlemen &c coming and sending orders, to be particular in not mistaking my Warehouse' in the *London Courant* in 1781, and repeated the address three years later in the *Norfolk Chronicle*, requesting 'Ladies, Gentlemen, Dealers, &c., to favour him with their orders'.[258] That the same trader carried the formula from a metropolitan to a provincial paper across three years suggests habit rather than ornament: by this date, female custom was assumed, rather than solicited as a novelty.

The salutations name women among the expected buyers; a small body of copy went further, addressing them as a distinct constituency with needs of their own. Bourdillon's cocoa advertisement of 1789 divided its claims by sex, offering the drink to 'Gentlemen accustomed to riding or other exercises, or having indulged themselves too frequently in

[256] *London Chronicle*, 3 April 1760, issue 511, Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Burney Newspaper Collection (Gale) <link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2001671235/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&pg=3&xid=bc9d2fc0>
[accessed 3 January 2026], 331 b.
[257] *Morning Herald*, 5 December 1782, issue 656, <
link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000911320/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&pg=1&xid=7c75218b>
[accessed 21 April 2022], 1b.
[258] *London Courant*, 10 October 1781
<link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000615806/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&pg=4&xid=494a58ab>, 4d; *Norfolk Chronicle*, issue 801, 9 October 1784; <
link.gale.com/apps/doc/GR3218756960/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&pg=1&xid=8f51e5df>
[accessed 1 September 2026], 1c&d

liquor', and equally to 'all those ladies who find Tea-leaves frequently leave a desire on the stomach for more and better nutriment'.[259] The male half of the appeal invokes exertion and excess; the female half sets cocoa against tea, the drink most closely identified with women's sociability, and promises the nourishment that tea withholds. Churchman's chocolate went further in 1799, recommending itself 'for Females in Child-Bed, to whom it is particularly favourable'.[260] The addressee is no longer 'Ladies' in general but women in a particular condition, and the product is fitted to her. Two notices a decade apart cannot establish a trend, but they show the same technique at work in both: the female market was not simply an audience to be greeted, but one that could be subdivided and sold to accordingly.

This reorientation is consistent with the growing recognition of women — specifically the elite and middling women whom newspapers addressed — as chocolate consumers. What the advertisements presuppose is itself informative: that selection and purchase offered cultural capital through specialised knowledge of quality, origin and preparation (expertise amply evidenced in the recipe collections examined in Chapter 4), enhanced standing as hostesses, and a recognised role in household spending. Whether every reader answered the appeal cannot be known; that advertisers increasingly made it can. The appeal was pragmatic. By the 1730s traditional chocolate houses were losing ground to coffee-houses

[259] *General Evening Post*, 14–17 November 1789, issue 8748, < link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000472101/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&pg=1&xid=003f7ad2> [accessed 1 September 2026], 1d. Bourdillon advertised cocoa rather than made chocolate, and the two were distinct preparations. They are treated here as a single marketing field: eighteenth-century traders commonly dealt in both, advertised them in the same notices and under the same trade descriptions, and addressed them to the same purchasers.

[260] *London Chronicle*, 8–10 October 1799, vol. 86, issue 6336, <link.gale.com/apps/doc/MLIDEV929070439/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&pg=2&xid=1de68f9> [accessed 1 September 2026], 346c.

and gentlemen's clubs, and chocolate makers who wished to prosper had to extend their market accordingly.

Tobacco

Tobacco, whether for pipes or as powdered snuff, was marketed through imagery and text that both paralleled and diverged from the strategies used for chocolate. The British Museum holds 196 eighteenth-century tobacco cards and papers.[261] Reading individual cards against the full set in this way means the examples discussed below illustrate a documented pattern rather than being selected in isolation. Of these 196, 116 (approximately 60 per cent) feature at least one of the motifs analysed here: racialised figures (29%), male sociability (17%), Masonic symbols (4%), shop quality (3%), references to Walter Raleigh (2%), mixed-gender sociability (1.5%), patriotic emblems (1.5%) or female figures (1.5%).[262] The remaining 40% present only functional details (names, addresses and products) or miscellaneous shop signs. Tobacco marketing thus relied heavily on two representations: tobacco's colonial origins and male conviviality. This stands in marked contrast to chocolate, which by the latter part of the century incorporated women as arbiters of taste. These 116 cards with recognisable motifs are broken down by date and collection in Table A2.1 and are listed individually in Table A2.2.

Tobacco, empire and the construction of racial hierarchies

Rolls's tobacco trade card (Fig. 2.6) illustrates this dynamic: beneath its seemingly straightforward composition lie complex negotiations of race, gender and class. While

[261] Those catalogued online with eighteenth-century dates.
[262] Cards can fall into more than one category.

Woodruff Smith has argued that tobacco advertising promoted '[…] tobacco as a symbol of manliness,' the reality presents multiple gradations of masculinity, ranging from coercive exploitation of enslaved labourers, to cultivated sensibility.[263] On this card, these romanticised, bare-chested Native American figures, adorned with tobacco-leaf skirts and feathered headdresses while smoking long pipes, embody an exotic ideal of natural freedom and sensual indulgence. Their languid poses and euphoric expressions evoke a fantasy of unrestrained pleasure, standing in deliberate contrast to the disciplined, productive labour depicted in the background.

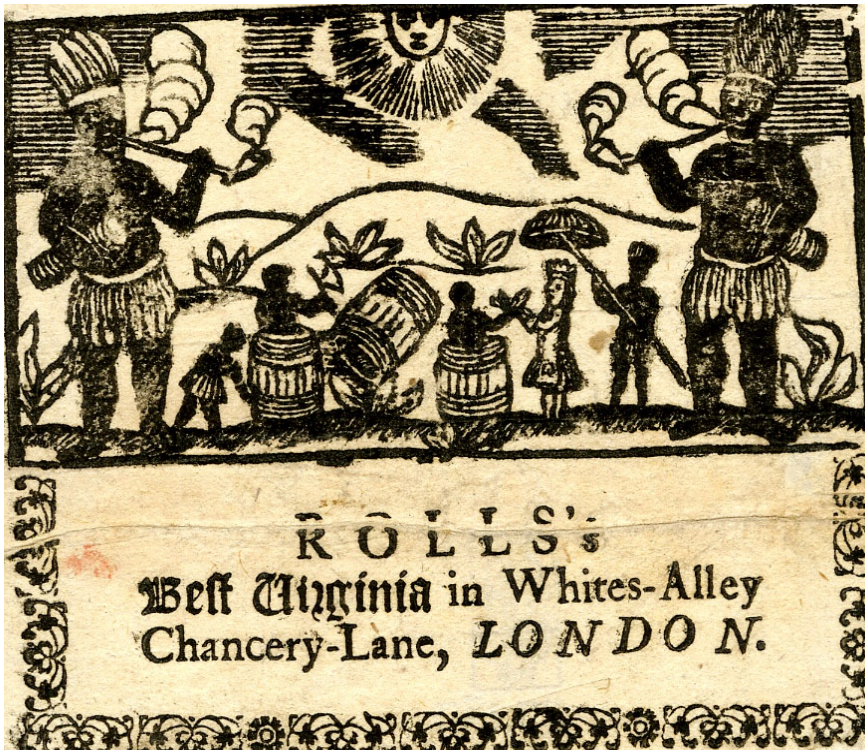

Figure 2.6: *Trade Card for Rolls's Best Virginia Tobacco* (early eighteenth century), wood engraving on paper, 86 × 61 mm, Heal Collection, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, 117.137. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum)**.**

Here, enslaved Africans harvest and pack tobacco under the seemingly benevolent supervision of a white overseer, a scene that translates racial hierarchy into an image of

[263] Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, p.165.

moral and economic order. Through this stratified composition, the card naturalises imperial relations, aligning racial difference with both their occupation and moral value. This visual arrangement complicates Molineux's claim that London tobacconists 'represented the Native Americans and the African as one and the same within advertisements' — here, they are visually and functionally distinct.[264]



Figure 2.7: *Bowles and Carver Trade Card* (eighteenth century), engraving on paper, Bridgeman Images, GCL3349168. (Image © Bridgeman Images).

Rolls's card (Fig. 2.6) depicts a plantation landscape characterised by an illusion of harmony, in which relations between enslaved Africans and a white overseer appear paternalistic rather than exploitative. A comparable strategy is evident in Bowles and Carver's trade card (Fig. 2.7), where enslaved Africans pack barrels of tobacco under white

[264] Molineux, 'Pleasures of the Smoke', 347.

direction while a banner above them depicts a Native American face, signalling the crop's indigenous origins. In both cases, depictions of labour are deliberately sanitised, legitimising English consumption by obscuring the inherent violence of colonial production: idyllic rural imagery — rolling hills, fertile fields, warm sunlight — constructs a georgic vision of prosperity that masked the brutality, and reframed exploitation as naturalised profusion. Tobacco trade cards depended upon this visual fiction of racial harmony and abundance in order to naturalise the commodity's place within respectable metropolitan culture. The ships' masts in the background reinforce this, anchoring the fantasy of racial harmony to the commercial circuits of maritime trade and imperial prosperity. The conspicuous absence of enslaved women on this card further exemplifies this sanitisation, erasing women's considerable contributions to plantation labour, while sparing English consumers an unpalatable confrontation with female exploitation. Not every tobacconist was white: Sancho's Best Trinidado (1774–80) appears to be the card of Ignatius Sancho's Westminster shop, yet it too relies on the trade's conventional imagery of a European trader clasping hands with a Native American.[265]

Closer scrutiny reveals a finely graduated hierarchy of racialised masculinities, in which three positions are distinguished by their relation to labour and to self-command. In Rolls's card (Fig. 2.6), the Native American figures occupy the foreground, semi-naked, their ecstatic immersion in smoke and indulgent handling of oversized tobacco rolls rendering them free but ungoverned — leisured without being disciplined. The enslaved Africans behind them are disciplined but not free: their labour is productive yet performed under

[265] Sancho's Best Trinidado trade card, Banks D,2.3877

direction and therefore yielding no claim to autonomy. Only the white figure, formally attired and transacting rather than labouring, combines command over others with command over himself. The card seems to locate masculine authority in neither idleness nor toil, but exclusively in the man who directs both. Such juxtapositions visualise the ideal of English masculinity as one of dignified self-command coupled with entrepreneurial boldness — qualities supposedly vindicated through overseas expansion.

However, an alternative interpretation of this card complicates such assertions of colonial mastery, and the card's compositional singularity gives that alternative particular force. A survey of over 100 comparable tobacco cards yields no second example in which a white figure is present but reduced in scale and relegated to the background while non-white figures dominate the foreground. Cards on which black or Native American figures predominate are not uncommon, but these are cards from which white figures are absent altogether, which is a different proposition: absence leaves the hierarchy unstated, whereas Rolls's card states it and then inverts its visual weighting.[266] This image could accordingly be read as a depiction of non-white masculine dominance: the white man appears as a minor figure in the distance, outnumbered by non-whites and overshadowed by two dominant male figures smoking in the foreground, who frame the entire print. In essence, the non-whites have cultivated, harvested and packaged the crop; the white man merely purchases the finished commodity. His non-physical role reinforces the association between gentility and the avoidance of manual labour while exposing its paradox — refinement framed as distance from work, yet visibly dependent upon the labour of

[266] Examples include *Sharpe's Best Virginia* (c.1725–1775) Heal Collection BM 117.145; Shaw's trade card (c.1760–1818) Banks Collection, British Museum D,2.3910; Scrimshire's trade card (date unknown) Heal Collection, BM 117.154.

colonial others. The imposing scale of the Native American smokers may thus register not only exotic appeal but latent anxiety, positioning the solitary merchant precariously within the landscape he presumes to command. Tobacco imagery therefore projected an unstable field of meanings — at once asserting imperial mastery while simultaneously betraying anxieties about racial dependence. Crucially, nothing obliged the purchaser to choose. The confident imperialist and the more uneasy observer each found their reading available in the same print; the card's commercial intelligence lay in accommodating both, without adjudicating between them. That no comparable composition survives means this reading cannot be generalised into a claim about tobacco marketing. What it establishes is narrower: that the visual conventions of plantation imagery were loose enough to accommodate an arrangement in which the commanding figure was also the diminished one, and that at least one engraver produced, and at least one tradesman circulated, a card which permitted that reading.

This taxonomy of masculinities resonates with Kathleen Wilson's argument that the construction of racial 'otherness' enabled English colonisers to consolidate notions of national superiority and English exceptionalism.[267] Colonial projects were framed as calling for bravery, discipline and governance — traits constructed as inherently masculine and distinctly English.[268] Philippa Levine similarly observes that colonised peoples were represented as weak and unmasculine precisely because they were colonised, rendering white masculine authority both as a justification for, and a product of, empire.[269] Tobacco

[267] Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp.18–27.
[268] Racial stereotypes were also depicted on other cards, particularly for tea, china and glass.
[269] Philippa Levine (ed.), *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), p.6.

advertising thus functioned as a cultural mechanism that enabled consumers to associate their purchases with patriotism and virility, in what Molineux has described as an 'inter-racial, transatlantic encounter individually experienced but […] mutually enjoyed.'[270]

These competing masculine archetypes stood in deliberate opposition to the effeminate, posturing London fop. As Philip Carter has argued, the fop's frivolity, vanity and lack of self-discipline represented 'a series of social and gender failings against which men were expected to define themselves.'[271] Rolls's trade card (Fig. 2.6) is notable for its exclusion of effeminacy — though the masculinity it constructs is not a hardy one. The white figure, small in scale and sheltered from the sun, might at first appear an unlikely emblem of manly vigour. Yet the card's masculine claim rests not on the trader's physique but on his position: his ease beneath the tropical sun is presented as the earned privilege of a man who commands the commerce conducted around him. The masculinity advertised is proprietorial — grounded in dominion over empire and trade rather than in physical ruggedness. Where the fop's leisure was idle and self-regarding, oriented towards display for its own sake, the trader's repose was the visible dividend of purposeful enterprise; his shade was earned, the fop's ornament merely worn. Rolls's card thus responded to contemporary anxieties by presenting the composed authority of the colonial trader rather than the delicate urban consumer. As early as 1709, *The Female Tatler* called for the expulsion of these fops whom it derided as 'impudent beau Jews [suggesting that] … far from being admitted into civil society, [they] ought to be expell'd [from] the nation', signifying that their supposed gender failings were coterminous with their perceived

[270] Molineux, 'Pleasures of the Smoke', 354.
[271] Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society,* (Harlow: Longman, 2006), p.137.

foreignness.[272] Even though this anti-Semitic comparison, likening Jews and fops, is jarring to the modern reader – it would have been less so to contemporary eighteenth-century society. Jews and Catholics faced legal and social discrimination throughout the eighteenth century, barred from public office, universities and many professions, and anti-Jewish feeling occasionally turned violent — as in the agitation that forced the repeal of the Jews' Naturalisation Act within a year of its passing in 1753.[273] The parallel was clear: fops and Jews alike were stereotyped as materialistic and self-serving.

Unlike treatises that addressed tobacco's physiological effects, these trade cards exploited cultural insecurities, positioning tobacco consumption as a patriotic practice. This contrasted with the 'continental' affectations of fops who reportedly avoided tobacco 'for Fear of [their] Lungs yet [they] hold a Pipe in [their] Mouth to make [their] Diamond Ring more Conspicuous.'[274] They only pretended to smoke in order to display their wealth rather than because they truly enjoyed the effects of tobacco like true Englishmen. This marketing supports Carter's argument that English masculine identity was constructed through contrast — specifically by opposing perceived weaknesses in others.[275]

[272] *The Female Tatler,* issue 3, 11–13 July 1709, 1b.
[273] Liza Picard, *Dr. Johnson's London: Everyday Life in London, 1740–1770* (London: Phoenix Press, 2001), p.182.
[274] Anonymous, *Hell Upon Earth: Or, the Town in an Uproar* (London: 1729), p.33.
[275] Carter, *Men and the Emergence*, esp. pp.124–152.



Figure 2.8: *Tobacco paper for [Mild?] Sweet Scented Virginia*, London (early eighteenth century), wood engraving on paper, 73 × 58 mm, Heal Collection, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, 117.178. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum)**.**

This anonymous tobacco paper (Fig. 2.8) reveals a further evolution in marketing through its depiction of an idealised, multi-racial scene of masculine sociability — an improbable assembly and a romanticised, symbolic scene rather than a plausible depiction of reality.[276] It includes a Native American, a European, a Turk (possibly referencing the Mediterranean's preference for Turkish tobacco) and an Englishman in Tudor clothing (probably a reference to Sir Walter Raleigh,[277] who popularised smoking in England and frequently appeared on other trade cards (Fig. 2.9)).[278] As Molineux notes, tobacconists 'tempted customers with

[276] A similar image can be seen on Richardson's 'Best Virginia' trade card (Banks Collection, 117.141).
[277] V. G. Kiernan, *Tobacco: A History* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1991), p.12.
[278] An image of Raleigh's head can also be seen on D. Laing's tobacco paper (Banks D,2.3884).

a variety of imagined encounters [including] provocative images of homosocial relationships with black smokers.'[279] In contrast to Rolls's card (Fig. 2.6), the Native American is conversing and seated in apparent parity with European men. The table is set with long pipes, a punch bowl and apparently a legal contract, all symbolising global commercial exchange and genial sociability. In this image, masculine camaraderie transcends national and racial boundaries. It is their masculinity and the business at hand, as well as the enjoyment of pipe tobacco, that unite them though, crucially, there remains no place at the table for fops nor Jews.

Both Rolls's trade card (Fig. 2.6) and this tobacco paper (Fig. 2.8) highlight the interdependence of masculinity and empire in early eighteenth-century England. On the tobacco paper, the Native American's partial nudity operates as a visible reminder that racial inequality endures despite increased commercial engagement — creating a pointed contrast with the perfectly balanced neo-classical façade. This paper therefore employs subtle visual hierarchies to reaffirm social order while simultaneously promoting genial consumption. The Native American no longer appears as the 'untamed primitive' but as a 'refined savage,' aligning with Elizabeth Kim's argument that racial portrayal was fluid and context-dependent.[280] Despite his seat (and ostensible equality) at the negotiating table, his raised glass admits a less equal reading: the gesture may be a toast between parties to a bargain, but it is equally legible as appetite, the figure indulged in drink rather than transacting on level terms. Richardson's Best Virginia card repeats the composition, gesture included, suggesting the design circulated among tobacconists over several

[279] Molineux, 'Pleasures of the Smoke', 337.
[280] Kim, 'Race Sells', 137.

decades.[281] Either way the hierarchy holds: the Native American is admitted to the table on English terms, tolerated but ultimately inferior.



Figure 2.9: *Tobacco paper for Walkers Best Virginia at Raleigh's Head* (1730–69), copperplate engraving on paper, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, 1982,U.4528 album. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum)**.**

The scene is framed by columns topped with urns of tobacco plants, visually anchoring the product within an aesthetic of elegance and abundance. Tall sash windows and a curved alcove create an idealised interior, while the cockerel perched above the group may symbolise masculinity, or it could possibly allude to an inn sign.[282] The overall composition

[281] Richardson's Best Virginia, (*c.*1765) Banks Collection, BM 117.141.
[282] The image of a cockerel is also used on: Davis's tobacco paper for 'Best Virginia' (*c.*1750), British Museum, Heal Collection, 117.34; A. Forfitt's trade card for the Cock Inn, British Museum, Banks Collection, I.193.

synthesises traditional imagery of masculine conviviality with the fashionable present and a romanticised past. As noted above, imperial expansion was justified through gendered narratives in which Englishmen cast themselves as enlightened protectors and civilisers.[283] Consumers purchasing tobacco implicitly participated in this fiction, endorsing the notion that empire-building served to 'civilise the uncivilised', even though the enterprise was fundamentally driven by mercantile profit.

The Tudor-dressed figure drew upon the reputation of Elizabethan seafarers such as Hawkins, Drake, Raleigh and Frobisher, whose voyages had become associated with England's maritime expansion and overseas ambitions. Their exploits continued to feature prominently in eighteenth-century accounts of English naval history, including Thomas Lediard's *The Naval History of England* (1735).[284] Though more critical accounts emerged by mid-century, in works such as David Hume's *History of England* (1754–61), the image of the fearless explorer as an exemplar of masculine virtue — embodying courage, leadership and physical endurance — persisted well into the nineteenth century.[285] Added to this, the inclusion of the Tudor figure reminds the customer that tobacco had been imported from Virginia for more than a century. The implicit message was one of continuity: tobacco had withstood the test of time and was no longer an alien substance but thoroughly anglicised and embedded within the nation's cultural fabric. In this way, marketing linked individual acts of consumption to collective national identity, achieving a cultural resonance that treatises on tobacco's properties rarely matched.

[283] Wilson, *The Island Race,* p.171.
[284] Thomas Lediard, *The Naval History of England,* 2 vols. (London: 1735), vol I.
[285] Dane Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015), p.65.

Empire, as Wilson observes, functioned as a stage upon which 'an austere, forceful, disciplined and martial manliness could restore national spirit and power.'[286] This model of restrained, patriotic masculinity counteracted perceived domestic effeminacy, particularly during wartime. While earlier trade cards depicted pastoral scenes of harmonious English planters (Figs. 2.6 and 2.7), others such as Thomas Bewick's (1753-1828) wood engraving (Fig. 2.10) exposed more sinister elements. In this example, Bewick depicts a white overseer, whip in hand, supervising enslaved workers as they pack tobacco barrels. A cross-beam in the top left corner, most likely a hoist for barrels, is a stock-feature of such cards; beside the whip, however, it also recalls the form of a gallows, an echo that invites the viewer to associate the overseer's authority with coercion and corporal punishment rather than benevolence or moral restraint.[287] Although the enslaved men perform similar tasks to those on Rolls's card (Fig. 2.6), this image portrays a fundamentally different type of masculinity. Unlike the previous century's treatises that often extolled the 'improving' nature of European presence, this card lays bare the brutal mechanisms of plantation discipline.[288]

[286] Wilson, *The Island Race,* p.19.
[287] Other tobacco trade cards with similar cross-beams include Sancho's Best Trinidado (c.1774–1780), (BM D,2.3877); and Archer's Best Virginia (Fig 2.16).
[288] Other trade cards, including Peter Davenport's tobacco trade card (BM 117.41), depict white men threatening violence against the enslaved.



Figure 2.10: Thomas Bewick, *Tobacco paper for Samuel Steel, Bedale, Yorkshire* (*c.*1781), wood engraving on paper, 60 × 74 mm, Department of Prints and Drawings, donated by Isabella Bewick, British Museum, 1882,0311.3226. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum)**.**

This model of patriarchal masculinity instils order through intimidation — antagonistic and uncompromising rather than refining. The all-male environment depicted here has dispensed with any pretence of racial harmony or planter altruism found on earlier trade card imagery. Physical force now establishes the hierarchy: the 'superior' white Englishman controls the 'inferior' enslaved black men. While tobacco treatises and earlier trade cards concealed the violent enforcement underlying the economic relationship of the planter and the enslaved, Wilson's characterisation of empire's 'forceful […] martial manliness' is unequivocally reflected here. However, her assertion that such masculinity could 'restore national spirit' obscures the more prosaic reality — the primary motivation was always economic profit, a reality acknowledged more candidly in trade cards than in earlier treatises.

This imagery also contrasts sharply with emerging models of masculinity in late eighteenth-century England, fashioned by sensibility and Romanticism. As Tim Blanning notes, a 'culture of feeling' merged traditional ideals of bravery with compassion and receptivity, producing a nuanced masculine ideal that valued both strength and emotion.[289] This ideal was embodied in figures such as Captain James Cook (1728–1779), who was remembered for combining 'English pluck and humanity and sense and sensibility,'[290] and General James Wolfe (1727–1759) who was described in 1760 as 'polite, affable, free […] truly brave, truly noble, friendly and candid, gentle and beneficent.'[291] The plantation overseer, by contrast, (Fig. 2.10) exhibits little of this sensitivity: the masculinity foregrounded here is one of command enforced through the threat of violence, with the whip (rather than any gesture of benevolence or feeling) as its defining attribute. That such an image was commissioned in the 1780s, after the Mansfield Judgment (Somerset v. Stewart, 1772)[292] had energised the English abolitionist movement, is itself notable. Bewick engraved the block for Steel *c.*1781, so the image was new, not an old block reused. Steel's politics are undocumented, and an anti-abolitionist reading, while possible, cannot be substantiated; but the card was evidently thought fit to sell tobacco to male customers nearly a decade after Mansfield. The engraving recalls seventeenth-century treatises in its focus on power dynamics, though in strikingly different ways. As discussed in Chapter 1, treatises often highlighted tobacco's exotic origins and physiological effects, situating the plant within a framework of humoral theory. Bewick's image, by contrast, largely dispenses with medicinal associations,

[289] Tim Blanning, *The Pursuit of Glory: Europe, 1648–1815* (London: Penguin, 2008), pp.456–63.
[290] Wilson, *The Island Race*, p.62.
[291] John Pringle, *The Life of General Wolfe* (London, 1760), pp. 5, 11, quoted in Philip Carter, 'An "Effeminate" or "Efficient" Nation? Masculinity and Eighteenth-Century Social Documentary', *Textual Practice*, 11 (1997), 429–43 (p. 441).
[292] The Mansfield Judgment, Court of King's Bench (1772), relating to the right of an enslaved person on English soil to not be forcibly removed from England to Jamaica, Somerset v Stewart (1772) 98 ER 499 (KB).

presenting tobacco chiefly as the product of coerced labour. Both treatises and trade cards, however, shared a common purpose: they celebrated tobacco as a symbol of colonial success. This portrayal of English masculinity (Fig. 2.10) thus reveals competing versions of masculinity in circulation simultaneously, rather than a linear evolution of ideas — the man of feeling and the man of the whip coexisting in the same decade's print culture, each presented as a legible form of manhood to the customers who encountered them.

In this plantation scene, masculine identities are articulated through hierarchies of power, dependence and exclusion: the planter's reliance on physical coercion exposes the violence underpinning tobacco cultivation, even as the enslaved men's superior strength and endurance are rendered meaningless within a system that equates autonomy with manhood. Their athletic physiques, thrown into relief by the overseer's paunch, paradoxically confirm their degraded status: physical power without self-command signifies not masculine authority but primitive excess. Their basic dress and implied need for restraint further reinforce perceptions of emotional and intellectual deficiency, portraying their masculinity as uncontrolled and therefore debased. The scene thus visualises the emerging English masculine ideal as one grounded in restraint, sensibility and moral authority, defined not through physical superiority but against the figure of the enslaved man who possesses it.

This moralised contrast between self-control and bodily excess extends beyond representations of labour to the broader cultural discourse surrounding tobacco itself. Whereas seventeenth-century treatises warned that tobacco's 'heating' properties could disrupt humoral balance and gender stability if misused, this plantation scene relocates the

moral danger from the site of consumption to that of production. Tobacco, once framed as an exotic substance requiring disciplined management by the English, is here domesticated into a commodity whose cultivation — and the violence it entails — now raises pressing questions about English virtue and identity.

Lauren Working has shown that tobacco's cultural power in early modern England (1580-1625) derived from its association with conquest and social dominance.[293] Bewick's trade card suggests this connection persisted well beyond the period Working examines. The whip-wielding overseer affirms the same hierarchies of control that had shaped tobacco's appeal since its introduction into England, and the recurring depiction of enslaved black men labouring under white supervision implies that this power dynamic remained a deliberate selling point, even as abolitionist sentiment grew; Bewick's card shows it still in use in the 1780s.[294] While evidence directly linking consumer pleasure to slave labour is scarce, the slave-based economy undoubtedly made tobacco more accessible and affordable. As Molineux explains, tobacconists leveraged 'explicit acts of domination in their advertisements' to appeal to customers through association with imperial hierarchies.[295]

This card reinforces the association, within eighteenth-century European culture, between idealised masculinity and whiteness — a theme often promoted in treatises, such as in Wadsworth's poem (discussed in Chapter 1). Such associations were increasingly

[293] Lauren Working, 'Tobacco and the Social Life of Conquest in London, 1580-1625', *Historical Journal*, 65.1 (2022), 30–48 (42–8).
[294] Heal BM117.14 (1735); Heal BM117.4 (1740); Heal BM117.53 (1740); Banks BMS.2.3910.
[295] Molineux, 'Pleasures of the Smoke', 376.

articulated through classificatory schemes that differentiated Europeans from other populations. In the first edition of his *Systema Naturae* (1735), the Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus (1707–1778) classified humanity into four geographical 'varieties', distinguishing *Europaeus* from *Americanus*, *Asiaticus* and *Africanus* principally by skin colour; the tenth edition (1758) expanded the classification of Homo to include physical and behavioural characteristics.[296] Later eighteenth-century writers developed more explicitly hierarchical accounts of human difference. In 1774, for example, the British planter and writer Edward Long claimed that black people were 'void of genius'.[297] Such classifications belonged to a wider culture in which difference was organised by gradations of Christianity, civility and climate, and in which English manners, dress and habits of consumption supplied the standard against which other peoples were measured — a hierarchy that helped render British authority intelligible as the natural consequence of superior refinement.[298] On this tobacco paper, whiteness is visually equated with authority, intellect and civilisation. The white man is depicted as being not only at the top of a racial but also gender hierarchy — he is the solitary agent of order in a morally and physically dangerous environment, evidently not a place where white women could thrive, unless protected by white men with access to weaponry. Physical strength carries different racial connotations here: for white men, it signifies heroic exploration; for black men, it represents their economic value as labourers and their potential threat to white male authority. As Wilson argues, empire 'highlighted salient constructions of masculinity and

[296] Carolus Linnaeus, *Systema Naturae* (1735; facsimile edition, Leiden: Brill, 1964) unpaginated classification table, 'Homo'.
[297] Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica,* 3 vols (London: 1774), II, p.476.
[298] Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture*, New Cultural Studies (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), pp.186-243.

femininity […].'[299] This tobacco paper is a microcosm of that ideology translated into everyday consumer culture, demonstrating how such constructions were materially disseminated through everyday objects, rather than confined to abstract theory.

Commercial success also emerged as a defining marker of eighteenth-century masculinity, especially among the 'middling sorts'. Risk-taking, financial acumen and wealth accumulation were increasingly celebrated, particularly in overseas trade, where physical endurance and economic skill converged. The colonial trader became a new model of masculine virtue: disciplined, calculating and profit-driven. Successful merchants challenged aristocratic ideals of manhood, though anxieties persisted that luxury might have a softening effect on masculine virtue and martial capabilities — a tension that would persist well into the nineteenth century. By the second half of the eighteenth century, tobacco's earlier association with mysterious properties, written about in treatises, gave way to its commodification, its value rooted less in intrinsic qualities than in imperial commerce.

Brotherhood, excess and sensibility

This shift is vividly illustrated in N. Poole's trade card (Fig. 2.11) where the homo-sociability of the earlier tobacco paper (Fig. 2.8) takes on a more flamboyant character. Five worldly English merchants smoke and drink at the water's edge in an intensely sensory scene: sounds (lively conversation, the rippling sea) mixing with smells (tobacco smoke, alcohol

[299] Wilson, p.19.

on the breath, the salty air) and sights of mercantile strength (huge vessels dominating the horizon). Such sensory immersion connotes not only pleasure but also a presentation of mastery, as these men demonstrate command over both the elements and their appetites. Unlike the measured Englishmen in previous images, this convivial group appears loud and self-confident. The background ships under sail suggest these are successful traders – men of self-assurance and *savoir faire,* made rich by the onboard cargo. Though it is unlikely that they are drawn from the highest social echelons given their trade involvement, they appear as affluent men of business, almost theatrical in their self-consciously stylish poses, performing the role of archetypically superior Englishmen. Their gestures and orientation towards one another imply a shared code of class and gendered behaviour — a visual expression of self-assurance and camaraderie. They emulate elite postures with their shoulders back in classical stances, while the Latin motto '*Omnes Vinco'* (I overcome all) reinforces an assured white English masculinity.[300] Tobacco here remains tied to ideals of convivial manhood, with social emulation fuelling its popularity.

Smith argues that the allure of such images in general is that ' […] [these men are] integrated into a picture of rational, sober, adult and yet manifestly virile, heterosexual males […] consistent with respectability — with just hint of transgression.'[301] While their sobriety is questionable given visible drinking vessels, the transgressive element — at least from a modern viewpoint — lies in their self-indulgence. Smith is also right in describing them as 'manifestly virile' – their manly body language (with legs akimbo and confident gazes) emphasises their manliness. The trade card thus promotes not only N. Poole's

[300] Trade card for tobacconist Lacroix (V&A Collection, Ref: 636–1976) has a similarly sociable and confident group of men smoking and drinking together, appearing self-absorbed as a group.
[301] Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, pp.167–68.

tobacco but also endorses a socially-adept masculinity, leveraging tobacco's social *cachet* to target merchants and other middling customers. The card's heraldic motifs reinforce this: the central hart symbolises virility and honour, while the knight's helmet (also adopted in Sarah Greenland's card for tobacco pipe making) evokes chivalric honour.[302] The heraldic allusions transform the commercial into the noble, merging profit with patriotic masculinity. Much like earlier crusaders, these imperial traders are seeking control of foreign lands and are attempting to impose Englishness on racial 'others'.



Figure 2.11: Anonymous, *Tobacco paper for N. Poole's Superfine Sweet Scent, London* (mid-eighteenth century), copperplate engraving on paper, Heal Collection, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, 117.130. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum)**.**

[302] Sarah Greenland's trade card, (1725–1775), British Museum, London, Heal Collection 117.69.



Figure 2.12: Katharine Read (1723–1778), *British Gentlemen in Rome* (*c.*1750), oil on canvas, 946 × 1346 mm, Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art, B1981.25.272. (Image courtesy of Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection).

Such entitled, homosocial superiority finds a visual parallel in Katharine Read's contemporary conversation piece, *British Gentlemen in Rome* (*c.*1750) (Fig. 2.12). Despite their youth, Read's Grand Tour aristocrats, though socially distinct from Poole's merchants, strike similar poses to the trade card figures — hands on hips, affectionate tactility and expansively gesticulating hands — revealing an accepted code of elite masculine posturing. Absorbed in easy sociability, they demonstrate the binding power of fraternalism and project innate authority, even on foreign soil. Read's painting thus naturalises English male dominance within the European sphere just as Poole's trade card does within the imperial commercial one. Both images (Figs. 2.11 & 2.12) show powerful male fellowship that excluded women, fops and foreigners from their homogeneous groups — whether comprising the highest elites or the 'middling sorts'.

This flamboyant masculinity tipped into excess on Richard Lee's trade card of 1794 (Fig. 2.13), clearly modelled on Hogarth's 'A Midnight Modern Conversation' of 1733 (Fig. 2.14). The composition and fashionable clothing reflect the dissipated conduct celebrated in gentlemen's clubs and chocolate houses earlier in the century. Both images depict Bacchanalian scenes of raucous men drinking and smoking pipes around tables, exposing masculine follies in sensory-rich settings — one man on the trade card rises to vomit while another collapses unconscious on the floor. What was once confident display becomes a chaotic loss of self-control.

Debauchery, and heavy drinking in particular, recurs across tobacco trade cards of the period, where men sit ringed around a punch bowl, pipes in hand.[303] Such scenes traded on a long association between drink and convivial masculinity which, as John Burnett argues, framed heavy drinking as 'manly and convivial, an aid to wit, good humour and fellowship', well into the late eighteenth century.[304] Politeness pulled the other way. Conduct writers of the same decades made self-command the test of a gentleman, and treated the drinking club as the place where it failed.[305] Lee's trade card from 1794 (Fig. 2.13) exposes this tension visually, though not by setting tobacco against drink. Pipes appear on both sides of the line between control and collapse. A sober-looking man seated on the left smokes with a cup beside him; another, seated centre left, smokes with no drinking vessel in view; a third, on the right, holds a pipe. Yet the man who rises to vomit still holds a pipe in the hand resting on his chairback, and his companion lies insensible on

[303] Knightly's tobacco trade card (BM117.96); William White's *Best London Virginia Lechlade* (BM117.182).
[304] John Burnett, *Liquid Pleasures: A Social History of Drinks in Modern Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p.146.
[305] Charles Ludington, *The Politics of Wine in Britain: A New Cultural History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), ch. 10.

the floor, cup in hand. The pipe is no guarantee of restraint. What separates the composed figures from the incapacitated ones is degree, not the choice of indulgence. The card's message is that moderation is desirable whatever one's pleasure, and that tobacco, taken in measure, was compatible with controlled, respectable masculinity: a message likely to have resonated with the industrious 'middling sorts' among his customers.



Figure 2.13: Anonymous, *Trade card for Richard Lee,* tobacconist (1794), etching and copperplate engraving on paper, 125 × 115 mm, Banks Collection, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, 117.118. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum)**.**



Figure 2.14: William Hogarth, *A Midnight Modern Conversation* (1733), etching and copperplate engraving on paper, 343 × 460 mm, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, D,2.34. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum)**.**

Hogarth's original etching (Fig. 2.14) emphasised the dangers of excess: by surrendering to Dionysian over-indulgence, these decadent men were incapable of carrying out their marital, familial, civic, godly or political duties. His raw, visceral image exposes the hypocrisy behind genteel façades: these irresponsible hedonists struggle to remain literally and metaphorically upright. The entire scene displays polite masculine expectations — the capacity to drink and smoke heavily, exchange sharp-witted banter, and uphold homosocial bonds — while inviting the viewer to reflect upon how excessive drinking undermines the very dignity and control those ideals purported to value. The contrast between Hogarth's satirical image and Lee's appropriation encapsulates a broader cultural shift: from aristocratic license to bourgeois self-regulation, from careless consumption to purposeful restraint. In both cases (Figs. 2.13 & 2.14), the inebriated men's behaviour is at odds with economically-driven patriotism. Evidently, these are not men who can be trusted to maintain control in the colonies — nor in public life at home.

Table A2.2 records versions of Lee's design from mid-century to 1794; if the plate was engraved earlier, the 1794 impression represents continued use rather than revival. Either way, the figures on Lee's card (Fig. 2.13) wear long-skirted coats, extended waistcoats, knee-breeches and full-bottomed powdered wigs, reminiscent of early eighteenth-century dress rather than contemporary late eighteenth-century fashion. That the image was still worth issuing in the 1790s, when sensibility and conservatism were increasingly valued, is itself telling. A notable tension emerges between past and present here: the image reaches toward an earlier age of masculine excess at the very moment when late-century ideals of restraint and moral virtue were in the ascendant. Lee's motivation is unclear: it could be a strategic appropriation of Hogarth's (1697–1764) enduring artistic legacy to enhance his business prestige; or it could be an entertaining ploy to attract the industrious middling classes by light-heartedly mocking the wayward social elites. This is credible, as humour was commonly employed by tobacconists elsewhere to attract customers – for example in the draft tobacco paper depicting Sir Walter Raleigh smoking a pipe while his servant throws ale or water over him, fearing he is on fire (Fig. 2.15)[306] and the humorous pun used by George Farr on his trade card *c.*1750-70, claiming he sells 'The Finest Tobacco by Farr'.[307] In addition, an entertaining rebus design was used to sell Archer's best Virginia (Fig. 2.16), with the 'Pe' and 'er' hidden in the sand in the foreground, the missing 'T' to make the name Peter (his shop was in Peter Street) being visible in the enslaved man's hammer as he bangs a barrel closed. This wit invited the viewer into a game of shared light-heartedness. This strategy of using humour to promote tobacco differs markedly from seventeenth-century tobacco treatises that generally framed tobacco consumption in

[306] See also Bacon's tobacco trade card (Heal Collection, British Museum, 117.5) *c.*1805.
[307] Heal Collection, British Museum, 117.49.

medicinal rather than comic terms. Where the treatises sought to legitimise, the trade cards aimed to entertain and entice.



Figure 2.15: Anonymous, *Draft Tobacco Paper for anonymous tobacco and snuff seller*, etching and copperplate engraving on paper, Heal Collection, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, 117.173. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum)**.**



Figure 2.16: *Draft tobacco paper of Archer*, tobacconist (*c.*1740), etching and copperplate engraving on paper, Heal Collection, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, 117.4. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum)**.**

Fraternity and freemasonry

As well as providing insight into the shifting construction, maintenance and development of masculinity, trade cards from this period also provide insight into tobacco's central role in eighteenth-century male social gatherings, including those of the freemason fraternity. Essentially, freemasonry served as another form of male clubbing, offering social, political and commercial networking opportunities to a wide circle of men including the 'middling sorts'. It represented an institutionalised form of homo-sociability — ritualised, relatively exclusive and ideologically self-reinforcing. This fraternity exemplified contemporary masculinity's paradoxical nature: embodying Enlightenment values such as equality, fraternity and rationality while explicitly excluding women. Unlike seventeenth-century male spaces with permeable boundaries between public and private spheres, these masonic spaces enforced rigid gender exclusivity as fundamental to male solidarity — a

structural reinforcement of the conviction that moral and civic order depended upon the exclusion of women from serious discussions. Women were actively prevented from even so much as eavesdropping on meetings.[308]

William Rogers' draft tobacco trade card (Fig. 2.17) is richly symbolic, appealing directly to fellow freemasons with its motto 'Let Brotherly Love Continue'.[309] Its message, however, would have reached beyond the lodge, resonating with a wider male audience (excluding atheists) who supported ideals of civic co-operation and of working towards the common good. This fraternal maxim is written underneath a shield bearing a tobacco plant (possibly evoking the Tree of Knowledge) carried by a naked man and woman (presumably Adam and Eve), their modesty protected by leaves.[310] This interweaving of biblical and masonic motifs links the moral authority of Genesis to Enlightenment fraternity, thus naturalising male social order through religious and philosophical synthesis. This design is explicitly Christian, recalling seventeenth-century treatises that had similarly invoked biblical authority to legitimise tobacco use. Additional masculine iconography includes a knight's helmet (as in Fig. 2.11), surmounted by a figure holding a pipe and globe, signalling both martial honour and worldly reach. By displaying his masonic affiliation, Rogers was advertising his trustworthiness and appealing to like-minded customers. The aura of respectability associated with freemasonry may well have translated into increased

[308] Marie Mulvey-Roberts, 'Pleasures Engendered by Gender: Homosociality and the Club', in *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Roy Porter and Mulvey-Roberts (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 48–76 (p.65).
[309] The United Grand Lodge of England Archives, 60 Great Queen Street, London WC2B 5AZ holds a record of William Rogers, who was initiated 1 January 1767, holding the office of Right Worshipful Master before the end of 1770, remaining a member until at least 1781. He was a member of Lodge No. 306, which met at Ben Jonson's Head, Goodman's Yard, Great Minories from 1767 until 1772. Given the close proximity of Minories and Hermitage Moorings, and that Rogers was a salesman and that the dates match, it seems likely that the tobacconist was indeed a Master. This explains the freemasonry symbolism on his trade card.
[310] Another example of a card depicting Adam and Eve is Tobacco pipe maker Sarah Greenland's card (1725–1775), Heal Collection, British Museum 117.69.

clientele for one's business. By the 1770s, tobacco trade cards such as this one had evolved to feature more refined, naturalistic designs adorned with floral garlands, reflecting shifting aesthetic sensibilities while maintaining their gendered appeals.



Figure 2.17: *Draft trade card of William Rogers, tobacconist* (*c.*1770), etching and copperplate engraving on paper, Banks Collection, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, D,2.3911. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum)**.**

T. Withers's tobacco paper (Fig. 2.18) deploys the same vocabulary to the same end: square and compass, clasping hands, and the motto 'UNITY IS THE STRENGTH OF SOCIETY'. As Davidoff and Hall argue, such organisations celebrated male unity as the foundation of social order, and the language of fraternal equality was accordingly contingent and exclusionary — it depended upon the visible absence of women.[311] By stressing brotherhood and equality, masonic symbols challenged hierarchies of birth, offering social inclusivity to the wealthy 'middling sorts', while simultaneously entrenching exclusion based on gender. In this way, the trade cards crystallised the contradictions of Enlightenment masculinity: it was at once socially progressive yet structurally still

[311] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), pp.416, 421.

patriarchal. For tobacconists, explicit references to freemasonry widened their market appeal across this expanding male consumer base positioning the tobacco shop as a microcosm of the masonic lodge — a place of fraternity and business exchange.



Figure 2.18: *Tobacco Paper for T. Withers,* tobacco and snuff seller (*c.*1760), etching and copperplate engraving on paper, Heal Collection, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, 117.167. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum)**.**

The perception of women and the redefinition of gender boundaries

Enlightenment discourses on politeness held that respectable women exerted an improving influence on men: Addison observed in 1712 that a man 'would not only be an unhappy, but a rude unfinished Creature, were he conversant with none but those of his

own Make', [312] and Hume later noted that mixed-gender socialising improved 'the tempers of men, as well as their behaviour'.[313] While the trade cards analysed thus far have emphasised male social groupings and imperial connections as markers of masculinity, mid-century brought distinct shifts in how some elite and middle class English women were perceived, resulting in increasing recognition of women's social agency. As Wilson argues, 'real-life women's superior capacities for civility, refinement and sensibility'[314] were increasingly valued in both public and private spheres especially following conflicts such as the Seven Years' War. Her argument illuminates how post-war society increasingly valued feminine virtues as a counterbalance to martial aggression. Women of the aristocracy, gentry and the 'middling sorts' gained greater visibility, including at pleasure gardens, theatres and assembly rooms while, as Elaine Chalus further demonstrates, elite women also participated in political sociability in domestic contexts, particularly at dinner parties, as is evident in Marcellus Laroon's *A Dinner Party* (*c.*1719-25) (Fig. 2.23).[315] This expansion in social, economic and political opportunities enhanced women's prominence and visibility in public life. The result was not the dissolution but the redefinition of gender boundaries: women became arbiters of morality, while men retained the domains of commerce and governance — each reinforcing the other in the performance of polite society.

[312] *The Spectator,* no. 433, 17 July 1712, p.1.
[313] David Hume, 'Of Refinement in the Arts', in *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. by Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987), pp. 268–80 (p.271).
[314] Wilson, *The Island Race,* p.19.
[315] Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life, c.1754–1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp.228–31.

Tobacco trade cards increasingly mirrored the social evolution of gender relations in eighteenth-century Britain. By mid-century women had begun to appear on trade cards for tobacco (Figs. 2.19 & 2.21), mirroring the growth in mixed-gender socialising and women's increased public presence. This visual shift signals a reconfiguration of the tobacco trade's target audience: from the exclusively homosocial club to the polite, semi-public space of refined courtship. At intimate gatherings, behaviour was carefully regulated, and etiquette was prescriptive, as reflected in the tobacco paper (Fig. 2.19), dated only to 1760—1818, the span of Sarah Banks's collecting. Its bucolic imagery, with shrubs and trees set against partly-cloudy English skies is reminiscent of Gainsborough's *Conversation in a Park* (1746) (Fig. 2.20). Both depict elegant, unchaperoned but respectable young couples engaging in quiet conversation. In this trade card from the latter half of the eighteenth century as well as in the earlier Gainsborough oil painting, the men and women epitomise elite masculinity and femininity respectively, through their refined clothes and manners, their graceful postures and their mastery of social decorum — their comportment demonstrating the balance between self-command and emotional delicacy demanded by polite society.

On the anonymous tobacco paper (Fig. 2.19), the man displays chivalry and courteous restraint. Though conversing as apparent equals, he smokes and drinks while his female companion refrains from both, reflecting persistent gender distinctions. As Smith explains, etiquette demanded that 'a gentleman request permission to smoke if a lady were present. If a gentleman failed to do [so], it meant either that he was not respectable or that he did not regard the lady as respectable or both.'[316] Presumably this trade card's outdoor setting

[316] Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, p.168.

is intended to emphasise the fact that smoking offered gentlemen opportunities to demonstrate courtesy in mixed company. Here, tobacco is transformed from a symbol of indulgence into an emblem of cultivated restraint — compatible with civility, sociability and masculine self-control.

When indoors, however, etiquette demanded that pipes be set aside in the presence of women. This practice stemmed from prevailing assumptions about feminine feelings — women were believed to be more susceptible to external stimulation, with tobacco smoke, 'mainly because of its undeniable dirtiness and smell, [deemed] to be offensive to ladies' sensibilities.'[317] Pipe smoking was a messy business involving cutting, crushing and fitting tobacco, with flying embers and settling ash, its physicality carrying faintly erotic undertones — as Walvin notes, 'Dutch painters made blatant use of the sexual innuendo of poking fingers into the apertures of tobacco pouches.'[318] For genteel women wishing to maintain respectability and remain pristine, the uptake of pipe smoking held limited appeal.

[317] *Ibid*., p.168.
[318] James Walvin, *Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1660–1800* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p.84.



Figure 2.19: *Tobacco paper* (*c.*1760–1818), copperplate engraving on paper, Banks Collection, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, D,2.3920.
(Image © The Trustees of the British Museum)**.**



Figure 2.20: Thomas Gainsborough, *Conversation in a Park* (1746), oil on canvas, 73 × 68 cm, Department of the Paintings of the Musée du Louvre, Paris, RF 1952-16.
Image © Musée du Louvre / RMN-GP.

The tobacco paper (Fig. 2.19) portrays men and women on more equal footing than in earlier depictions, while still emphasising natural gender differences. The woman maintains decorous distance from her suitor, embodying studied propriety — the very behaviour prescribed in Edward Moore's fables: he advised women against promiscuity, coquetry, pride, vanity and prudery, and recommended they aimed instead for charm.[319] The man's behaviour, though equally decorous, displays more expansive, open and authoritative body language. His outstretched limbs suggest (at least to modern eyes) a desire for greater intimacy — unreciprocated in the woman's passive posture. This visual asymmetry encodes behavioural ideals. It appears that he is the one taking the initiative in their courtship and, as Shoemaker argues, the 'active […] role taken by men was given greater prominence, and any activity (such as homosexual intercourse) in which they could be seen as acting passively was further marginalised.'[320]

On the anonymous tobacco paper for 'Best Virginia' (*c.*1760-1818) (Fig. 2.21), both genders are depicted drinking wine and apparently toasting a couple (second and third from the right) who display undisguised physical affection in public. It seems likely that they are newly engaged when viewed next to *The Happy Marriage* series of engravings (particularly Plate II, *The Courtship*) by Thomas Ryder, after William Hogarth (1799) (Fig. 2.22). In the Ryder engraving, the couple are also displaying unconcealed affection in public, without censure. It appears that, in the polite company these two images depict, physical affection between courting couples could be not just tolerated but celebrated — though two images,

[319] Edward Moore and Henry Brooke, *Fables for the Female Sex: Embellished with Engravings* (Paris: 1782), pp. 4, 16.
[320] Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, p.85.

one belonging to an idealised print series, attest to representational convention as much as to social practice.

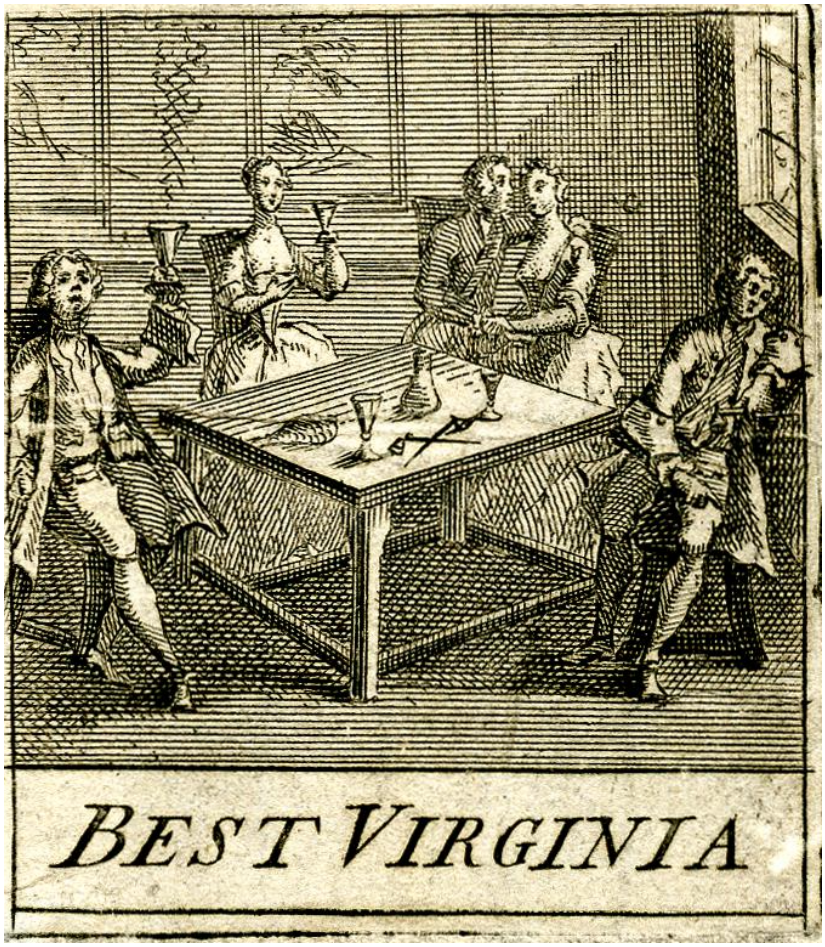

Figure 2.21: *Best Virginia Tobacco Paper* (*c.*1760–1818), copperplate engraving on paper, Banks Collection, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, D,2.3978. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum)**.**

This visual evidence aligns with Roy Porter's observation that society women 'happily colluded in men's games of clandestine flirtation and conquest.'[321] The neoclassical elegance of this composition (Fig. 2.21) — particularly the preponderance of straight vertical and horizontal lines — conveys moral stability and social order, countering any

[321] Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, (London: Penguin, 1991), p.25.

suggestion of licentiousness and asserting instead that such scenes depict respectable, well-bred company.



Figure 2.22: Print made by Thomas Ryder after William Hogarth, *Happy Marriage Series: Plate II, The Courtship* (1799), copperplate engraving on paper, 164 × 215 mm, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, CC3.83. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum)**.**

Laroon's *A Dinner Party* (Fig. 2.23) reinforces this reading. It depicts men and women of the elites seated around a table, drinking wine together, with one man openly flirting with a female guest in a central position at the front table. This work suggests that some genteel women were drinking wine and taking snuff in mixed company at least forty years earlier, and that displays of affection could be acceptable in such settings — though a single conversation piece, itself a commissioned and idealising genre, cannot establish how customary such behaviour was. This painting contradicts Edward Moore's recommendation that women should refrain from flirtation, suggesting that advice literature was not always followed to the letter.



Figure 2.23: Marcellus Laroon the Younger (1679-1772), *A Dinner Party* (*c.*1719-25), oil on canvas, 90.8 x 85.8 cm, Royal Collection Trust, London, RCIN 403539. (Image © His Majesty King Charles III 2025)**.**

This tobacco paper (Fig. 2.21) unsettles the assumption that masculine sociability was necessarily convivial. The figure on the far right sits apart from his companions, turned away from the group, one arm along the back of his chair and the other hand pointing downwards, his expression grave and his gaze directed out of the scene. The pose was a conventional one, and its conventionality is the point: Wright of Derby's Eton leaving portrait of Richard Wilmot (1765) shows its sitter in an almost identical attitude — seated, face slightly to the left, arm over the chair back. [322] Such portraits marked a boy's passage into adult manhood, and Wilmot chose to be shown composed and inward-looking rather

[322] Joseph Wright of Derby, *Leaving Portrait of Richard Wilmot* (1765), Eton College Collections Online, FDA–P.42–2010. On the leaving-portrait genre, see Lionel Cust, *Eton College Portraits* (London: Spottiswoode, 1910), pp.1–10.

than genial.[323] These images differ: one sitter commissioned his own likeness; the other is an anonymous type engraved for the purposes of trade. They do suggest that gravity was an available and desirable mode of masculine self-representation, particularly in portraits from the 1760s, and the figure's withdrawal registers as a recognised masculine posture rather than a failure of sociability.

By the later eighteenth century, the terms on which men could display feeling were changing. Early modern literature already offers examples of men expressing grief publicly, particularly in religious or mourning contexts,[324] and by 1788 Vicesimus Knox could explicitly link men's tears with moral virtue, advising them '[not to] blush at being sent to give vent to grief by the floodgates of the eyes.'[325] Within the culture of sensibility, susceptibility to feeling could be read not as weakness but as 'indicative of inner cultural taste and social worth.'[326] The figure on this tobacco paper does not weep, and nothing in the image obliges the viewer to read him as a man of feeling. What the context shows is that his gravity was available to be read that way: a customer attuned to sensibility could see in his withdrawal the reflective seriousness the culture admired, while another might see simply a composed gentleman. Either way, he remains unmistakably masculine. Unlike the effete fop of contemporary satire (Chapter 5), he keeps his dignity, and he remains part of the group rather than being excluded from it. Carter has argued that '[o]n account of his physical delicacy and fine feelings, the sentimental gentleman became an alternative,

[323] Other Etonian leaving portraits in Cust's book (above) with similar poses include Gainsborough's portrait of the Marquess of Granby (1773) (Plate VII); Benjamin West's portrait of Charles Maynard (1771) (Plate VIII) and George Romney's portrait of Charles Grey (1784) (Plate X).
[324] Bernard Capp, ''Jesus Wept' But Did the Englishman? Masculinity and Emotion in Early Modern England,' *Past & Present,* 224 (2014) 75–108.
[325] Vicesimus Knox, 'On the Manliness of Shedding Tears' (1788), in *Winter Evenings,* 2 vols (1788, 2nd edn 1793), II, pp. 182–3.
[326] Tullett, *Smell in Eighteenth-Century England*, p.5.

sometimes rival performer within a polite society […].'[327] Read in these terms, the figure's apartness makes him just such a rival performer, drawing the eye as readily as the animated drinkers around him. Such imagery suggests that the masculine norms projected in commercial ephemera could be more accommodating than prescriptive texts implied.

Moreover, the affectionate couple may symbolise the modernity of tobacco's consumers, as courtship practices grew increasingly companionate, and marriages were less often arranged.[328] Tobacco thus becomes intertwined with modern romance: it is a product for the polite, sensitive yet passionate man. While an alternative interpretation might view these women as high-society courtesans — given their *décolletage* and the social setting — this reading becomes less convincing when compared with the Ryder engraving (Fig. 2.22) and Laroon's *A Dinner Party* (Fig. 2.23) which similarly depict respectable women in mixed social settings.[329] More significantly, the card sets two masculine modes side by side: the demonstrative suitor embracing sensual pleasures, and the grave figure who has literally turned his back on the group's indulgence. The card's marketing message is seemingly clear: 'Best Virginia' accommodates both — the pleasure-seeker and the reflective man — each finding validation through consumption.

Not all observers supported this softening of gender boundaries. In 1757, the moralist and essayist John Brown censured both men and women for deviating from their traditional gender roles. He complained that 'the sexes have now little apparent Distinction. […] Their

[327] Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, p.211.
[328] Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, p.100.
[329] *Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies* (1757–1795) was updated annually, selling over 8000 copies a year, and gave details of courtesans and other prostitutes in London, so these men would certainly have had no trouble in finding such company.

peculiar and characteristic manners are confounded and lost: The one sex having advanced into Boldness, as the other have sunk into Effeminacy.'[330] His jeremiad struck a chord after the British setback at the Battle of Minorca (1756), resulting in the execution of Admiral Byng. Brown's rhetoric, linking military failure to perceived effeminacy, exemplifies how anxiety over gender was often a proxy for concerns around national and imperial weakness. Read as a man of feeling, the grave figure represents precisely the kind of masculine sensibility that traditionalists condemned as effeminate. Another contemporary moralist, Dr John Gregory (1724-1773), similarly criticised women for '[…] conversing with us with the same unreserved freedom as we do with one another […] resembling us as nearly as they possibly can.'[331] Yet this card (Fig. 2.21) pointedly contradicts such admonitions: its women mirror male deportment in all but smoking, exuding composure, elegance and respectability, capturing the dissonance between moralists' prescriptive gender ideals and contemporary social practice.

Unlike the reactionary stance of Brown and Gregory, Enlightenment thinkers such as William Robertson (1721-1793) regarded women's increased social confidence in public as evidence of Britain's advancing civilisation. His assertion in 1777 that '[t]o despise and to degrade the female sex, is the characteristic of the savage state in every part of the globe' explicitly linked gender relations to moral progress.[332] Robertson saw progress towards greater civilisation in all societies as being through social, political and cultural changes and, importantly, through respect for women. These ideas take visual form in tobacco

[330] John Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (London, 1757), p.51.
[331] John Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (London: 1784), p.28.
[332] William Robertson, *The History of America,* 4 vols (London: 1777), II, p.98.

trade cards and papers from *c.*1760-1818 (Figs. 2.19 & 2.21), where male conduct is modulated by female presence — making refinement visible through both their gestures and gaze.

Beyond 'civilising' men, women increasingly expressed public opinions and became more politically active in the 1780s and 1790s through anti-slavery activity: including the joining of associations, the signing of petitions, the distribution of pamphlets and fundraising. Through boycotting slave-produced goods such as sugar, women provided practical support that was 'actively solicited' by men.[333] After all, as Colley explains, 'when British women posed as the nation's conscience, as selfless activists who had left their customary domesticity only […] to further the national good', it was hard for 'the lances of misogyny and condescension' to wound them.[334] Thus, even within a consumer context, women's moral authority became a political instrument — translating domestic virtue into some level of civic power.

While pipe smoking remained a primarily male preserve, snuff-taking crossed gender boundaries among the affluent elites. By the early eighteenth century, 'snuffing' had become fashionable for both sexes. As early as 1709, *The Daily Courant* advertised:

> The incomparable Britannick Sweet-scented Snuff, a little of which mix't with plain Spanish or Portugal Snuff renders the whole boxful so charming, fine, pleasant, durable and delightfully scented that it far exceeds […] any in the whole Universe. It makes it graceful to all sorts of People, neither is it offensive to the Ladies.[335]

[333] Clare Midgley, *Women against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780–1870* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), p.35.
[334] Linda Colley, *Britons,* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), p.286.
[335] *Daily Courant*, 5 February 1709, issue 2272, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000175158/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=0593520f> 2b [accessed 15 February 2022].

Here, the choice of adjectives — 'charming', 'fine' and 'delightfully scented' — encapsulates the feminisation of refinement, framing olfactory pleasure as a marker of polite sensibility. The description of snuff as 'graceful', and its association with continental sophistication ('Spanish' and 'Portugal'), positioned it as a cosmopolitan luxury uniting the sexes in shared cultivated consumption. In this, the tobacco trade became a microcosm of Enlightenment society itself: it was hierarchical yet aspirational, masculine yet softened by feminine civility.

Snuff was cleaner and less intrusive than pipe tobacco, given that no smoke was produced, allowing its users to demonstrate their civility. It was deemed a more elegant and socially acceptable form of consumption, offering stimulation only to those who chose to partake in it. As Smith has argued, 'it was ideal for social rituals involving both men and women.'[336] Although it was not explicitly marketed to women for their own use in this advertisement, snuff did enable women to participate in the same fashionable pleasures as men, while maintaining decorum. Respectable women could take snuff publicly, yet all the while they continued to be viewed by most as delicate and refined. This duality exposes the coexistence of shifting models of both femininity and masculinity, which adapted according to circumstance.

Beyond the gendered imbalance in marketing that often privileged male consumers**,** a similar disparity is evident among the vendors themselves of these commodities (Table 2.2). An examination of the London trade in tobacco, chocolate and perfume suggests that

[336] Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability,* p.169.

women comprised only a small minority of sellers. Among surviving trade cards, male chocolate sellers outnumber female ones by twenty to one (40 to 2), though women may simply have been less likely to commission cards. Yet, recent scholarship challenges assumptions of women's commercial marginalisation, showing that they operated effectively within complex networks of formal and informal business relationships (explored in detail in Chapter 6). They actively negotiated legal and social constraints to sustain economic agency. As Hannah Barker argues, women's enterprises frequently crossed the supposed boundary between commercial and domestic spheres.[337] Similarly, Amy Louise Erickson has demonstrated that the legal restrictions placed upon women often diverged from actual economic practices: women owned, managed and inherited property through a range of legal arrangements and jurisdictions.[338] Nicola Phillips has likewise documented women's strategic use of legal mechanisms, particularly the '*feme sole*' designation, to trade independently. [339] Female traders' engagement with advertising (see Table 2.2 and Figure 2.B) further demonstrates their active participation in commercial culture and their efforts to establish an identifiable presence in competitive markets.

[337] Hannah Barker, *The Business of Women: Female Enterprise and Urban Development in Northern England 1760–1870* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), pp.72–104.
[338] Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993), especially Chs. 2, 6, 8 and 11.
[339] Phillips, *Women in Business*, pp.48–68.

Table 2.2: *Comparison of trade cards showing gender ownership of shops selling tobacco / snuff, chocolate and perfume, and numbers of male: female images from c.1700-1800.*

Trade	**Number of trade cards examined**	**Male traders / female traders / unclear**	**Male images / female images / no men nor women on trade cards**
Tobacco / snuff	80	12 Male 2 Female 66 Unclear	73 Male 4 Female 3 no male or female
Chocolate	45	40 Male 2 Female 3 Unclear	5 Male 3 Female 37 no male or female
Perfume	53	30 Male 4 Female 19 Unclear	5 Male 11 Female 37 no male or female

Source: Information gathered from the John Johnson, Heal, and Banks trade card collections.

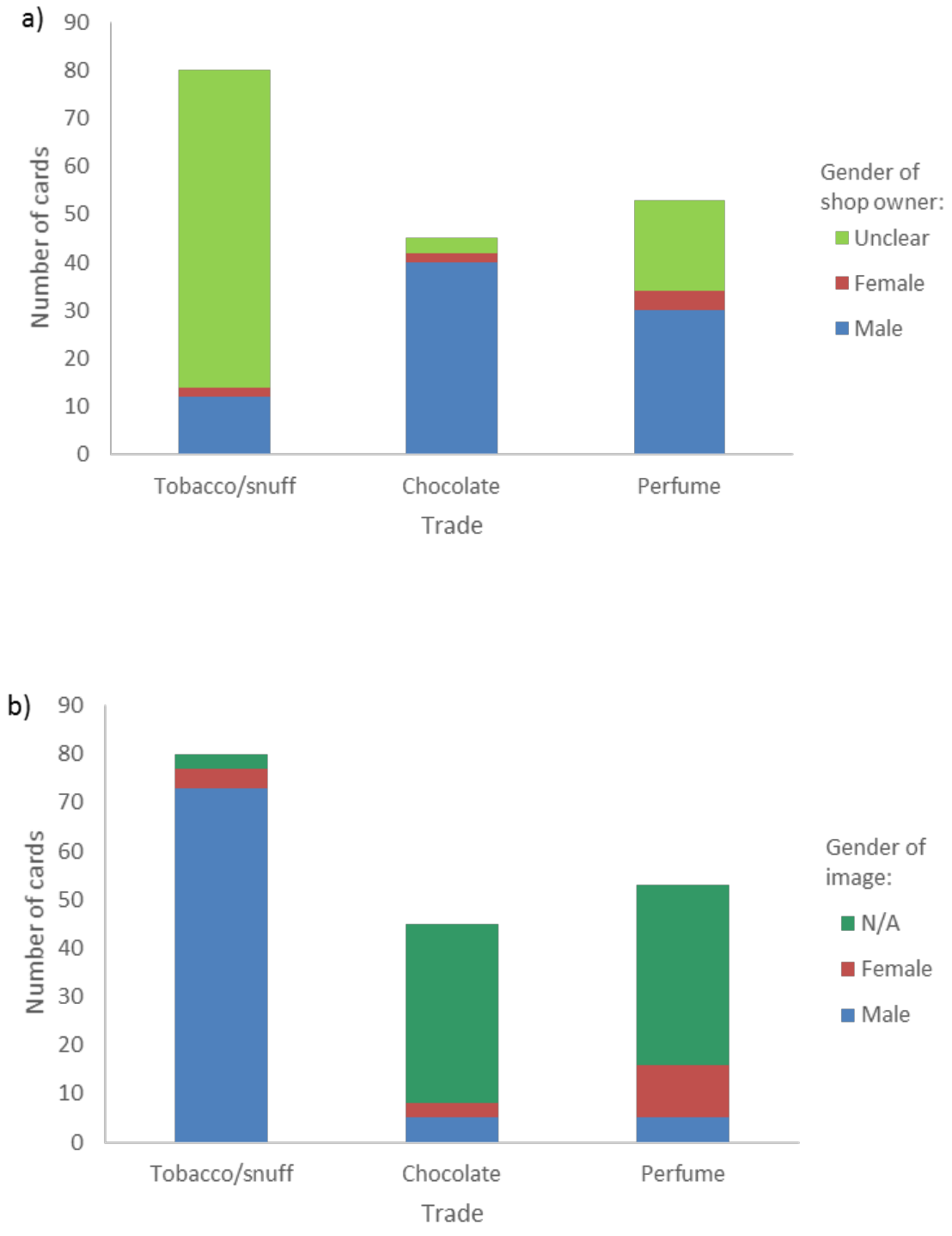

Figure 2.B: *Comparison of trade cards showing a)* ***gender ownership*** *of shops selling tobacco / snuff, chocolate and perfume, and b)* ***numbers of male: female images*** *from c.1700-1800. 'N/A' in b) signifies there were no images of men or women.*
Source: Information gathered from the Johnson, Heal and Banks trade card collections.

Erickson's research shows widows often assumed responsibility for their husbands' businesses (see Chapter 6). When women assumed control of male relatives' establishments, they typically advertised this connection publicly or referenced it on their trade cards.[340] One card identifies the proprietor simply as 'Mr William Trunkett's Sister', her credibility anchored entirely in kinship ties.[341] Yet men also often felt the need to establish themselves in business by referring to previous owners of their establishments. For example, Nicholas Sanders styled himself as a 'chocolate maker in Greek Street near Soho Square, Nephew and Successor to the late Mr Haines, chocolate maker, who also succeeds Mr Smith in his business.'[342] Notably absent, however, are cards showing male shopkeepers leveraging female relatives' reputations to bolster their own. This unevenness illustrates how commercial credibility was persistently gendered, even as women demonstrated agency, business acumen and profitability within the marketplace.

Conclusion

The trade cards and advertisements examined here expose a persistent instability in representations of commercial masculinity: the visual strategies deployed to consolidate masculine authority simultaneously revealed its fragility. Of the 196 eighteenth-century tobacco cards in the British Museum's collection, close to three in ten feature racialised figures and roughly a sixth feature scenes of male sociability; the holding partly reflects the collecting priorities of Banks and Heal rather than the pattern of surviving production, but it establishes these as structural features of the corpus rather than incidental motifs.

[340] Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, p.139.
[341] Trade card of Mr William Trunkett's Sister, *c.*1750, Heal Collection, British Museum (BM 93.33).
[342] Sanders' trade card, BM 38.7 *c.*1750.

Repetition alone, it must be conceded, is weak evidence of anxiety: engravers reused plates, woodcuts outlived their moment, and a successful commercial formula would be copied whether or not it answered any deeper unease. What repetition cannot explain is adaptation. These cards do not just restate a single image of masculine command; they rework it — pastoral harmony set beside the whip, the sensitive and grave man admitted to the sociable table, the incapacitated drinker set against his abstemious companion. Nor can commercial differentiation account for the clustering: these reworkings converge on the same contested attributes — the discipline of coerced labour, the admissibility of feeling, the boundary between conviviality and incapacity. It is this patterned reworking, rather than sheer frequency, that points not to the triumph of a stable masculine ideal but to its continual renegotiation.

Marketing here functioned as aspiration rather than documentation. Lee's continued use, as late as 1794, of 1730s Hogarthian excess, the invocation of Tudor seafarers to sell contemporary tobacco, and the co-existence of sanitised, pastoral plantations with Bewick's whip-wielding overseer, who laid bare the coercion those idylls concealed: all demonstrate that trade cards trafficked less in present realities than in nostalgic fantasy. They offered consumers not what they were but what they might imagine themselves to be through purchase, selling identities that required continuous consumption to sustain. Empire was sold on the same terms, rendered not just palatable but pleasurable — and the absence of enslaved women from these scenes spared consumers any confrontation with female exploitation. Yet ruptures appeared: the gallows-like cross-beam over Steel's card, the imposing Native American figures dwarfing the solitary merchant they ostensibly served. The ideological work of naturalising empire was never complete.

Chocolate and tobacco diverged along gendered lines, and that divergence illuminates a deeper structural pattern. Both originated in colonial extraction, yet their marketing trajectories moved in opposite directions: tobacco masculinised consumption through homosocial bonding, Masonic fraternity and imperial command, even as snuff advertising acknowledged that practice crossed gender lines; chocolate advertisements increasingly courted women, from Brunsden's rococo elegance, through to salutations that by the 1760s routinely included 'Ladies' among the expected customers, to notices of 1789 and 1799 that addressed women as a distinct market — even as chocolate houses themselves remained predominantly male preserves. Whether or not this misalignment was calculated, its effect was commercially useful: gendered advertising addressed a target market without restricting who actually bought, while sustaining the fiction of naturally gendered appetites. And behind the counter, if rarely on the card, women traded too — the small minority of female proprietors recorded in Table 2.2 demonstrates that the marketplace never matched the masculine self-image its ephemera projected.

Class anxieties were encoded in the same visual grammar. Rococo frames, neoclassical columns, pseudo-heraldic harts and knights' helmets all appropriated elite aesthetic codes for increasingly middling consumption; yet the very explicitness of such symbols exposed the cultural work required to transform commerce into gentility. Elite status was also performed, but rarely required such assertion. The ‘middling sorts’ had to make their claims visible, using trade cards as visual scripts for social advancement. By 1800 the marketing of chocolate and tobacco had established recognisable templates — feminised domestic consumption against masculinised public sociability, consumer discernment against fraternal solidarity — yet the analysis here reveals these apparently stable

categories as provisional settlements in ongoing struggles over the meanings of gender, class, race and nation. The next chapter examines how material objects associated with these commodities became sites where such struggles were not purely represented but materially enacted.

Appendix to Chapter 2

Table A2.1: Numbers of **all** tobacco trade cards and papers from *c.*1700-*c.*1800, predominantly in the Banks and Heal online collections held at the British Museum, with the following subject matter: race imagery; male sociability; male and female figures socialising together; Walter Raleigh; freemasonry; patriotism; female figure; quality of shop.

	Heal	**Banks**	**Unclear**	**Total**
***c.*1700-*c.*1729**	6	2	1	**9**
***c.*1730-1759**	27	6	10	**43**
***c.*1760-1789**	11	25	3	**39**
***c.*1790-*c.*1805**	7	6		**13**
Unknown date	10	2		**12**
Total	**61**	**41**	**14**	**116**

Source: British Museum Online Collections

Table A2.2: British Museum tobacco trade cards and papers, arranged by the subject categories listed in Table A2.1.
Key: An asterisk indicates this card is discussed in this thesis.

Subject matter	Reference	Date	Description
Race imagery (including plantation labour and race camaraderie)			
	Heal, 117.168	*c.*1700	Wood's Best Virginia in St Martins Lane. Two Native Americans on a plantation – one smoking a pipe and the other holding out some tobacco leaves to him. Tobacco roll and barrel, with trees behind.
	2006, U.390	Early-18th century	Martin's Best Virginia. Enslaved children working on a tobacco plantation.
*	Heal, 117.137	Early-18th century	Trade card for Rolls's Best Virginia[343] Tobacco. A white man is doing business on a tobacco plantation. Two Native American men are smoking pipes. Enslaved black men/boys are sorting tobacco into barrels.
	Banks, 117.41	*c.*1710	Peter Davenport, tobacconist. White man sitting on a barrel smoking a pipe while he points a stick at an enslaved black child who is packing tobacco leaves into a barrel.
	Heal, 117.1	1720	Adlington. Two Native Americans smoking pipes while standing on barrels.

[343] Virginia was used as a metonym for tobacco in eighteenth-century trade literature.

	Heal, 117.32	*c.*1725	Crofton's Virginia. White man leaning on barrel, smoking a pipe. Three enslaved black men prepare the tobacco. Galleons in background.
	Heal, 117.39	1725	Dickin's Best Virginia. Two Native Americans smoking pipes.
	Heal, 117.23	1730	Charlton's. Two Native Americans smoking.
	Heal, 117.19	*c.*1730	Native American holding a still inside the cartouche. Two other men cutting and picking tobacco on a plantation.
	Heal, 117.22	1730	Chance's. Two Native Americans smoking.
	Heal, 117.81	1730	Healey's. Native American smoking and holding up tobacco
	Heal, 117.191	Not known	White man sitting on barrel while enslaved men move barrels. Galleons in background. 'The Best Tobacco under the Sun' in Latin, French and English.
	1982, U.4528 album	1730-1760	Henry Bishop, Best Virginia in Tylers Court, Carnaby Market with two pipe smoking Native Americans. (Two impressions). Donaldson's Best Virginia, Queen Street, Cheapside with galleons and two Africans. Leathwait's Virginia, Thames Street near Billingsgate, London; two pipe smoking Native Americans. Vidgen's Best Virginia, Scotch and Rappee Snuff, at the two Black Boys in Tower Street with two black boys smoking pipes and standing on tobacco rolls. Panton's Best Virginia and Brandy and Rums imported, Barbican with a pipe smoking Native American by a punchbowl with ships beyond. Griffith's Best Virginia; a kilted Highlander with a small black boy holding tobacco leaves.
	Heal, 117.19	1730	Bullock's Best York-River Mild Tobacco. Furnace/still and Native American. Two enslaved men are cultivating the tobacco.
	Heal, 117.14	1735	Bowler's. Two white men seated and smoking pipes. Enslaved man rolling and hammering down barrels. Ships in the background.
	Heal, 117.6	Not known	Bathurst's Best Virginia. White man and native American both smoking pipes.
	Banks, 117.7	Not known	Barretts Old Tobacco. Two black boys resting on barrels of tobacco.
*	Heal, 117.4	1740	Archer's best Virginia, in Peter Street, near Moorfields. White planter smoking a pipe while he watches enslaved men pack up barrels of tobacco. Ship on the horizon.
	Heal, 117.16	1740	Brice's. Native American handing tobacco leaves to his child. Ships in background.
	Heal, 117.53	1740	Field, tobacco & snuff seller. White man smoking a pipe. African rolling barrels.
	Heal, 117.147	Mid-18th century	Simper's best Virginian. Native American smoking a pipe in centre as two African figures behind him collect and

			sort tobacco leaves into barrels on the plantation behind, apparently at ease.
	Heal, 117.83	*c.*1750	Hylands tobacconist. Idyllic plantation scene with men cutting, picking and carrying tobacco. Galleons in far distance.
	Heal, 117.50	*c.*1750	Fawkner, tobacconist. White man seated, dressed formally and smoking a pipe. Black man standing in toga-like dress, pointing to sign.
	Heal, 117.164	*c.*1750	Smith's Best Virginia. White man taking two pipes from Native Americans.
	Heal, 117.181	1740-1770	Chained bear in a roundel of tobacco leaves. Supported by two black men holding pipes. Lower image of five enslaved black men in a field. Four gathering tobacco and one smoking.
	Banks, 117.134	1750	Norman's, tobacconist. Two Native Americans smoking and balancing on rolls of tobacco and barrels
	Banks, 117.174	*c.*1750	John Walkers Best Virginia, Rumford. Native American smoking a pipe, holding tobacco leaves in one hand, resting on a barrel with a tobacco roll under his elbow. Two Africans tending to tobacco plants on a plantation in the background.
	Banks, 117.12	1750	Bowen's. Black boy cutting down tobacco leaves
	Heal, 117.121	Mid-18th century	Newman's Best Virginia. Two white men. One smoking and drinking. One pointing at the tobacco leaves in the hand of Native America/black man. Business transaction.
	Heal, 117.49	*c.*1760	Farr's. Native American on throne. Another working on barrel. Ships in background. Smoking pipe.
	Heal, 117.59	*c.*1760	Farr's. Native American on throne. Smoking pipe. Another handing over tobacco leaves. Ship in background.
	Banks, 117.48	*c.*1760	Donaldson's. Two Native Americans smoking pipes with ships in background.
	Banks, 117.141	*c.*1765	Richardson's Best Virginia. Turk, European, native American and another male figure all around the table. Native American is holding up a cup.
	Banks, 117.177	1760-1818	Watkinsons best Virginia. Plantation scene with black figures on a plantation, rolling barrels, cutting tobacco and sorting it, as a seated white man smokes a pipe and surveys the scene. Galleons in the background.
	Banks, D,2.3905	1760-1818	Sarvent. Chinese man smoking. Native American child holding out object.
	Banks, D,2.3910	1760-1818	Shaw. Five black men tending to tobacco plantation with ships in the background
	Banks, D,2.3965	1760-1818	Skinner x2. Native Americans and Scottish men. Scottish men without pipes.
	Banks, 117.91	1770	Harriott's Manufactory tobacco, Rochford. Two Native Americans on horseback racing. Both with pipes in their mouths and tobacco leaves in their hands.
	Banks, 117.104	*c.*1770	Native American holding a sprig of tobacco walking near seated white man who is smoking a pipe. Apparently pleasant scene.
	Banks, D,2.3877	1774-1780	Sancho's Best Trinidado. European trader shaking hands with a Native American.

	Heal, 117.136	1775	S. Roberts. Highlander, Chinese man and Native American smoking, with ship in background. Poem and riddle.
	BM, 1882,0311.3227	1777	Tobacco paper showing African chief wearing a kilt and head-dress made of tobacco leaves, as well as ermine cape. He is smoking.
*	BM, 1882,0311.3226	1781	Tobacco paper for S. Steel, Bedale. White man seated with whip and pipe. Enslaved men working on tobacco plantation.
	Banks, 117.51	1790	Downes of Deptford. Two Native Americans smoking
	Heal, 117.150	Late-18th century	Miles Standley, tobacconist. Native American with axe and a Highlander taking snuff.
	Heal, 117.177	Not known	3 sugar loaves and 2 Native Americans smoking pipes.
	Heal, 117.15	Not known	Bradley. 3 men: white gentleman sitting down smelling tobacco leaves, another white man standing and smoking pipe and Native American holding out tobacco leaves and saying 'It's sweet scented.'
	Heal, 117.175	Not known	2 men. One white sitting down. One Native American standing up in a loin cloth.
	Heal, 117.182	Not known	Best Virginia RS. 2 Native Americans smoking pipes in loin cloths.
Male sociability			
*	Heal, 117.178	Early-18th century	Sweet Scented Virginia. Group of four men around a table: Native American, Turk, European and man in Tudor clothing.
	Banks, 117.21	*c*.1710	John Cater's best Virginia London. Similarities with Hogarth's Midnight Modern Conversation. 'N" back to front!
	Heal, 117.93	1730	Kingston's Best Virginia Three men smoking pipes and drinking around a table. Outside is a man with a still.
	Heal, 117.9	1740	Bennett's Fumigations. Two white men standing up smoking, a dog at the feet of one of them.
	Heal, 117.20	1740	John Cater, Blackmoor's Head. Two men. One speaking French and taking snuff. One English smoking a pipe.
	Banks, 117.228	*c*.1745	Men sitting around the table talking and smoking.
	Banks, 117.141	(*c.*1765)	Richardson's Best Virginia. Four men around table including one Native American, one Turk and one man dressed in Tudor clothing.
	1982, U.4528 album	1730-1760	Wilson in King Street, Westminster with two gentlemen smoking pipes, plus dog.
	1868,0822.1647	Mid-18th century	Richard Lee. Related to Hogarth's Midnight Modern Conversation.
*	Heal, 117.130	Mid-18th century	N. Poole's superfine sweet scent. Five men conversing on beach. Ships behind.
	Heal, 117.87	1750	Jenning's. Two white men smoking
	Banks, 117.44	*c*.1750	Davis's Best Virginia. Four white men sitting around a table. Some smoking, one raising a glass. Bowl of punch.

	Heal, 117.96	1750	Knightly's Mild Virginia. Three men smoking and drinking punch.
	Heal, 117.176	Not known	Group of six men socialising around a table with tobacco, drinking. One man slouched on table.
	Heal, 117.97	1760	Lacroix. Four men sitting around a table, smoking pipes and drinking, possibly in an ale house. Wearing tricorn hats.
	Heal, 117.71	*c.*1760	F. Griszell Best Virginia. Nine men seated and standing around a table
	Banks, 117.59	Not known	Farr's. Six men seated around a table. One is standing. Smoking pipes. 'The Finest Tobacco by Farr.'
	Banks, 117.192	*c.*1760	West, tobacconist. Three men – two are smoking and one is drinking ale. Punch in a bowl.
	Banks, 117.153	1770	Scaife's best Virginia, Peterborough. Three men seated around a table, smoking and drinking punch.
	Banks, D,2.3979	1760-1818	Oliver. Three men drinking and smoking around a table.
	Banks, 117.211	1760-1818	Four men sitting around a table. Punch bowl in the middle. Simple background.
	Banks, D,2.3883	1760-1818	C. Wright. Four men sitting around a table smoking pipes and discussing the tobacco.
	Banks, D,2.3983	1760-1818	Bown's Best Virginia. Sir Roger de Coverley. Two men, one smoking a pipe sitting down.
	Heal, no ref.	Not known	Wimble and Co tobacconist. Same image as above.
	Banks, D,2.3997	1760-1818	Edmond's. Six men seated around a table smoking and extolling the merits of tobacco. Inscription content: 'It is Good tobacco/it smokes well/who's is it/Edmonds's/where does he live/ Grays Inn Lane'.
	Banks, D,2.3952	1760-1818	Hilditch tobacco. Eight men around the table smoking pipes and discussing the excellent tobacco from Hilditch.
	Heal, 117.182 D,2.3981	1760-1818	William White's, Best London Virginia. Multiple men sitting and standing around a table smoking and talking about tobacco.
	Banks, D,2.3912	1760-1818	Best Virginia. 3 men: French, German and English discussing snuff.
	Banks, D,2.3958	1775	J Cowse tobacconist. Four men sitting around a table discussing tobacco as 'charming scent' and 'silver ash'.
	Heal, 117.105	18th century	Richard Lee. Based on Hogarth's *Midnight Modern Conversation.* A drinking and smoking scene with ten men around a table, one rising to vomit, another collapsed on the floor, paintings and hats hung on the wall behind.
	Heal, 117.106	1790	Ditto
	Heal, 117.107	1790	Ditto
*	Banks, 117.118	1794	Ditto
Quality of shop: shopkeeper / freshness of produce			

	Banks, D,2.3892	1760-1818	Woon's. Horse, man and wheel. Preparing tobacco.
	Banks, D,2.3964	1760-1818	Old Wigs, otherwise Jeffry Dunstan. Image of Dunstan himself.
	Banks, D,2.3878	1765	Fisher's tobacco and snuff warehouse. Cartouches with tobacco being ground down, rolled and processed.
	Heal, 117.35	1765	Abraham Delvalle. Cartouche. Vignettes. Processing of tobacco and snuff, including a horse drawn mill.
	Banks, D,2.3963	1780	Peter Cockburn, tobacconist and snuff maker 'at the Abel Drugger … NB Late shopman at Sr Roger de Coverly's.' Appears to be shopkeeper himself holding on to some tobacco.
	Heal, 117.115	*c.*1800	May's. 'All sorts of tobacco sold here.' One man is the customer and another is the seller.
Freemasonry			
	Heal, 117.69	1725-75	Sarah Greenland, tobacco pipe maker. Motto: 'Let Brotherly Love Continue'.
	Heal, 117.167	*c.*1750	Stanier
*	Heal, 117.167	*c.*1760	T. Withers, tobacco and snuff seller. Masonic signs.
*	Banks, D,2.3911	*c.*1770	William Rogers, tobacconist. 'Let Brotherly Love Continue'.
	Heal, 117.142	*c.*1770	John Savell. Masonic instruments. Set squares etc.
	Heal, 117.28	*c.*1770	Cooke's best tobacco. Masonic signs.
	Heal,117.25	1775	W. Clamtree, pipe-maker. Freemasonry imagery.
	Heal, 117.116	1789	Maynard's Mild Virginia. Freemasonry imagery.
Male and female figures socialising together			
	Heal, 117.99	1750	Lambkin & Co, snuff manufacturers. Exterior of Lambkin's shop. Men and women walking on the pavement outside, horses and carriages.
*	Banks, D,2.3920	1760-1818	Man and woman sitting outside. The man has put down his pipe. The two are conversing.
*	Banks, D,2.3978	1760-1818	Best Virginia tobacco paper. Five people around a table. Two are women. Drinking. Pipes laid down.
Walter Raleigh			
*	1982,U.4528 album	1730-1760	Walker's, Best Virginia, at Raleigh's Head near Exeter Exchange, Strand with image of Sir Walter Raleigh.
	Banks, D,2.3884	1760-1818	D. Laing's, tobacco and snuff manufactory. Sir Walter Raleigh's head.
*	Heal, 117.173	1794	Richard Lee, tobacconist. Humorous depiction of servant throwing water or ale over a figure (Raleigh) who is smoking, believing him to be on fire.
	Heal, 117.5	*c.*1805	Anonymous. A man smoking a pipe is being doused with water by a servant.

Patriotism			
	Heal, 117.44	1745-56	Edward's Best Virginia. Tobacco-paper for Edwards's Best Virginia, at the Green Man and Still in Goswell Street, London; Anti-Gallican society founded in 1745. Anti-Gallican coat of arms surmounted by Britannia, weaponry and flags, with St George mounted on a white horse, spearing a shield decorated with the fleur-de-lis of France, supported by the British lion and the Austrian double-headed eagle, with motto 'For our country'; lettered cartouche below.
	Banks, D,2.3935	1775	Michael Crausaz, snuff maker. Image of Britannia with anchor.
	Banks, D,2.3937	1775	Ditto.
Female figures			
	Heal, 117.12	1740	Boulton's Virginia. Naked white woman with a skirt of tobacco leaves. Phoenix rising from the ashes. Pointing at a cartouche on the ground, tobacco leaves growing up beside her.
	Heal, 117.79	1750	Harper's Best Virginia, London. Woman in a cartouche holding on to an anchor, wearing a head covering and simple dress.
	Heal, 117.133	1775	C. Richardson's. Blackmoor Street. Image of black woman with earrings. Plus sugar loaves.

Source: British Museum trade cards.

CHAPTER 3

Material Culture and Domestic Consumption

Studies of material culture have profoundly shaped the historiography of gender in eighteenth-century England, transforming historians' understanding of the relationship between objects, identity and power. Methodologies have moved from broad theoretical frameworks to more finely grained micro-historical and object-based analyses. Early scholarship, largely grounded in prescriptive literature and conduct manuals, treated objects as passive mirrors of pre-existing gender divisions; more recent work has recast them as important sites of identity formation. Amanda Vickery's study of provincial gentlewomen reads possessions, domestic space and patterns of consumption as evidence of female agency, demonstrating that the household and its contents could be arenas of considerable female authority.[344] For Hannah Greig, fashionable display was equally central to elite self-definition, governed by codes of taste that were no less rigorous for being largely unwritten.[345] Maxine Berg, meanwhile, traces the ways imported goods and global commerce reshaped patterns of consumption, status and their gendered expression.[346] Material culture, these approaches suggest, does not only reflect gender relations but helps to make and remake them.

This chapter analyses the material culture of snuff and tobacco boxes, chocolate cups and perfume bottles as objects through which gendered identity was articulated and questioned. As John Styles and Amanda Vickery have noted, '[t]he things people owned,

[344] Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp.174–80.
[345] Hannah Greig, *The Beau Monde* (Oxford: OUP, 2020), pp.32–62.
[346] Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure,* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), pp.46–84.

displayed, and coveted are now prominent in historical interpretations of the eighteenth century […].'[347] Building on this insight, this chapter offers an explicitly gendered interpretation of personal objects and considers how they reshaped male and female roles and mediated power dynamics between the sexes, and illuminated the attendant anxieties surrounding female agency, sexuality, effeminacy and the extremes of all-male sociability. It therefore moves this thesis away from looking at how these substances were marketed and towards how the accompanying paraphernalia functioned as a vehicle for communicating social identity, in public and private contexts alike — from theatrical same-sex sociability to intimate moments of courtship and marriage. By drawing upon textual sources such as wills and parental advice literature, this analysis moves beyond the objects' functional uses to situate them within broader moral and social frameworks. Since the tactile, visual and olfactory effects of chocolate, perfume and tobacco (ephemeral substances by nature) are impossible to recreate precisely, their containers assume critical importance, offering insight into how consumers encountered, displayed and interpreted such commodities.

Caution is needed at the outset, and it bears with particular force on the interpretations of masculine vulnerability advanced below. The visual language of these objects is not always transparent to modern eyes, and contemporaries did not read uniformly: the same armorial box could strike one viewer as convention and another, who knew its owner's history, as self-justification. Where this chapter identifies anxiety beneath masculine display, this is a reading the objects permit rather than a message they declare — and their

[347] John Styles and Amanda Vickery, 'Introduction', in *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700–1830*, ed. John Styles and Amanda Vickery (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p.1.

capacity to sustain opposed readings is treated here as a historical feature, not a defect of the evidence.

As Antony Buxton argues, '[…] human life is founded in material existence, […] it is not only a functional engagement, but one in which actions around objects articulate social relationships and carry conceptual meanings, in turn investing objects and actions with wider significance.'[348] It is precisely this 'wider significance' of objects as media of gender expression with which this chapter engages. Imperial expansion and global trade supplied the English elites with new consumable luxuries, while associated objects such as perfume bottles, chocolate cups and snuff boxes became increasingly important to their consumption and display. As Berg notes, such commodities were not only markers of fashion but also '[…] the material products of enlightenment and modernity'.[349]

The equipment linked to chocolate, perfume and tobacco was, as William Tullett has observed, integral to eighteenth-century practices of self-fashioning, enabling individuals to cultivate an appearance designed to please others while communicating ideals of taste and elegance central to the performance of politeness.[350] Beyond conspicuous signals of wealth and refinement, these items functioned as portable markers embodying social, racial, political and gendered meanings. As 'cultural releasers [...] the embodiment of

[348] Antony Buxton, *Domestic Culture in Early Modern Britain* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2015), p.266.
[349] Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p.6.
[350] Tullett, *Smell in Eighteenth-Century England*, p.160.

mental structures, or patterns of belief,'[351] they transmitted elite and increasingly middle-class conceptions of masculine and feminine agency through everyday use and show.[352]

Snuff boxes illustrate this most clearly. Though larger boxes for pipe tobacco had been commonly owned by men in the second half of the seventeenth century, bespoke containers for snuff (smaller, with tight-fitting, hinged lids to prevent the powder from drying out) only became popular in the early eighteenth century.[353] These boxes were continually displayed to others, making them a perfect medium through which to announce to the outside world one's individuality or group allegiance — or both. Kenneth Blakemore has characterised snuff boxes as primarily status symbols of the elites, with 'kings and queens, mistresses and ambassadors sometimes acquir[ing] as many snuff boxes as there were days in a year.'[354] Yet to view them, as Blakemore does, solely as emblems of wealth is reductive: they also helped articulate wider shifts in identity.

As McShane has highlighted, women had owned their own snuff paraphernalia since the second half of the seventeenth century 'to express and make known their sense of self in society,' as well as to demonstrate their political loyalties. [355] McShane describes two such examples from the early Restoration period: Joan Bacon's carved wooden box (1667) and Gillian Forahm's gourd snuff bottle (1672),[356] both decorated with Charles II's coat of arms, which testify to this practice. However, such objects remained rare until the eighteenth

[351] Jules David Prown, 'Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 17.1 (1982), 1–19 (p.6).
[352] Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste and Material Culture,* p.22.
[353] Tea caddies were larger but also airtight to prevent the drying out of tea leaves.
[354] Kenneth Blakemore, *Snuff Boxes* (London: Frederick Muller, 1976), p.2.
[355] McShane, 'Bad Habits', p.56.
[356] Snuff bottles were also airtight with narrow openings and stoppers to preserve the freshness and fragrance of the powder.

century, when snuff boxes became more distinctly personalised and gendered. Box makers swiftly capitalised on the expanding female market for snuff and, as Clare le Corbeiller notes, 'distinctions began to be made […] amongst boxes for particular sexes, seasons and costumes.'[357]

Table 3.1: gendered subject matter on eighteenth-century snuff boxes in V&A online collections

Subject matter	Total number	Gendered Subject matter[358]	1700 - 1750[359]	1750-1800	'Eighteenth century' or uncertain dates
Family / dynasty	14	M	5	7	2
Hunting, shooting, fishing	12	M	3	3	6
Military / naval/ maps	8	M	2	4	2
Masculine sociability	3	M	3		
Male portrait	1	M		1	
Domestic /genre scenes	9	F		4	5
Female portrait	6	F	1	1	4
Couples	5	Both	2	1	2
Pastoral scenes	28	Unclear	10	6	12
Animals/ birds/insects	21	Unclear	5	10	6
Classical Mythology /fantasy	19	Unclear	9	8	2
Decorative - floral	13	Unclear	2	5	6
Biblical	7	Unclear	3	1	3
Patriotic	7	Unclear	3		4
Decorative - pattern	6	Unclear	4	2	
Political	3	Unclear		2	1
Calendar	3	Unclear		3	
Music	3	Unclear			3
Event	2	Unclear		1	1
TOTAL	170		52	59	59

Source: V&A collection online. **Key:** M = subject conventionally associated with men; F = subject conventionally associated with women.

[357] Le Corbeiller, *European and American Snuff Boxes* (London: Chancellor Press, 1983), p.14.
[358] Without records of ownership, it is not always clear whether boxes were owned by males or females. The sorting of boxes here into 'M', 'F' or 'Both' has been done through a combination of colours, decoration, subject matter and materials, but some conjecture is inevitable.
[359] Dates identified by the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Using the V&A Online Collection of eighteenth-century snuff boxes (Table 3.1) as a point of comparison, the snuff boxes selected for this thesis are broadly representative in terms of subject matter, size and materials used. However, it is likely that it is the more valuable and aesthetically distinctive examples that have survived, as was the case with trade cards. It is not always possible to determine whether the boxes were designed or owned by a man or woman. However, men's snuff boxes typically featured bolder designs with geometric patterns, hunting scenes, military motifs, heraldic and masonic imagery, as well as mythological gods associated with war and strength.[360] A caveat should accompany these generalisations: where provenance is lost, gendered ownership is itself partly inferred from design, so the association between bold imagery and male ownership rests on documented cases and cannot be confirmed independently for the many boxes whose owners are unknown (the 'unclear' categories in Table 3.1). They were commonly made of sturdy materials such as horn, tortoiseshell, silver or gold. Beyond the durability of these materials, horn was popular because it was cheap and readily available; tortoiseshell was prized for its malleability; and silver and gold were enduring symbols of wealth that functioned as visible, liquid capital.[361] The range of materials itself mapped a social range of ownership: gold, enamel and fine tortoiseshell belonged to elite consumers, while pressed horn carried the same forms and functions into less exalted hands — a descent the surviving corpus under-represents, since survival favoured the valuable. Women's boxes, by contrast, were generally smaller and more often featured goddesses of love and beauty, particularly Venus or Cupid, and were sometimes crafted from enamelled porcelain or

[360] Lisa Beaven and Matthew Martin, 'The Stuff of Snuff: The Affective and Sensory Connotations of Snuff Boxes in Eighteenth-Century Culture', *Emotions: History, Culture, Society*, 7.1 (2023), 95–118 (104–106).
[361] Le Corbeiller, *European and American Snuff Boxes*, p.83.

precious metals.[362] Notably, floral decoration — particularly in shades of pink, green, and brown — appeared in both male and female designs, echoing motifs also found on men's waistcoats, suggesting that some decorative choices transcended strict gender divisions.[363]

Just as snuff boxes evolved from tobacco boxes, perfume containers became increasingly prominent within the eighteenth century trade in small luxury 'toys'.[364] Although perfume was sold in plain bottles, known as 'throwaways', essences, perfumed waters and oils were subsequently decanted, using a funnel, into smaller decorative bottles. These miniature vessels could then be carried in a detachable pocket, suspended from a *chatelaine* around the waist, or housed in an *etui*, toilet box or *necessaire*.[365] Over time, such objects acquired 'a visual and textual vocabulary of lively scenes, mottoes, and exhortations', through which owners could express personality, taste and social background, while the objects themselves reflected broader cultural and ideological changes.[366]

[362] Museums housing collections of snuff boxes sometimes have information on provenance, such as letters, diaries, inventories and wills, linking them specifically to male or female owners.
[363] Using the V&A collection of men's eighteenth-century waistcoats as a reference point, 28 out of 30 waistcoats have floral imagery and the most popular colours are pink, red and green.
[364] Kate Foster, *Scent Bottles* (London: The Connoisseur, 1966), especially Chs.4 and 5.
[365] Edmund Launert, *Perfume and Pomanders* (Thirsk: Potterton Books, 1987), pp.78–79. A *chatelaine* was a set of short chains attached to a woman's belt to carry objects; *etuis* (from the French word 'estuier' meaning 'to keep') and *necessaires* were small ornamental cases used for holding personal items.
[366] McShane, 'Tobacco-Taking', 111.



Figure 3.1: *Chinese Mancerina,* (1735-1795), porcelain, width 20cm, Galerie Nicolas Fournery, Paris, Ref: B719. Image © Galerie Nicolas Fournery, Paris.

Chocolate paraphernalia, by contrast, rarely accompanied its owner in public. This very restriction made it especially potent in domestic contexts, where objects helped articulate familial relationships and gendered roles. Chocolate consumption required an elaborate array of implements: gold and silver pots; porcelain or delftware cups (with metal frames to protect hands from the heat); saucers; glass bowls; *mancerinas* (cups designed with large saucers to prevent spillage on bedsheets) (Fig. 3.1); mills for blending ingredients; a pestle and mortar; and wooden *molinillos* (Fig. 3.2) to whip up the froth that signalled the ultimate in refinement.[367] The substances themselves were as culturally charged as the containers that held them. The gendered associations of chocolate have been examined in

[367] The *molinillo* and *mancerina* were probably sixteenth-century Spanish inventions: see Coe and Coe, *The True History of Chocolate*, pp.87–8, 137.

Chapter 1, and its domestic preparation is taken up in Chapter 4; perfume and snuff, whose use by both sexes changed markedly over the century, are considered here.[368]



Figure 3.2: *Chocolate whisk* (molinillo), date unknown, wood, diameter 5.5 cm, height 29 cm, British Museum, Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas, Am1979,19.1, Image © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Perfume

Perfume practice in 1700 was cumulative: scent was applied to the face and body, and dispensed liberally on clothes, on wigs as oils and pomade, and on gloves (which were sold by scent as well as by colour and size). Halifax's warning to his daughter that heavy perfumes, like '[e]xcessive good words', served to disguise unwelcome truths indicates both that such quantities were worn and that they already carried a moral charge.[369]

Two changes followed. The first concerns the vessel itself. When Defoe described Bath's bathers in the first edition of his *Tour*, he noted only that 'of late, the Snuff-box is added'. The 'Smelling-Bottle' joined the list in the edition of 1761, revised long after his death.[370]

[368] Friedman, *Reading Smell,* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2016), p.88.
[369] George Savile, Marquess of Halifax, *The Lady's New Year's Gift; or Advice to a Daughter* (London, 1700; repr. Stamford, CT: 1934), p.71.
[370] Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, 3 vols (London: G. Strahan, 1724–27), II, (1725) p. 51; compare the edition of 1761, 4 vols, II, p. 286.

The small portable flask, carried in a detachable pocket or suspended from a chatelaine, appears in the evidence examined here only from mid-century, in the St James's scent bottle of c.1751–54 (Fig. 3.14) and the macaronis' essence bottles of the 1770s (Chapter 5). The smelling bottle was not identical to the scent bottle — the one revived flagging spirits, the other refreshed a fragrance — but the two shared a form, a means of carriage and a sense of discretion. What could be refilled at a shop counter and reapplied privately did not need to be applied in quantity in the first place. The second concerns the composition of perfume. Richard Warren guaranteed in 1775 that his perfumes were made entirely from vegetables, free of musk and civet and of 'any of those fetid Drugs commonly made use of in the trade'[371] — a disavowal no other perfumer examined here appears to have advertised, and one whose significance lies in what a retailer judged worth paying to claim rather than in any demonstrable turn of customer sentiment (Chapter 6). Alexander Jolly's *Naples Dew*, sold in Bath from 1768 as a preserver of the complexion, belongs to the same commercial moment: the trade was selling refinement of the skin rather than saturation of the air.[372]

Neither change amounted to all men abandoning scent. The third earl of Egremont was spending over £180 a year on perfume in the late 1780s, and the macaronis of the 1770s carried essence bottles conspicuously enough to be satirised for it (Chapters 4 and 5). What altered was the register in which perfume could be publicly avowed, and the objects through which it was carried registered that alteration: the discreet refillable flask

[371] Advertisement for Richard Warren, 'News,' *General Evening Post*, 22—24 June 1775, issue 6475, 4d.
[372] *Bath Chronicle,* 3 November 1768, issue 420, 4a.

displaced the pomander at the waist, and the perfume trade cards examined in Chapter 2 pictured female wearers over male by more than two to one.[373]

Snuff

The substance of snuff, as much as the boxes that held it, could reflect the owner's masculinity or femininity, depending upon the strength, consistency and scent of the powder.[374] In *The Tatler* (1710), Bickerstaff ridiculed Jeffry Nicknack's desire for fashionable acceptance by suggesting one could 'settle his Character' by the shape of his snuff box and the type of snuff it contained, whether 'Spanish or Musty'.[375] A 1707 ballad portrayed Spanish snuff as plain and unadorned, while mocking musty snuff as 'Man's-Dung.'[376] Nineteenth-century writers characterised heavier, more textured 'Brazil' as masculine and 'Violet Strasburg' (a delicate mixture of powdered rappee,[377] ambergris, almonds and Persian essence of roses) as distinctly feminine, though the boundary was porous: Addison's lady of fashion carried 'good Brazile' in 1712 (Chapter 5).[378]

This characterisation of different types of snuff for men and women extends McShane's discussion of attitudes towards female snuff use. Although she notes that women 'were rebuked' by some writers for the 'unfeminine filthiness' of snuff use, she also emphasises that attitudes changed over time.[379] The association of women with milder blends and elegant snuff containers suggests that female consumers could negotiate these criticisms

[373] See Table 2.2 (eleven female images to five male across fifty-three cards).
[374] Olwen Hedley, *Queen Charlotte* (London: Purnell Books, 1975), pp.335–36, n. 17.
[375] Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, *The Lucubrations of Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq.*, 1 (London: [1710]), p.198.
[376] Anonymous, *Satyr Upon Musty-Snuff* (London: 1707), p.2.
[377] Rappée is dark tobacco.
[378] Frederick William Fairholt, *Tobacco: Its History, Varieties, Culture, Manufacture and Commerce* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1859), p. 268.
[379] McShane, 'Tobacco-Taking', 117.

by presenting their snuff use in ways that reinforced refinement and femininity.[380] Conversely, men who abandoned the pipe in favour of snuff preserved their masculine identity through the choice of stronger blends and more robust containers. Sensory qualities — sight, smell, taste and touch —were thus mobilised to reinforce gender distinctions, even as snuff-taking blurred them.

Taken together, the examples explored in this chapter show that material objects functioned as items through which gender was continually conveyed. They did this in three main ways, each of which will be considered here. First, they reinforced patriarchal ideals of masculinity through homosocial rituals and sexualised power. Secondly, they enabled experiments with gendered performance, particularly within the context of masquerade culture. Thirdly, they offered opportunities to test the limits of patriarchal expectations, whether through female solidarity (such as the friendship networks from which the Bluestocking circle emerged), unconventional female relationships or companionate marriages. It will be argued here that the use of the paraphernalia of snuff, perfume and chocolate simultaneously upheld and contested patriarchal norms.

The reinforcement of patriarchal norms

Henry French and Mark Rothery have argued that men from socially-elite backgrounds were trained from youth to cultivate restraint, authority and responsibility, in preparation for their predetermined patriarchal roles. Such ideals were not universally upheld — some

[380] Snuff could be scented with peach leaves, roses, and oranges, amongst other perfumes.

snuff boxes (discussed below) reveal significant lapses in both sexual and financial restraint. Propertied men typically employed material culture not only to display their capacity for substantial and expensive 'manly' acquisitions, but also to demonstrate their social power, influence and sense of duty.[381]

The design of a snuff box could, whether explicitly or implicitly, reinforce these patriarchal norms. A prime example of an 'articulate' tobacco box (most likely) commissioned as an act of self-promotion and self-legitimisation — in terms of social standing, wealth and *savoir faire* — was one probably commissioned by the American-born English merchant Elihu Yale (1649-1721) (Fig 3.3). As the Yale University Art Gallery catalogue states, '[t]he early history of this snuff box is unknown, but it was most likely commissioned by Elihu Yale, as similar boxes are known to have been commissioned by their subjects.'[382] Both the box itself and the connected conversation piece (*c.*1719) (Fig. 3.5) communicate ideals of domestic patriarchy and imperial self-fashioning.[383] While serving as President of Fort St George for the East India Company, Yale was accused of corruption and profiteering and was dismissed from his post in 1692. He returned to London, along with a fortune estimated at £200,000, part of which he deployed philanthropically including a substantial donation to the college that would later bear his name, Yale University.

[381] Karen Harvey, *The Little Republic: Masculinity and Domestic Authority in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), pp.1–23.
[382] See https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/52745 [accessed 15 May 2022].
[383] Again, it is not known for certain whether Yale commissioned the conversation piece. See Courtney J. Martin and others, 'New Light on the Group Portrait of Elihu Yale, His Family, and an Enslaved Child', Yale Center for British Art https://britishart.yale.edu/new-light-group-portrait-elihu-yale-his-family-and-enslaved-child [accessed 14 October 2023].



Figure 3.3: Jean Obrisset, *Tobacco box of Elihu Yale,* (*c.*1710-19), silver and tortoiseshell (1.4 × 8.3 × 6.3 cm) Yale University Art Gallery 1788.1.
(Image © Yale University Art Gallery).

Although it is impossible to reconstruct Yale's motivation with certainty, his tobacco box (*c.*1710–19) projects an image of moral rectitude and patriarchal respectability. His family coat of arms, established in the sixteenth century, featured a wild boar caught in a net and the Latin motto of *Præmium Virtutis Gloria* ('Glory is the Reward of Virtue'). By using this, he is claiming his ancestral legitimacy and – it seems – potentially hoping to rehabilitate his reputation after his controversial discharge. This rehabilitative reading is, however,

necessarily a modern reconstruction, and the box's contemporary messaging would have varied with its audience. A viewer ignorant of the East India controversy would have seen only conventional genteel self-presentation — armorials and profile portraits were standard currency — while one who knew of the dismissal might have read defiance, vindication or simple persistence of rank. The box's usefulness to Yale may have lain precisely in this flexibility: it asserted respectability without ever having to name the charge it answered, leaving each viewer to complete its meaning according to what they knew.

The profile portrait on the reverse side of the box reinforces this narrative: a full-bottom wig (worn exclusively by men – its size and weight conferring immediate authority), an elegant cravat, and fleshy features together position Yale as an urbane patriarch. Material choices further communicate his status: West Indian or African tortoiseshell and American silver declare his participation in global trade networks, while conveying robust masculinity through the box's dark weightiness. Most likely, Yale's choice of the celebrated Huguenot engraver Jean Obrisset to design the box signalled both his cosmopolitan taste and his awareness of current fashions, as Obrisset's French-influenced work was highly prized from 1705 until 1728. As Marcia Pointon has observed more generally about portrait miniatures, these images were introduced onto containers 'made of precious metals [that] fused economic and social value.'[384] This box distilled power, refinement and social pre-eminence into a single portable emblem of masculine identity while also demonstrating that men, no less than women, were enthusiastic consumers of luxury objects.[385]

[384] Marcia Pointon, ''Surrounded with Brilliants': Miniature Portraits in Eighteenth-Century England', *The Art Bulletin*, 83.1 (March 2001), 48–71 (56).
[385] Margot Finn, 'Men's Things', *Social History* 25 (2000), 133–55.



Figure 3.4: Jean Obrisset, *Tobacco box with profile of John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough* (*c.*1710), tortoiseshell, silver (1.9 × 6.0 × 7.7 cm), Royal Collection Trust RCIN 380. (Image © His Majesty King Charles III, 2025).

Yale's box is rare in bearing a portrait of a gentleman, rather than a monarch or aristocrat, and in having his coat of arms as well as his portrait on the same box. Some tobacco boxes from the period have coats of arms and additional armorials,[386] while others include side-on portraits of individuals, but this pairing of the two is distinctive. Its closest parallel is Obrisset's silver and tortoiseshell box depicting John Churchill, duke of Marlborough (Fig. 3.4), made as a popular keepsake, which (like Yale's) features a right-facing profile framed by a full-bottom wig.[387] Yet the differences are also telling: Marlborough, a celebrated

[386] Examples include the Kinoull snuff box, Gilbert Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum, 317-2008; snuff box with Charles II's coat of arms, Victoria and Albert Museum, M.8261:1,2-1926; tobacco box with the arms of Foley impaling Tempest, Victoria and Albert Museum, M.708:1,2-1926.
[387] Such objects were commercial or commemorative pieces, and as such were not formally commissioned.

military commander, appears in armour and his image is adorned with the badge of the Order of the Garter, neither of which were symbols that Yale could legitimately employ. The resemblance of the two boxes suggests Yale seemingly instructed Obrisset to adapt elements of Marlborough's iconography, appropriating its prestigious associations to construct his own image of masculine authority.



Figure 3.5: John Verelst, *Elihu Yale with members of his family and an Enslaved Child* (*c.*1719), oil on canvas, 201 × 236 cm, Yale Center for British Art, B1970.1.
(Image courtesy of Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection).

French and Rothery show how patriarchal authority reproduced itself across generations of the landed gentry, sustained less by formal rule than by the everyday judgements exchanged within families.[388] The legal machinery ran alongside it: strict settlement, in

[388] French and Rothery, *Man's Estate*, p.35.

particular, tightened the descent of estates through the male line over the course of the period.[389] John Verelst's conversation piece of the Yale family (*c.*1719) (Fig. 3.5) features this same tobacco box, positioned in front of Elihu Yale and marking it as a prized personal possession. The composition presents Yale as *paterfamilias*: his grandchildren play in the background, while his sons-in-law, Lord James Cavendish and Dudley North, flank him. The painting illustrates the patriarchal dilemma identified by French and Rothery: luxury objects could affirm refinement and generosity, thereby maintaining a family's social standing, while simultaneously risking the depletion of resources essential to dynastic continuity.[390] Here, Yale's possessions (the tobacco box and the conversation piece itself) thus function as symbolic investments in both his ancestral heritage and the perpetuation of patriarchal power. The absence of women around the table reinforces the prioritisation of the male line, echoing John Tosh's observation that 'domestic patriarchy' was integral to the construction of masculine identity.[391] The painting therefore makes visual the alignment between domestic authority and broader structures of patriarchal governance.[392]

The conversation piece reflects emerging ideals of familial masculinity as defined through the father's central role in family life. Shawn Lisa Maurer has argued that in the early eighteenth century the model of 'familial masculinity' was epitomised by the 'exemplary sentimental father […] who protect[ed], support[ed], advise[d] and underst[ood] his

[389] Eileen Spring, *Law, Land, and Family: Aristocratic Inheritance in England, 1300 to 1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), pp.123-47.
[390] French and Rothery, pp. 85-106.
[391] John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.4.
[392] Harvey**,** *The Little Republic,* pp. 4–5.

son'.[393] This interpretation aligns with the portrayal of Yale as a nurturing grandfather and father-in-law, though Kathryn Shevelow's identification of compassion as a male virtue is less visible here.[394] Yale's philanthropy, notably his 1718 gift of books, a portrait of George I and goods that sold for about £800 to the Collegiate School of Connecticut, renamed Yale College in his honour, can nonetheless be read as an extension of paternal benevolence into the civic arena. His paternal role, as the painting stages it, is nevertheless directed principally at dynastic succession: the sons-in-law beside him are evidence of suitable marriages secured, and it is through them that provision and authority would pass.

Yale thus presents himself in multiple masculine guises: as gentleman, father-in-law, grandfather, dynastic patriarch, cosmopolitan consumer and imperial master. The presence of the enslaved child working as a page, marked out by a silver collar and padlock, reinforces hierarchical control and racialised servitude, further accentuating Yale's command over his household and his reach within global commerce. As Amy Lim has argued, dynasty itself was gendered masculine, as women surrendered their birth name upon marriage and were subsumed into their husband's family.[395]

Material culture played an important role in articulating and reinforcing men's roles within the family.[396] Such objects operated within broader patterns of genteel consumption, in which mere possession was insufficient. As John Styles has argued, decorative goods

[393] Shawn Lisa Maurer, ''As Sacred as Friendship, as Pleasurable as Love': Father–Son Relations in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*', in *History, Gender and Eighteenth-Century Literature*, ed. by Beth Fowkes Tobin (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1994), pp.15–25.
[394] Kathryn Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (London: Routledge, 1989), p.143.
[395] Amy Lim, 'Art and Aristocracy in Late Stuart England' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2021), p.341.
[396] Harvey, *The Little Republic*, pp.99–123.

functioned as indispensable props in the performances that constituted politeness: gentility was judged by whether one owned the right items, whether those items were sufficiently refined in design, and whether one was capable of using them correctly. [397] For men, this calculus carried an additional difficulty. Discernment had to be demonstrated without incurring the charge of effeminacy, and the line between the two was drawn not by the object alone but by the restraint with which it was held. Prescriptive literature addressed this tension directly, and nowhere more explicitly than in advice passed from fathers to sons.

In 1750, Lord Chesterfield articulated what he saw as his paternal duty to steer his son away from any form of effeminate foolishness, warning him against becoming a *beau* and recommending that he own just a single snuff box to remain sociable, but no more. His instruction to '[h]ave one handsome snuff-box (if you take snuff) and one handsome sword; but then no more very pretty and very useless things' is revealing.[398] Here, the word 'pretty' feminises such objects, identifying them as unmanly, and 'useless' disqualifies them as appropriate masculine possessions. The permitted objects are not plain ones: a handsome snuff box and a handsome sword both announce means and taste. What Chesterfield polices is not quality but quantity, and with it the suspicion that a man's relationship to his possessions might become one of pleasure rather than practical use. His exhortation reflects a broader paternal responsibility to cultivate masculine restraint, steering sons away from frivolity and towards possessions that signified self-control. This desirability of

[397] John Styles, 'Georgian Britain 1714–1837: Introduction', in *Design and the Decorative Arts: Britain 1500–1900*, ed. by Michael Snodin and John Styles (London: V&A Publications, 2004), pp. 9-38 (36).
[398] Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth Earl of Chesterfield, *Letters Written by the Late Right Honourable Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, to His Son, Philip Stanhope, Esq.*, ed. Eugenia Stanhope vol. II (London: 1774), letter 121 (8 November 1750), pp.260-1.

moderation extended beyond objects to appearance more generally. Chesterfield's assertion that '[d]ress [was] a very foolish thing' but, equally, that 'it [was] a very foolish thing for a man not to be well dressed' encapsulates an ideal of controlled refinement rather than ostentatious display.[399] By instructing his son to exercise restraint — limiting frivolous objects, regulating dress and cultivating decorum — fathers such as Chesterfield sought not only to instil masculine authority but also to prepare their heirs to uphold the family's reputation and secure its social continuity. Though his views cannot be taken as representative of paternal attitudes across the century, his book was influential and was much reprinted in the later decades.[400] Such anxieties were not confined to fathers. *The Spectator* wondered whether a *beau* might be better employed making a snuff box than eternally playing with one, a redirection that would 'conduce to the Public Emolument, by making every Man living good for something.'[401] In 1718, the clergyman John Baptist Weston denounced snuff boxes alongside other luxury items as the '[…] Inventions of Libertine, Sensual and Idle Men, lovers of their Bodies […]'.[402] The charge against the object was consistently the same — that it absorbed attention properly owed elsewhere.

This regulated masculinity was internalised from an early age by men of the landed gentry and aristocracy, who were trained to assume patriarchal roles through their education, religious instruction and social practice.[403] Within this framework of restraint and display, the ritual of sharing snuff became both a marker of status and a performance of sociability.

[399] Chesterfield, *Letters*, vol I, Letter CIV, 19 November 1745, p.26.
[400] The *Letters* went through five editions in 1774 alone and were reprinted frequently into the nineteenth century.
[401] *The Spectator*, no. 43, 19 April 1711, I (printed for A. and B. Tonson and T. Draper: London [collected edition, 1766]) p.190.
[402] John Baptist Weston, *An Abstract of the Doctrine of Jesus-Christ* (London: 1718), p.220.
[403] French and Rothery, *Man's Estate,* Chs. 1–3.

The act of offering snuff was as significant as the object itself. An Englishman who had stayed at the ambassador's residence in Paris recalled that '[t]he Dukes of Berwick and Albemarle, perceiving I was an English Man, and a Stranger at Court, very civilly took Snuff out of my Box.'[404] Although the account was published in 1710, the encounter must have taken place some years earlier, since Albemarle died in 1702.[405] That two dukes accepted snuff from a stranger affirmed his gentlemanly standing and underlined their shared commitment to politeness. The courtesy is the more telling for its circumstances: both dukes were illegitimate sons of James II living in exile with the Stuart court, and Berwick would later serve France as a naturalised subject and marshal. Yet it was the visitor's Englishness that prompted the gesture. The episode illustrates French and Rothery's argument that gentlemanly identity was bound up with social rank and, in important respects, with a sense of national belonging.[406]

Beyond facilitating homosocial bonding and signalling status, material objects also articulated, and helped to negotiate, the fundamental tensions within masculine identity: between restraint and indulgence, authority and friendship, propriety and sanctioned transgression. Snuff and tobacco boxes are particularly revealing in this respect, functioning simultaneously as personal accessories, social instruments and symbolic statements of male belonging, and embodying the camaraderie and solidarity that men derived from single-sex sociability, often expressed playfully through parody and humour. The lid on this 1733 snuff box (Fig. 3.6), for instance, is decorated with the fictitious coat of

[404] A Gentleman Lately Residing at the English Ambassador's at Paris, *An Account of Paris, and Places Adjoining* (London: 1710), p.64.
[405] The 1st duke of Albemarle lived from 1673-1702.
[406] French and Rothery, *Man's Estate,* pp.137-84.

arms of a convivial society known as 'The Original, Ancient and Honourable Lumber Troop', providing rare material evidence of exclusively male club culture. The design's own history binds it to the commercial print culture examined in Chapter 2: the arms were designed and engraved by William Hogarth as an ornament for a tobacco paper for John Harrison, a fellow Troop member who kept a tobacco shop in Bell Yard, Temple Bar — an advertisement for a tradesman's wares, subsequently pressed into a tradesman's snuff box. Though the box's owner is unrecorded, the link to Harrison is through the engraved arms, not the object itself. The Troop, significantly, was no St James's institution: its membership drew on City tradesmen and citizens — Hogarth the engraver and Harrison the tobacconist among them, the latter reportedly admitted nightly into taverns on the strength of his bawdy bacchanalian songs, selling his tobacco as he sang.[407]

The box features a mock coat of arms with symbols of consumption and revelry: a punch bowl and lantern, surmounted by an owl on an upturned barrel. The supporters, Bacchus and Ceres, celebrate indulgence in wine and food, while the Latin motto 'IN NOCTE LAETAMUR' ('In the night let us rejoice') makes explicit reference to nocturnal gatherings. For Harrison, the mock heraldry was barely a joke: the arms pictured the tavern conviviality through which he actually traded. This tongue-in-cheek device appears to promote the members' masculinity in a setting where merriment (fuelled by wine and punch) stretched until dawn — symbolised by the crescent moon, star and barrel. Executed in dark pressed horn — an inexpensive material well suited to a tradesman's society — and decorated with robust masculine motifs, the box stands in sharp contrast to Zincke's contemporaneous

[407] V&A catalogue entry W.21-1940 <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O370786/box-hogarth-william/> [accessed 15 September 2024].

commissions in French gold and enamel (Figs. 3.11 and 3.13), objects of comparable size and function but executed in more costly materials. The Lumber Troop box is accordingly the clearest evidence in this chapter that the convivial rituals of masculine sociability, and the object celebrating them, extended well below the aristocracy, and that a corpus favouring the valuable under-represents how far down the social scale they reached.

Gendered identity, therefore, emerged through use and display as much as representation, with such artefacts operating as both instruments and evidence of social differentiation. Convivial clubs themselves performed important social functions: they reinforced male solidarity across the propertied ranks — from the aristocratic clubs of St James's to tradesmen's societies such as the Lumber Troop — through the ritualised consumption of tobacco, alcohol and food, while simultaneously excluding women from the homosocial networks that facilitated political influence, commercial exchange and collective authority.



Figure 3.6: Baker (maker), attributed to William Hogarth (designer), Snuff box for 'The Original, Ancient and Honourable Lumber Troop', (c.1733), pressed horn, 3.5 (w) x 9 (h) x 8 (d) cm, V&A Museum W.21-1940. (Images © Victoria and Albert Museum).

Erotic snuff boxes: sexual licence and masculine performance

If convivial snuff boxes articulated masculine authority through ritualised fellowship and sanctioned excess, erotic examples mobilised similar strategies to negotiate a more precarious terrain: sexual desire. Rather than undermining ideals of restraint and propriety, these objects allowed transgression to be staged, contained and shared within homosocial contexts. In this sense, erotic snuff boxes did not represent a departure from patriarchal masculinity but rather an extension of it, translating sexual licence into a controlled material form. As Roy Porter has argued, in the eighteenth century '[a]mongst the affluent and leisured, sexuality thawed out. The libido was liberated.'[408] This observation is borne out by the more salacious snuff boxes of the period (Figs. 3.7 and 3.8), but in a manner that remained governed by codes of discretion and male privilege. One way for a man to proclaim his virility was to commission titillating images of women in various stages of undress, concealed within the double lids or false bottoms of his snuff box. These images varied from mildly erotic to distinctly pornographic and were revealed secretly, often in convivial settings where bravado shaped their reception. As le Corbeiller documents, the practice of hiding erotic miniatures became fashionable from the beginning of the eighteenth century.[409] The mechanics of concealment were central to their meaning: desire was simultaneously indulged and measured, visible only to those admitted into the homosocial circle. Like the playful heraldry and parody found on convivial boxes, erotic imagery relied on wit and artifice, allowing men to transgress norms of sexual propriety while maintaining public respectability. Erotic boxes served the same end as convivial ones. Both gave material form to a masculinity defined by indulgence held in

[408] Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Penguin, 1982), p.278.
[409] Le Corbeiller, *European and American Snuff Boxes*, p.14.

check, and both propped up patriarchal authority through habits that were informal yet fully sanctioned.

Joseph Addison also alluded to their prevalence, remarking that he knew 'many a brave fellow, who carries his mistress in the lid of his snuff-box.'[410] Here, the term 'mistress' could denote not only an extramarital partner but also a fiancée or woman being courted; the word 'brave' is better read as 'brazen', since even carrying the image of a socially acceptable partner required audacity in a society that prized female discretion. Snuff boxes, though intimate objects, were routinely opened in company, making their contents visible and subject to scrutiny. Displaying a woman's likeness, particularly if she was naked, signalled private affection and sexual confidence, and was a deliberate flouting of social norms that sought to keep such intimacies concealed. As Cindy McCreery observes, contemporaries viewed extramarital mistresses with ambivalence, 'combining sentiment and melodrama with curiosity, and even voyeuristic interest in the experience of women on the margins of respectable society.'[411] To associate oneself so conspicuously with such a figure — whether a cultivated courtesan or otherwise — was to advertise one's virility. This public-private duality is crucial: erotic snuff boxes functioned as portable repositories of transgression, enabling men to signal sexual prowess within homosocial circles while maintaining a veneer of respectability in mixed company. The very act of concealment mirrored the period's broader double standard, in which private licence coexisted with public decorum.

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[410] Joseph Addison, *The Works of the Late Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.* 2nd edn, 4 vols (London: 1730), III, p.221.

[411] Cindy McCreery**,** 'Keeping Up with the Bon Ton: The Tête-à-Tête Series in the Town and Country Magazine', in *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities*, ed. by Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (London: Addison-Wesley Longman, 1997), pp.207–29.



Figures 3.7a (exterior above) and 3.7b (interior below): Artist/maker unknown, Snuff box, (c.1680), English, silver, engraved, V&A Museum, 808-1864. (Images © Victoria and Albert Museum).



Examined chronologically, these snuff boxes (Figs. 3.7 and 3.8) trace both continuities and shifts in how elite masculinity navigated the competing demands of desire and decorum. The earlier silver example (*c.*1680) (Fig. 3.7), though artistically naïve, is conceptually sophisticated. It depicts four scenes with accompanying mottoes in English, French and Latin. On the outer lid is an ostensibly innocuous image of a Native American man

apparently paying homage to the sun, having laid down his bow and arrow. This image would have been visible to casual observers, including women, and it initially seems to allude to the sun-drenched climes where tobacco was cultivated. Yet, the French inscription in the sky, *'J'adore qui me brûle'* ('I adore the one who burns me'), recasts the scene as an allegory of passion: as tobacco requires the sun's heat, so love thrives on fiery desire. At the same time, the language of burning could have resonated with contemporary euphemisms for venereal disease, commonly described as 'the burning disease',[412] invoking the bodily consequences of sexual excess outside marriage — though whether the engraver intended the pun, or every viewer caught it, cannot be established; the reading is available rather than certain. That uncertainty may itself be the point. Its commissioner and owner are unknown, but the image permits a range of responses: the worldly viewer could relish the warning folded into the compliment, the naive one could enjoy an exotic scene, and the box flattered both. It operates ambivalently, conflating pleasure and peril, desire and punishment, without obliging the viewer to settle on either. This layered iconography exemplifies the sophisticated strategies of encoding that were employed in erotic snuff boxes, where publicly acceptable imagery conceals sexual meaning, accessible only to initiated viewers. The box thus functioned as a visual riddle, marking out the owner as both worldly and witty, yet also alert to the risks attendant on libertine conduct.

The reverse side (Fig 3.7b) depicts a courtship scene: a man kneeling on one knee before a seated woman whose right breast is exposed. His words in Latin 'Dulce est sic decipi' ('Sweet it is to be thus deceived') suggest the romance is illicit and dangerous while also

[412] Women were sometimes insulted as 'burnt whores' in the seventeenth century.

being pleasurable. Her response 'Arceo sed ardeo'('I ward off yet I burn') captures the tension between modest restraint and inward desire of the woman. Her bare breast suggests she is tacitly encouraging her suitor and that she has lustful thoughts herself but, at this stage, is not acting upon them, her reticence reflecting an awareness of female propriety. The gestures and inscriptions thus reflect the era's moral paradoxes.

As Shoemaker has argued, 'in courtship and marriage, in extramarital sexuality and homosexuality […] men and women were expected to behave differently and usually did.'[413] This gendered double standard — whereby men were permitted, even expected, to pursue sexual experience while women were required to preserve chastity — was not simply an abstract social ideal. It was materially inscribed on objects such as this snuff box, which celebrated male initiative while simultaneously framing female desire as something to be acknowledged and contained. The interior of the box illustrates this point: its narrative progresses from courtship to seduction, with the man formally requesting, 'With permission madam,' before lifting the woman's skirt. Even in this intimate moment, the language of politeness and deference is, ironically, preserved. The most explicit scene — later defaced, perhaps in the nineteenth century — shows the woman with her legs apart, accompanied by the motto, 'Of this snuff I shall nere have enough.' Here, snuff-taking functions as a metaphor for sexual appetite. Crucially, these images suggest acceptance of both male initiative and female desire, yet within an unequal framework: the man's desire is active and entitled, requiring only token permission, while the woman's desire is presented as responsive and passive, aroused by masculine pursuit. These images align

[413] Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, p.85.

with Shoemaker's observation that 'men and women were both seen as lustful' in early eighteenth-century England, much as earlier treatises had also made clear, though the social consequences of acting upon that lust differed profoundly according to gender.[414]

This erotic material diverged sharply from contemporary conduct literature that extolled female chastity and modesty. Following the lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695, which ended the system of pre-publication licensing, more explicit representations of sexuality circulated in print and on decorative objects. Penelope Corfield has identified this period as one where 'there were perceptible changes in public manifestations of the human sex drive'.[415] Faramerz Dabhoiwala, however, locates such developments within a broader transformation of sexual governance, in which greater openness about sex emerged alongside continuing, though changing, forms of moral and legal regulation[416]— a dialectic pursued from the 1690s by the societies for the reformation of manners.[417] That regulation fell unevenly, according to social circumstances, with sexual behaviour increasingly subject to different forms of moral scrutiny depending upon the social groups involved.[418] The *c.*1760 snuff box (Fig. 3.8) makes this hierarchy visible, showing that masculine sexual identity was contingent upon social position rather than fixed. Here, anxieties about sexual conduct register class and urban–rural distinctions more sharply than gender alone.

[414] *Ibid.,* p.63.
[415] Penelope J. Corfield, *The Georgians: The Deeds and Misdeeds of 18th-Century Britain* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2022), p.95.
[416] Faramerz Dabhoiwala, *The Origins of Sex: A History of the First Sexual Revolution* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), pp.1–105.
[417] Julian Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty? England 1689–1727* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p.66.
[418] Dabhoiwala, Origins of Sex, pp. 79-140.

This ideological tension is clearly reflected here. The outer lid depicts an idealised rustic couple — hand in hand, bearing agricultural tools, and framed by an Arcadian landscape. This imagery affirms the Horatian vision of rural virtue, in contrast to the moral corruption of the city. Yet the voyeuristic interior presents a striking inversion: a gentleman is depicted *in flagrante* with a woman in a bare, airless room. The contrast between the two couples is pointed: the labourers' sexuality is framed as natural and decorous, while elite desire is rendered illicit, indulgent and morally compromised.



Figure 3.8: Artist/maker unknown, *Snuff Box with two lids, English,* (c.1760), enamel on copper with hand painted and gilt decoration, brass mounts. 3.8 × 8.6 × 6.7 cm. The Richard P. Rosenau Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1975-140-109. Image © Philadelphia Museum of Art.

This juxtaposition appears deliberately satirical rather than moralistic, and the box mocks the very binaries it depicts. Neither the maker, commissioner nor owner of this box is documented, so readings of intent are necessarily inferential — though the survival of comparable erotic boxes indicates that this was a recognised genre produced for a market, not a private aberration.[419] Whoever owned it, the fact of ownership itself supports the satirical reading: a purchaser who genuinely disapproved of urban licentiousness is unlikely to have acquired and preserved so explicit an image. More plausibly, the box mocks the very moralists who celebrated rural purity while castigating elite libertinism — allowing its owner to assert the privilege to transgress social norms while simultaneously ridiculing those norms as hypocritical.

Set against the box of c.1680, this example shows what persisted and what had changed. What persisted is the structure. Both boxes present an innocuous image on the outside and an explicit one within, and both therefore allow their owner to control who sees what: the outer image is available to the room, the inner one only to those he chooses to show. What changed is how much the viewer needs to know. The earlier box requires a good deal from the viewer. Its meaning depends on mottoes in French, Latin and English, and on recognising that burning stands for both desire and disease. Its owner displays not only his licence but his learning. The later box asks almost nothing. Anyone who opens it sees virtuous labourers on the lid and a gentleman in bed with a woman inside, and the joke is

[419] Other examples of erotic snuff boxes include a tortoiseshell box in the British Museum (1893,1111.167) and enamel boxes depicting Leda and the Swan <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O156559/snuffbox-unknown/> and (Steven Powers collection), <https://stevenspowers.com/s_erotic_ledaswan.html> [accessed 23 July 2026].

immediate. The earlier box flatters those who can decode it; the later one simply admits those who are shown it.

Helen Berry's argument regarding the 'middling sorts' in the early modern period — that 'those who engaged [in] premarital or extramarital sexual activity […] were not only considered undesirable (not to mention sinful) but actually anti-social' — seemingly did not apply to this later context, or at least not to the elites.[420] This interpretation aligns with Donna Andrew's findings that the middling ranks increasingly distanced themselves from adultery, branding it an aristocratic vice.[421] The snuff box thus becomes material evidence of class differentiation through sexual morality: what the 'middling sorts' condemned as vice, the elites reframed as wit.

Courteous and chivalric behaviour is notably absent in this *c.*1760 snuff box (Fig. 3.8), and the woman's identity is left deliberately unresolved. The undecorated room and exposed floorboards are visual clues that might suggest this is a place of business rather than romance, and it is tempting to read the female figure as a prostitute. This interpretation would align with the 'growing visibility of female prostitution as an urban service industry.'[422] Yet this identification cannot be assumed. The sexual opportunities available to elite men extended well beyond the commercial sex trade: James Boswell's journal records him taking an actress — whom he pointedly did not regard as a prostitute — to an inn for sex, while Carter has argued that heterosexual activity was integral to eighteenth

[420] Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture*, p.160.
[421] Donna Andrew, *Aristocratic Vice: The Attack on Duelling, Suicide, Adultery, and Gambling in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), pp.30,128,131.
[422] Corfield, *The Georgians,* p.103.

century masculine identity.[423] Chapter 5 returns to this problem: by the 1780s the visual markers separating respectable women from courtesans had become unreliable, and dress alone could not settle the question. The woman on the box may be a prostitute, a mistress, an actress, or a willing social equal; the image withholds the certainty that would allow the viewer to categorise her. What is unambiguous is that this is an image of elite male sexual licence, and the ambiguity itself may be part of the joke: the laughing monkey who observes the scene, pointing at the couple and mocking human folly, ridicules the gentleman's conduct regardless of his choice of partner.

Such boxes were, in all likelihood, exchanged as gifts among men as tokens of camaraderie and as symbols of unrestrained heterosexual display. They can be interpreted as another example of male homosocial 'bonding', also evident — in more seemly ways — in the Yale conversation piece (Fig. 3.5) and the Hogarth 'Lumber Troop' box (Fig. 3.6).[424] What unites these diverse objects — whether celebrating convivial drinking, tobacco rituals or sexual conquest — is their role in consolidating masculine solidarity through the exclusion (and objectification) of women. Artefacts, in this sense, served as the glue of patriarchal power, binding men together through shared performances of gendered privilege.

Robert Dodsley's *The Toy-shop: A Dramatick Satire* (1735) similarly attests to their ubiquity, satirising *beaux* who demanded snuff boxes with 'pretty Devices' inside the lid to fuel witty repartee, though in this case, in mixed company. These objects reinforced patriarchal

[423] Carter, *Men and the* Emergence of Polite Society, pp.7-9, 195-6.
[424] Other erotic snuff boxes include Christie's, *Magnificent Gold Boxes, Objects of Vertu and Portrait Miniatures* (New York, 19 April 2000), Lot 49 (George III gold, hardstone and gem-set erotic snuff box by James Cox, c. 1770).

norms through the interplay of sexuality, humour and ritualised sociability. In Dodsley's example, a *beau* walks into a Toy-Shop asking for

> [a snuff box] with some pretty Device on the Inside of the Lid; something that may serve to joke upon, or help one to an occasion to be witty, that is, smutty[425] now and then […] a little Decent Smut is the very life of all Conversation. 'Tis the Wit of Drawing-Rooms, Assemblies, and Tea-tables. 'Tis the smart Raillery of fine Gentlemen, and the innocent Freedom of fine Ladies. 'Tis a Double Entendre, at which the Coquet laughs, the Prude looks grave, the modest blush, but all are pleased with.[426]

Dodsley's use of the word 'device' suggests that the snuff box had evolved beyond mere function into an instrument of wit and performance. It became both a prop and an object of amusement, functioning as a social catalyst in polite interaction. The rhythmic pairing of *smut* and *snuff*, with their sibilant symmetry and assonant /u/, enacts a rhetorical parallelism that highlights both the literal and figurative meanings of 'smut' — at once tactile, witty and transgressive.

Snuff boxes could also facilitate flirtatious deception of women by men, as hidden mirrors transformed interactions into playful performances. One anecdote in *The Spectator* (1711) recounts a man who hinted that 'his Heart had been long engaged to one whose Name he thought himself obliged in Honour to conceal; but that he could shew her Picture in the Lid of his Snuff-Box.'[427] A 'young Lady' snatched his box and was 'very agreeably surprised to find there was Nothing within the Lid but a little Looking-Glass, in which, after she had viewed her own Face with more Pleasure than she had ever done before, she returned the Box with a Smile, telling him, she could not but admire his Choice.' Not only

[425] 'Smutty' meaning lascivious as well as dirty.
[426] Robert Dodsley, *The Toy-shop: A Dramatick Satire* (London: 1735), pp.23–4.
[427] *The Spectator*, no.30, 4 April 1711, in collected edition, 5 vols (London: J. Tonson, 1720), I, p.21 <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CB0129106856/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=fbc3cdbd> [accessed 1 November 2022].

does the man appear polite and mannerly, but the woman is 'in on the secret' and enters into flirtatious and witty repartee with him on discovering his clever trick. She becomes the answer to the riddle, yet her reflection is transitory and is easily replaced, suggesting that the playful deception subtly positions the woman as doubly deceived herself.

Masquerades and gendered performance

Thus far, this chapter has examined a variety of objects for the ways in which they reinforced patriarchal control and authority — and facilitated male camaraderie. By way of contrast, it is now instructive to consider how material culture could also articulate resistance to aspects of these patriarchal structures. Patriarchal norms in the eighteenth century imposed significant restrictions on women's education, political influence and economic independence. Nevertheless, as this chapter now demonstrates, and as Mendelson and Crawford have argued, women found ways to negotiate agency and, often subtly, resist the limitations that society imposed upon them.[428]

This snuff handkerchief (Fig. 3.9) commemorating 'The Present taste of the Nobility and Gentry Exhibited at the Grand Masquerade Ball in Soho Square in 1771' exemplifies the tension between display and transgression in luxury goods. As Dawn Hoskin has noted, the typically dark colours of snuff handkerchiefs (or snuff napkins) would have served a practical purpose, effectively disguising brown snuff stains.[429] More significantly, their

[428] Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550–1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp.431-6.
[429] Dawn Hoskin, 'Consideration of a Handkerchief', *V&A Blog*, 16 December 2013 <http://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/creating-new-europe-1600-1800-galleries/considerations-handkerchief> [accessed 15 November 2022].

printed imagery — depicting contemporary events, scientific achievements, military victories and royal celebrations — allowed the owners to proclaim their political loyalties and cultural affiliations publicly.[430]



Figure 3.9: Maker unknown, *Snuff handkerchief* (1771) copperplate printed cotton, 78.1 x 83.82 cm, V&A Museum, T.314-1960. (Images © Victoria and Albert Museum).

The masquerade handkerchief occupied an ambiguous position. Displayed conspicuously (often half-hanging from a pocket to appear *soignée*), it marked social status and refinement. Yet commemorating masquerade attendance also signalled participation in an event where conventional boundaries were suspended. The central motif of two cupids bearing masks alludes to the occasion's defining features: concealment of identity and romantic intrigue. For an owner, particularly a female one, to display such a handkerchief

[430] Other examples include: A snuff handkerchief depicting Lord Nelson, (*c.*1805) , Royal Museums Greenwich TXT0266; Sportsman's Delight handkerchief (1760), V&A Museum T.42-2021.

publicly suggested at the very least tolerance of, and most likely participation in, the masquerade's transgressive atmosphere.[431]

Masquerade balls in 1770s London troubled contemporaries because they suspended, for a night, several of the mechanisms through which patriarchal control ordinarily operated.[432] Unmarried women could attend without the male supervision or female chaperonage that normally regulated their movements. Masks offered an anonymity that could shield participants from the reputational consequences of unconventional behaviour.[433] Critics dwelt on the revealing costumes and on the 'Assignations and Intrigues' the masquerade was thought to foster, in which women might pursue encounters outside the marriage market that ordinarily governed their sexuality.[434] Cross-dressing and the adoption of servants' costumes compounded the offence: elite men and women appeared as the opposite sex, or as cook maids and footmen, confounding the distinctions of sex and rank by which contemporaries read one another. It was this illegibility, more than any particular licence, that critics found most alarming. Once dress and demeanour could no longer be trusted to reveal who a person was, the ordinary means of watching over women, and over social inferiors, could not operate.

[431] There is no documentation relating to the ownership of this handkerchief.
[432] Terry Castle**,** *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986), pp.39–51.
[433] Ibid., p.44.
[434] Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, p.264; Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, p. 255**.**

Female agency through consumption and display

Snuff-taking may have generated moral anxiety, but it also created opportunities for female agency.[435] As Robert Shoemaker observes, 'new urban activities involved both sexes, in some cases giving greater prominence to women'.[436] Contemporary accounts depict women using snuff boxes to initiate and control social encounters. A 1714 anecdote describes a young woman deliberately taking snuff from a gentleman's box, then commanding: "'Tis a new Subject, and if you will gain my good Graces, make me a Song on my taking Snuff out of your Box".[437] Others describe women adulterating unwanted suitors' snuff with pepper, or switching their scented handkerchiefs — calculated resistance, or a joke at the man's expense, within the bounds of convention.[438] Elite women could thus employ luxury objects to assert individuality rather than merely reflect prescribed feminine virtues; though these anecdotes show what was possible, not what was common.

It is important, however, to distinguish between the different forms this agency took. The evidence above concerns women as users of snuff boxes — initiating encounters, setting terms, sabotaging suitors. Agency in commissioning such objects is harder to establish. Most of the boxes discussed in this chapter were, on the available evidence, commissioned by and for men; women appear more often as subjects than as patrons. This does not extinguish the question of female agency but relocates it — to the sitting, the gift, and the circulation of the object — as the following example demonstrates.

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[435] McShane, 'Tobacco-Taking,' 125.
[436] Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, p.277.
[437] *The Ladies Tales: Exemplified in the Vertues and Vices of the Quality, with Reflections* (London: 1714), p.187.
[438] McShane, 'Tobacco-Taking,' 108–9.



Figure 3.10: Richard Cosway, Portrait miniature of a woman, possibly Mrs Lowther, set in the lid of an ivory and gold piqué snuff box (c.1780), watercolour on ivory, miniature 44 × 36 mm, box 86 × 50 mm, V&A Museum, P.101-1931. (Images © Victoria and Albert Museum).

The snuff box portrait of Mrs Lowther (c.1780) (Fig. 3.10) offers a glimpse of attitudes toward respectable women's eroticism in private. Such semi-erotic miniatures were made for elite male viewing. The V&A catalogue judges that the box was most likely painted for a gentleman, and no evidence survives of Mrs Lowther (or anyone else) commissioning the image.[439] Primarily this box testifies to what an elite man wished to possess and look at. Yet the image could not have existed without the sitter's participation. The sitter, identified by the V&A only tentatively as Mrs Lowther, is depicted with a partially uncovered left breast, her direct gaze and faint smile suggesting intimacy with the intended viewer. Virtue is signalled through her white dress and locket, while the *décolletage* signals her sensuality. The miniature sets her against a lightly painted sky, framed by the gold piqué stars of the

[439] Victoria and Albert Museum, 'Portrait Miniature of a Woman, possibly Mrs Lowther', P.101-1931 <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O75192/>[accessed 26 September 2026]. The museum's title gives the identification as possible rather than certain, and records nothing further about the sitter.

ivory box. Katherine Coombs identifies Cosway's works as 'semi-erotic miniatures', and this image appears designed to titillate.[440] The erotic idiom itself, moreover, had a notable genealogy: the formula of gentle allure through suggestion — a knowing but modest gaze, a 'half shielded, interesting disarrangement of line at the bosom' — had been established half a century earlier by Rosalba Carriera, the Venetian artist, whom the V&A credits with originating the practice of miniature painting on ivory snuff-box lids.[441] That the visual language through which this gentleman's box eroticised its sitter was pioneered by a woman is a further instance of the doubleness that runs through these objects. Cosway's light, airy and ultimately indistinct style was perfectly suited to such hints of eroticism, leaving more to the imagination than it presented to the eye. Whether the sitter consented to this presentation cannot be established from the image. The gaze and the décolletage were Cosway's to paint, and a miniaturist could heighten such details without the sitter's knowledge. If she sat knowingly, her agency lies not in commissioning the object but in consenting to, and arguably co-authoring, an erotic self-presentation that flouted prescriptive codes of female modesty. If she did not, the box records only what its owner wished to possess. At most, then, it illustrates a negotiated rather than an autonomous form of female agency: exercised within, and visible through, an object owned and controlled by a man.

[440] Katherine Coombs, *The Portrait Miniature in England* (London: V&A Publications, 1998), p.92.

[441] Rosalba Carriera (1675–1757) began her career decorating the ivory lids of snuff boxes before painting portrait miniatures on separated ivory ovals. Her 'fancy pictures' — ostensibly allegories of the Elements or the Seasons — were celebrated for precisely the mode of suggestion later exploited by Cosway; the phrase is a contemporary commentator's, cited in the V&A catalogue entry <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O75192/> [accessed 23 July 2026].

There are parallels to be drawn with the erotic snuff box of *c.*1760 examined earlier (Fig. 3.8), though arguably this one is more daring as it appears to depict a real, named woman rather than a type, and the exposed woman is on the exterior of the box rather than concealed inside. Trumbach traces a hardening of attitudes towards female sexual conduct across the century, including an increasing tendency to regard prostitutes as victims and women as sexually passive.[442] The box does not overturn that account so much as mark its limits. In the private world of elite male possession, an eroticised portrait of an individual, an apparently respectable woman, could still be commissioned and carried c.1780. Such boxes were handled, opened and offered, and that exchange permitted a discreet flirtation.

This period witnessed challenges to the *status quo*, despite the overarching grip that the patriarchy still maintained on society.[443] Economic pressures, evolving social hierarchies and individual changes in circumstance occasionally required redefinitions of masculinity, as illustrated by Christian Friedrich Zincke's 1735 gold snuff box (Fig. 3.11). Painted by the era's leading enamellist, Zincke's box displays a man's portrait on the interior and, on the exterior, a portrait of a woman. The exterior portrait is almost certainly Frances, Lady Carteret (*c.*1694-1743), as other portraits of Lady Carteret bear striking facial similarities to this one, particularly the portrait miniature of her painted in the following year (Fig. 3.12). She was married to Lord Carteret (1690-1763) — a statesman who held senior Irish posts — and was herself a prominent socialite. She held frequent levées during her tenure as Vicereine of Ireland (1724-1730) and her 'unprecedented involvement in and control

[442] Randolph Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp.135–68.
[443] French and Rothery, *Man's Estate: Landed Gentry Masculinities,* pp.1–38.

over the Dublin establishment made her and her court a resounding success.'[444] The box's design reveals sophisticated gender dynamics. Both husband and wife exude refinement, and the close proximity of their images — one literally positioned on top of the other — emphasises the unity of their relationship.

Neither the box's commissioner, its owner nor the circumstance of any gift is recorded, so the reading offered here is one the object permits rather than declares. If, as the design suggests, the box was made for Lady Carteret's own use, the arrangement — her image prominently on public view, her husband's discreetly concealed within — resonates suggestively with her documented public prominence during the Irish posting, and can be read as a quiet renegotiation of conventional precedence. Yet the same asymmetry admits tamer readings: exterior portraits of owners were conventional, and a spouse kept inside a lid may signify intimacy rather than subordination. What the box securely supports is more modest but still telling: its design was compatible with — and perhaps meant to flatter — a marriage in which the wife's public role was conspicuous.

Set beside the other portrait and erotic boxes discussed in this chapter, the Carteret box shows how far meaning depended on which images face outward and which are concealed. On the c.1680 box, allegory faces outward and erotic narrative is folded within; on the c.1760 box, rustic virtue occupies the outer lid and elite licence the concealed one; on the Cosway box the arrangement is reversed, the eroticised sitter is displayed and nothing is withheld; and here a wife's portrait faces the room while her husband's is kept inside the

[444] Rachel Wilson, 'The Vicereines of Ireland and the Transformation of the Dublin Court, c. 1703–1737', *The Court Historian*, 19.1 (2014), 3–28 (21).

lid. Each distinguishes what is shown to a room from what is reserved for those the owner chooses to show. The Cosway box (c.1780) is the exception, and it sharpens the pattern rather than breaking it: its eroticised sitter occupies the lid, visible to anyone who saw the box handled. Placing her there was a choice, and a bold one precisely because concealment was the convention. These objects differ in date, material, subject and ownership, but in each the placement carries as much meaning as the image.



Figure 3.11: Christian Friedrich Zincke, *A Lady and Gentleman on Snuff Box (c.*1735) French gold and enamel on copper, 44 × 37mm, V&A Museum Loan, Gilbert 316. (Images © Victoria and Albert Museum).



Figure 3.12: Abraham Seaman, *Miniature portrait of Frances, Lady Carteret,* (1736), enamel on copper in gilded silver frame, V&A Museum, Gilbert 272-2008. (Images © Victoria and Albert Museum).

Nevertheless, traditional gender expectations persisted within the design. The box's sides feature feminine floral decoration, and Lady Carteret wears appropriate feminine attire: a white dress, pink shawl and pearl hair ornament. As Amanda Vickery observes, 'successful women of this era managed to assert themselves within the paradigm of male supremacy and female subjection.'[445] Lady Carteret exemplifies this delicate balance — gaining recognition as a capable organiser while supporting her husband and maintaining proper feminine presentation.

Beyond the masquerade's temporary disruptions, elite women also claimed more sustained forms of intellectual agency. Karen O'Brien has challenged the perception of the Enlightenment as an exclusively male endeavour, showing that women took part in its

[445] Vickery**,** *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p.84.

intellectual and cultural life as listeners and interlocutors in discussions of literature, science and philosophy.[446] That intellectual agency finds material expression in another of Zincke's works: a friendship box commissioned by the duchess of Portland *c.*1740 (Fig. 3.13). Designed to hold snuff and set with four miniature enamel portraits, it commemorates the duchess's close female friendships and, with them, her place in an intellectual network.

Two of its sitters would later be central to what Nataliia Voloshkova describes as 'a mid- and late-eighteenth-century network of upper- and middle-class women and men who were crucial to eighteenth-century literary and political culture.'[447] The box predates the Bluestocking assemblies by roughly a decade, and its value lies in that gap: it records the network in formation rather than at its height. It suggests that the intellectual sociability for which the Bluestockings became known grew out of friendships already thought worth commemorating in gold and enamel, rather than being generated by the assemblies that later made it visible. Indeed, two of the four sitters are known to posterity by names they did not yet bear. Elizabeth Robinson became Elizabeth Montagu only in 1742, and Mary Pendarves became Mary Delany in 1743.

The other two sitters are Katherine Dashwood and Mary Howard, viscountess Andover. Each portrait is individualised in dress and features, and as Elizabeth Eger observes, the

[446] Karen O'Brien, 'Introduction [to Section 1: Sexual Distinctions and Prescriptions]', in *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, ed. by Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 3–7.
[447] Nataliia Voloshkova, 'Letters, Poems, Flowers, and Bluestocking Friendship: Mary Hamilton's Collage-Biography of Mary Delany', *Review of English Studies*, 74 (2023), 322–39 (p. 325).

box encapsulates the 'complex dynamics of friendship' among intellectual women.[448] Eger argues that for the Bluestockings, 'close female friendships often formed a substitute for (or release from) marriage, providing a means of self-expression that was free from the pressures of an institutionalised union, so often made on pragmatic rather than emotional grounds.'[449] The box, however, belongs to an earlier stage, when female friendship was commemorated alongside marriage rather than in place of it. The substitutive function emerged later, as these women's marriages and widowhoods took their course. Voloshkova's emphasis on inter-generational bonds comes closer to what the object shows.[450] When it was made, Pendarves was approaching forty, the duchess was twenty-five and Robinson barely into her twenties. What the box commemorates is therefore an asymmetrical attachment, in which an older woman's countenance of younger ones mattered as much as mutual regard. It celebrates intellectual exchange across a generational divide rather than the rejection of female subordination that Frank O'Gorman associates with women's intellectual sociability in this period.[451]

Amanda Herbert has argued that the exchange of objects played a crucial role in forging identity and sustaining bonds of friendship between women.[452] This friendship box is an object of precisely this kind, and its four portraits characterise each sitter through their dress. The lid portrays Mary Delany (1700-1788), the celebrated botanical illustrator, wearing drop pearl earrings and a russet velvet dress, her meticulous artistry mirrored in

[448] Elizabeth Eger, 'Paper Trails and Eloquent Objects: Bluestocking Friendship and Material Culture,' *Parergon*, 26.2 (2009), 109–38 (p.116).
[449] *Ibid.,* pp.111–12.
[450] Voloshkova, 'Letters, Poems,' p.329.
[451] Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688–1832*, 2nd edn (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), p.354.
[452] Amanda Herbert, *Female Alliances: Gender, Identity, and Friendship in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), pp.52–5.

her attire. The interior cover depicts viscountess Andover (1716-1803), an amateur painter, dressed in blue silk trimmed with pearls.[453] The base features Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800) dressed as Anne Boleyn — a deliberate allusion, since Anne Boleyn was 'a queen famous for her learning and vivacity' and was later held in particular regard within the circle as the mother of Elizabeth I.[454] Katherine Dashwood's white dress, Voloshkova plausibly argues, 'implies bridal innocence and virtue', while the floral garland across her chest suggests romantic devotion.[455]



Figure 3.13: Christian Friedrich Zincke, *Friendship Box* (*c.*1740) enamel and gold, 42 × 52 × 25 mm, Private Collection.
(Image © Owner).

[453] Voloshkova, 'Letters, Poems,' p.329.
[454] Eger, 'Paper Trails and Eloquent Objects', p.116.
[455] Voloshkova, 'Letters, Poems', p.329.

Clothing thus functions as a visual language, articulating shared values and ideals, exactly as it does on Zincke's Carteret box (Fig. 3.11) — and the two commissions, separated by no more than five years and executed by the same enamellist in the same format, are worth comparing. Both are portrait snuff boxes organised around the distinction between what the exterior shows and what the interior conceals; both use dress to characterise their sitters; both commemorate a relationship in a form designed to be carried and handled. Yet one commemorates a marriage and the other a network of female friendships pursued alongside it. One workshop, one kind of customer — and the same conventions of portraiture and dress were made to serve two quite different attachments. The vocabulary served a *milieu* in which sociability and intellectual exchange were inseparable.[456] Montagu herself, later hailed as the 'Queen of the Bluestockings', hosted salons at her Mayfair home, at which chocolate, coffee and tea were served to an eclectic mix of intellectuals of the day including statesmen, writers, artists and scholars.

Love, marriage and consumer goods

Collectively, these smooth, tangible, portable objects also served multiple functions in Georgian courtship rituals, facilitating progression from initial flirtation, through engagement, love, marriage and sex — and, at times, infidelity — with snuff boxes, scent bottles, and similar items laden with emotional symbolism at every stage.[457] Gentlemen were expected to present such gifts to women to demonstrate their romantic intentions, featuring as they did emotionally-charged scenes of courtship, seduction and

[456] Susannah Gibson, *Bluestockings: The First Women's Movement* (London: John Murray Press, 2024), p.10.
[457] Holloway, *The Game of Love in Georgian England*, p.171.

commitment.[458] The inscriptions, designs, imagery, symbolism and material properties were carefully selected to signal the giver's emotions but also often hinted at the anticipated recipient's response (discussed in the next chapter's section on gifting).



Figure 3.14: Maker unknown, *Scent bottle and stopper of 'Amorous Couple',* (*c.*1751-54), soft-paste porcelain with overglaze enamels, London St James Factory, 10.2 x 4.5cm, Gardiner Museum, Canada, G83.1.1024. (Image © Gardiner Museum).

[458] Friedman, *Reading Smell* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2016), p.81.

This mid-century bottle (Fig. 3.14) inscribed ‘Le Moyen de Parvenir’ (‘The Way to get On’) appears to commemorate a romantic pursuit, though both the inscription and the scene depicted are ambiguous. 'Getting on' might mean advancing towards marriage, but the phrase had a bawdier pedigree. It was the title of François Béroalde de Verville's notoriously obscene *Le Moyen de Parvenir*, and a recipient who recognised the allusion would read seduction rather than matrimony as the goal.[459] The French motto thus signalled the giver's cultural refinement while leaving open which reading he intended, and whether the recipient would catch the joke. The decorative scene sustains this ambiguity: the woman pushes her suitor away, a gesture that might be read as the modest resistance courtship convention demanded, or as a rebuff to unwelcome advances. As Holloway observes, women in this period were expected to demonstrate 'virtue, modesty, and self-doubt to suitors, who in return emphasised their sincerity.'[460] The bottle's meaning therefore depended on the context of its giving and receiving: the same object could serve as a token of honourable intentions or as an instrument of seduction. That openness was what made it useful. An object could advance sentiments without committing the giver to them, and it left both parties room to construe, or misconstrue, the message as propriety required. For the retailer, the equivocation was a selling point: the same stock could serve the honourable suitor and the practised seducer alike.

Many companionate marriages continued to function within patriarchal structures, with wives often exercising authority in the domestic sphere. Vickery describes this subtle

[459] François Béroalde de Verville, *Le Moyen de Parvenir* (first printed c.1616), ed. by Hélène Moreau and André Tournon (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 1984). Clandestine editions, often undated, appeared throughout the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth century.
[460] Holloway, *The Game of Love in Georgian England*, p.17.

equilibrium: 'women [did not] assert […] their tastes in an incipient bid to cast off the yoke of patriarchal domination,' yet men who denied female prerogative risked being labelled tyrants.[461] The Palmerston Gold Cups (Figs. 3.15a & 3.15b) (*c.*1700) are significant examples of female-commissioned objects of domestic luxury that reflected both marital affection and a wife's autonomy.



Figure 3.15a: John Chartier, *Palmerston Gold Chocolate Cups* (*c.*1700), hammered gold, 6.5 cm height × diameter 5.6cm, British Museum, 2005,0604.2. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum).

Anne Houblon, later viscountess Palmerston (1683-1735) commissioned these unique chocolate cups fashioned from melted-down gold memorial rings that commemorated her illustrious Huguenot ancestors (her uncle was Governor of the Bank of England and other relations had been successful merchants). Anne later left these cups as gifts to her husband, Henry Temple, 1st viscount Palmerston (*c.*1673-1757) in her will, dated 4 September 1726.[462] While married women could write wills only with their husbands'

[461] Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p.302.
[462] Her will was written nine years before her death.

consent — and husbands could overturn them posthumously — viscount Palmerston honoured her wishes.

Her bequest is accompanied by a moving declaration of devotion:

> As I have long since given you my heart and my tenderest affections and fondest wishes have always been yours, so in everything else which I possess and all that I may call mine being already yours, I have nothing to give but my Heartiest thanks for Health, for which God Almighty, will I hope, reward you in a better world. However, for the form's Sake, I give and bequeath you the following:
>
> First the Ten Thousand Pounds left me by Sir Rd Houblon. The two hundred pounds Annuity left me by my father. The Gold Cup and the two lesser Chocolate Cups you would sometimes look on as a Remembrance of Death, and also of the fondest and Faithfullest Friend you ever had.[463]

Used by Anne and her husband, these cups embodied their warm marriage. Her affectionate language — employing adjectives such as 'tenderest', 'fondest', 'heartiest' and 'faithfullest' — attests to genuine marital devotion. Her husband Henry, in turn, honoured her memory in his own will by leaving £4 to four poor widows in the village to keep her father's tomb well-tended.[464] It is also known that after her death, her husband 'who was devotedly attached to her, never again resided in East Sheen' [their shared home].[465] These actions attest to reciprocal and enduring attachment between this husband and wife.

As a wealthy heiress, Anne exercised considerable financial independence. Her £10,000 inheritance from Sir Richard Houblon (nearly £2 million today) afforded her authority over

[463] Will of Anne Houblon, Lady Palmerston, 4 September 1726. Broadlands archives: MS62/BR/8/1/1. University of Southampton Special Collections, University Road, Southampton.
[464] Alice Archer Houblon, *The Houblon Family – Its Story and Times* (London: Constable, 1907), p.336.
[465] *Ibid*., p.337.

her property.[466] The cups were created from twenty-two mourning rings by London Huguenot goldsmith John Chartier (active *c.*1698-1731), featuring a hammered gold construction with a flared cylindrical shape and scroll handles. The cups retained their memorial function through inscriptions (Fig. 3.15b): 'Think on yr friends & Death as the chief', *'MORTVIS LIBAMVR'* ('Let us drink to the dead') and *'DULCIA NON MERUIT QUI NON GUSTAVIT AMARA'* ('He has not deserved sweet who has not tasted bitter'). Anne's will is one of many pieces of evidence that reveal that, by the early eighteenth century, chocolate had entered domestic consumption for both women and men, sometimes at or before breakfast, though it remained very largely confined to wealthy households.[467]

[466] Using the Bank of England inflation calculator, <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>. It is important to be sceptical as to the value of these conversion calculations, however, as they can be wildly different, depending upon what is used as the basis.
[467] *The Spectator*, no. 323, 11 March 1712, p.1; Loveman, 'The Introduction of Chocolate', 31, Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture,* pp.45–75.



Figure 3.15b: Detail of inscription on the Palmerston Gold Chocolate Cups, (*c.*1700).

Though privileged in her wealth and fortunate in her marriage, Anne was evidently enjoying this bitter, dark, 'Catholic' drink as a Protestant, despite its underlying racy reputation as an aphrodisiac (Chapter 1). Not only is she consuming chocolate but she is clearly keen to display this consumption through these cups. As elite women gained cultural authority, they became arbiters of domestic refinement, commissioning and designing chocolate paraphernalia to reflect their tastes and relationships.[468]

Anne Houblon was not unique in commissioning or purchasing art independently or alongside her husband. Conjugal patronage in the eighteenth century reveals the

[468] Benjamin Heller, 'Leisure and Pleasure in London Society, 1760–1820: An Agent-Centred Approach' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2009), p.237.

significant role married women played in commissioning works, despite operating within legal, economic and social constraints.[469] Elizabeth Percy (1667-1722), sole heiress to the Percy estate and wife of the 6th duke of Somerset, offers a striking example. Her marriage settlement provided substantial income and financial independence, enabling her to act as a major patron in her own right. In 1700, she purchased 38 porcelain chocolate cups from merchant John van Collema and Amy Lim identifies her as among the most important English patrons of fine and decorative arts of her era.[470] James Rothwell reinforces this pattern of female patronage.[471] He documents that in 1680, Elizabeth Seymour, duchess of Somerset purchased 'a toilet service, consisting of pairs of comb, powder and patch boxes, 'Jessamey' or perfume pots' for display at morning levées.[472] In this light, Anne Houblon's chocolate cups thus formed part of a broader pattern in which wealthy, elite married women used decorative objects to assert their cultural presence.

Later in the century, a chocolate set (Fig. 3.16) commissioned by Sarah Ponsonby (1755-1831) and Lady Eleanor Butler (1739-1829), known as 'the Ladies of Llangollen', illustrates how luxury goods could also commemorate unconventional female partnerships.[473] Their Derby porcelain set comprised two cups with covers and saucers: one cup displays their shared Welsh home within a circular cartouche; the other shows the entwined arms of the Butler and Ponsonby families in lozenge-shaped shields.[474] The saucers bear their

[469] Amy Lim, 'Art and Aristocracy in Late Stuart England' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2021), abstract.
[470] Amy Lim, 'The Furniture Patronage of Elizabeth Seymour (née Percy), Duchess of Somerset, 1667–1722', *Furniture History*, 57 (2021), 1–23, (16).
[471] James Rothwell, 'Taste Contained and Liberated: Women as Patrons and Possessors of Silver in Stuart and Georgian Britain', *National Trust Historic Houses & Collections Annual* (2018), 27–34, (32).
[472] *Ibid.,* 27.
[473] It is known for certain that Ponsonby and Butler owned this set and the decoration makes it highly likely that they commissioned it.
[474] The arms of unmarried women and widows were usually displayed within a lozenge.

respective initials: EB and SP. The formal, deliberately muted design of the cups can plausibly be read as reflecting the couple's desire to publicly acknowledge their attachment with dignity while avoiding scandalous implication. This set serves as a unique example of how objects could 'announce and celebrate' romantic partnerships, even in defiance of social convention.[475]



Figure: 3.16: *Sarah Ponsonby and Eleanor Butler's chocolate cups and saucers*, Derby Porcelain Factory, (*c.*1795-1805), glazed and painted porcelain, saucer diameter 15.49cm, cup and cover height 14.22 cm, British Museum, 1887,0307, VIII.34.
(Image © The Trustees of the British Museum).

Placed beside Anne Houblon's cups (Figs. 3.15a and 3.15b), commissioned a century earlier, this set measures a shift in what such objects were made to commemorate. The two commissions have a great deal in common: both are chocolate vessels, both were commissioned by women, both bear heraldic reference, and both were made to memorialise a bond in a form that would be handled daily. But Anne Houblon's cups derive their authority from descent. They were fashioned from the melted mourning rings of her Huguenot forebears; their inscriptions are *memento mori* commonplaces; and the

[475] Eger, 'Paper Trails and Eloquent Objects', 137.

relationship they commemorate is a marriage, an institution requiring no justification beyond itself. The Llangollen cartouche shows the house the two women made together, its shields their own entwined arms, its saucers their own initials — a relationship with no legal standing, commemorated exclusively through its own particulars. Where Anne Houblon's cups locate a marriage within an inherited lineage, the Derby set constitutes a partnership out of the materials of a shared life. The restraint of the latter design makes sense on these terms: the set borrows the forms of ordinary armorial commemoration to dignify an attachment that had no form of its own.

The nature of their relationship nevertheless remains ambiguous. Butler's diary entries document their domestic intimacy with striking warmth. One entry (22 September 1785) records their daily rhythm of writing, drawing and reading together: '[…] Breakfasted at half past Eight. From nine 'till one, writing. My Beloved drawing Pembroke Castle – from one to three read to her [...] from ten 'till Eleven Sat over the Fire Conversing with My Beloved.'[476] A subsequent entry (2 December 1785) captures their physical closeness: 'I kept my bed all day with one of My dreadful Headaches. My Sally, My Tender, My Sweet Love lay beside me holding and supporting My Head […].'[477] The recurrent terms of endearment such as 'my beloved' and 'my sweet love' signal both the depth of their attachment and that Butler is at ease in expressing it privately.

In public, their relationship occupied a carefully managed middle ground. Robert Shoemaker has argued that romantic friendship between women was increasingly

[476] Eleanor Butler, journal, 22 September 1785, in *A Year with the Ladies of Llangollen*, ed. by Elizabeth Mavor (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p.55.
[477] Butler, journal, 2 December 1785, in *A Year with the Ladies of Llangollen*, ed. by Mavor, p. 58.

idealised in the second half of the eighteenth century.[478] Female same-sex relationships existed, as Penelope Corfield notes, in a space 'discreet as a sexual practice and cultural preference,' legally unregulated, unlike male homosexuality, and thus more easily tolerated.[479] Although their families initially regarded their elopement as scandalous, the wider public saw the couple as eccentric.[480] Devoted to art and literature, they drew distinguished literary visitors including Wordsworth; their rumoured sexuality evidently did not lastingly damage their reputation.

Richard Lane's lithograph (1831) (Fig. 3.17), published after Butler's death in 1829, captures the public image the couple had sustained: two elderly women, seated at a table strewn with papers, books and ornamentals, before well-filled bookcases. Both wear masculine-style jackets and cravats, their hair closely-cropped, in keeping with their documented preference for unconventional dress. That such a print could appear half a century after their elopement attests to their enduring visibility and to the image they had constructed: intellectually serious, domestically respectable, quietly defiant. They kept their household and their literary reputation for over fifty years, not by rejecting society but by fashioning an identity respectable enough to license unconventional dress and living arrangements. Their chocolate cups and the lithograph worked in concert, carving out space for an alternative way for women to live in Georgian society.

[478] Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, p.81.
[479] Corfield, *The Georgians*, p.107.
[480] A.D. Harvey, *Sex in Georgian England: Attitudes and Prejudices from the 1720s to 1820s* (London: Hambledon, 2001) pp.113-14.



Figure 3.17: Richard James Lane, *The Rt Hon.ble Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby, The Ladies of Llangollen,* (*c.*1831), lithograph on chine collé, 22 x 19.9cm, British Museum, 1905,0419.5. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum).

Conclusion

The material culture of snuff, perfume and chocolate demonstrates that gender in eighteenth-century elite society was achieved rather than given, requiring continuous material reinforcement. Two things were happening at once in the objects examined here. Convention set the limits: no box, bottle or cup could signify masculinity or femininity unless it repeated codes its audience already recognised. Within those limits, individuals worked strategically — Yale commissioning an image of patriarchal rectitude, Lady Carteret negotiating public prominence within feminine presentation. The finding of this chapter is

that the two were inseparable: self-fashioning was possible only through shared codes, and every use of them, however calculated, reinforced the conventions on which it drew.

Female agency operated through appropriation and reinterpretation rather than overt confrontation. Anne Houblon turned her family's mourning rings into chocolate cups that she later bequeathed to her husband; the duchess of Portland commemorated a circle of friends in which an older woman's countenance of younger ones mattered as much as mutual regard; the Ladies of Llangollen claimed domestic respectability for their unconventional partnership. These were strategic negotiations rather than acts of defiance, and they required exceptional resources: wealth, rank and education. Most of these women exercised such agency within marriage; only the Ladies of Llangollen lived outside it, and their example shows how much rank and resolve that required. Such women mark the boundaries of elite female autonomy, not its universality.

Masculine authority required constant exposition. Yale's tobacco box projected legitimacy after disgrace; the Lumber Troop box enacted fraternal bonds among ‘the middling sorts’ through ritualised consumption; erotic examples turned sexual licence into portable tokens of virility. That such objects were commissioned in these numbers, at this cost, and shown as often as they were, suggests that patriarchal power was not self-sustaining: it was maintained through homosocial networks and carefully choreographed spending.

This claim demands the caution registered at the chapter's outset. No one in these sources says he felt his standing was insecure. The anxiety identified here is inferred from the objects themselves, and the inference is not the only one available: a contemporary might

have seen the same box and read plain confidence, which may well be what its owner intended. The evidence shows that these men commissioned, carried and displayed such boxes, not what they felt when they did so. That distinction matters less than it might appear, since the argument turns on how authority was maintained, not the state of mind of those maintaining it. But it does mean the vulnerability traced in this chapter belongs to the position, not demonstrably to the men who held it.

Across the long eighteenth century these objects registered shifting conventions, though a corpus this small permits tendencies rather than a firm chronology. Two can be traced. The first concerns how much a viewer needed to know. The erotic box of c.1680 (Fig. 3.7) encodes its meaning in allegory and trilingual mottoes; the box of c.1760 (Fig. 3.8) makes its joke legible to anyone who opens it; and Cosway's miniature of c.1780 (Fig. 3.10) displays its sitter openly on the lid. The second concerns what commemorative objects drew their authority from. Objects commemorating particular people and relationships appear throughout the period, but their grounds shift. Yale's box (c.1710–19) and Anne Houblon's cups (c.1700) root commemoration in lineage, through armorials and ancestors' mourning rings. Zincke's Carteret and Portland boxes (c.1735 and c.1740) rest on likeness and dress. The Llangollen set (c.1795–1805) draws on the particulars of a shared life, borrowing the families' inherited arms to dignify a partnership that had no inherited form of its own. Two features of the corpus counsel caution: survival and collecting favoured the valuable and the identifiable, and objects attached to named individuals were the most likely to be preserved and documented, biases that may exaggerate any apparent change over time.

These objects are difficult to reconcile with the model of separate spheres. Snuff boxes moved between male clubs and mixed assemblies; perfume bottles and snuff handkerchiefs accompanied women to masquerades; chocolate cups signalled both marital intimacy and intellectual ambition. Elite Georgian life resisted neat compartmentalisation: gender was enacted not in isolation but through constant interaction, exchange and display, which makes these small, luxurious objects powerful evidence for the ongoing negotiation of power, desire and identity in eighteenth-century England.

CHAPTER 4

Domestic Consumption: Gifting and Recipes

This chapter examines how everyday domestic practices — particularly the writing and exchange of recipes, and the gifting of chocolate, snuff and perfume — illuminate broader patterns of social identity construction. It focuses on chocolate-recipe writing by women including Lady Ann Fanshawe, Hannah Woolley, Hannah Glasse and Elizabeth Raffald, whose manuscript and published recipes demonstrate that culinary expertise could operate as a powerful medium of female authority; alongside this, it examines the gift-giving of Jonathan Swift (chocolate), the third earl of Egremont (perfume) and the Reverend James Woodforde (tobacco), and of Margaret Cavendish Bentinck, second duchess of Portland (a snuff box), to reveal the intricate social negotiations embedded within seemingly simple material exchanges. Through these practices, men and women positioned themselves within their social networks, affirmed community ties and navigated shifting and sometimes conflicting expectations across different decades and social situations — women often through recipe exchanges that established expertise and maintained relationships within and beyond immediate household networks, men through displays of domestic governance and economic control. The household emerges here not merely as a site of consumption but as a dynamic arena for gendered self-expression.

Understanding these practices requires acknowledging a fundamental paradox of eighteenth-century gender relations. Women's domestic authority was not inherent but constituted what Amanda Vickery terms 'due female privileges, authorised by custom' —

a deliberate grant of limited autonomy granted by husbands and fathers.[481] As she observes '[t]he leading, perhaps even decisive, say in the look, arrangement and management of domestic life was something that honourable and happily married men were prepared to cede to their wives.'[482] This arrangement sustained an illusion of female authority while actually strengthening patriarchal control by defining areas of female responsibility that confined them within productive, yet restrictive, domestic boundaries. Although domestic activities typically occurred within 'a framework of male superintendence and surveillance', they simultaneously opened up spaces in which women could assert preferences, cultivate specialised knowledge and maintain autonomous networks that extended well beyond the home.[483]

Karen Harvey's concept of the home as a 'little republic' illuminates how middle-class masculinity manifested itself through *œconomy*[484] — defined as the management of household expenditure, time and resources that demonstrated a man's fitness to govern both his family and potentially the wider polity.[485] Building on Harvey's framework, John Tosh argues that establishing and governing a household was central to masculine identity formation, and that domestic authority served as a cornerstone of respectable manhood.[486] Yet, as masculine structures of domestic authority became increasingly formalised, women simultaneously operated both within and around these frameworks of male influence to assert themselves and subtly contest prevailing gender hierarchies.

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[481] Amanda Vickery, 'His and Hers: Gender, Consumption and Household Accounting in Eighteenth-Century England', in Ruth Harris, Lyndal Roper and Olwen Hufton (eds), *The Art of Survival: Gender and History in Europe, 1450–2000: Essays in Honour of Olwen Hufton*, *Past & Present*, Supplement 1 (2006), 23–24.
[482] Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors,* p.104.
[483] Vickery, 'His and Hers', 23–24.
[484] '*Œconomy*' derives from the Greek *'oikonomia'* combining '*oikos'* (house) and '*nemein'* (to manage).
[485] Harvey, *Little Republic,* p.24.
[486] Tosh, 'The Old Adam', in *English Masculinities* ed. by Hitchcock and Cohen*,* pp.217–38 (p.223).

Recipes

Initially an elixir reserved for the affluent, as described in Chapter 1, chocolate evolved into an adaptable beverage and food. Recipe collections chart this transformation through three distinct forms: expensive single recipes when it was still highly exclusive; inter-generational family manuscripts that were revised and shared; and widely-circulated published compilations.[487] These changing formats reveal not just changing tastes but shifting structures of domestic authority.

Royal patronage and chocolate's elite status

Royal patronage from Charles II onwards established chocolate's prestige while demonstrating imperial power and cultural refinement, and its prohibitive cost in the early decades of availability confined it to society's most affluent members. In 1669, Charles II (1660-1685) paid nearly £230 for a 'Receipt of Chocolatte'[488] (the equivalent today to £50,000),[489] as well as £4 for 'vanilloes for Chocalate',[490] and £5 8s to 'Mr Kitson's man for grinding Cococ Nuts.'[491] Such expenditures reveal not only the king's personal investment in chocolate but also its function as a symbol of royal taste and cosmopolitan sophistication. Charles II further cemented chocolate's fashionable court status by appointing a personal chocolate maker in 1682: the Dutchman Solomon de la Faya, whose

[487] In recipes, chocolate was variously spelled 'chacalet,' 'chocolatte,' 'chocalate,' 'chaculato', 'chocklate' and 'jocklett'.
[488] Journal of Edward Montagu, first earl of Sandwich MS, vol IX, p.49, cited in Loveman, 'The Introduction of Chocolate', 33.
[489] Using the Bank of England inflation calculator <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>. Journal of Edward Montagu, first earl of Sandwich MS, vol IX, p.49, cited in Loveman, 'The Introduction of Chocolate', 33.
[490] The exact quantities are not recorded.
[491] Polly Putnam, *Chocolate Fit for a Queen: Delectable Chocolate Recipes* (London: Ebury Press, 2015), p.37.

foreign expertise enhanced chocolate's allure and reflected the crown's ability to command international talent.

William and Mary (1689-1702) further strengthened the royal association with chocolate by commissioning Christopher Wren to design a dedicated chocolate kitchen at Hampton Court Palace (Fig. 4.1). This elaborate suite of three specialised rooms, set away from the regular kitchens to prevent flavour cross-contamination, featured 'state-of-the-art equipment, […] a smoke jack over the fireplace to help automated bean roasting, and a brazier' designed specifically for chocolate preparation.[492] These chocolate kitchens served not simply as practical workrooms but as diplomatic tools, demonstrating to visiting dignitaries that the post-Revolutionary English court was prosperous, with privileged access to imported goods through imperial expansion and military success. Thus, as Polly Putnam notes, these newly-constructed rooms acted 'as a visual and olfactory reminder of England's colonial and trading power,' transforming chocolate preparation into a form of political theatre that asserted national supremacy through sensory spectacle.[493]

[492] *Ibid.,* p.51.
[493] *Ibid*., p.51.



Figure 4.1: The chocolate kitchen at Hampton Court Palace, (constructed *c.*1689).
(Image © Historic Royal Palaces).

The construction of additional chocolate kitchens at Kensington Palace and Windsor Castle under successive monarchs — Queen Anne (1702-14), George I (1714-1727), George II (1727-1760) and his consort Caroline of Brandenburg-Ansbach — demonstrated chocolate's permanent integration into English court culture.[494] Sustained royal patronage also elevated those responsible for its preparation to positions of considerable privilege. Thomas Tosier, George I's chocolate maker from 1714 (Fig. 4.2), exemplifies this shift. His responsibility for delivering chocolate to the king's bedchamber every morning transcended mere service: it constituted a mark of exceptional honour within the overt hierarchy of the royal household. Tosier's proximity to the monarch was later strategically exploited by his wife-to-be Grace (Chapter 6), illustrating how chocolate preparation could function as a pathway to social advancement.

[494] *Ibid.,* p.38.

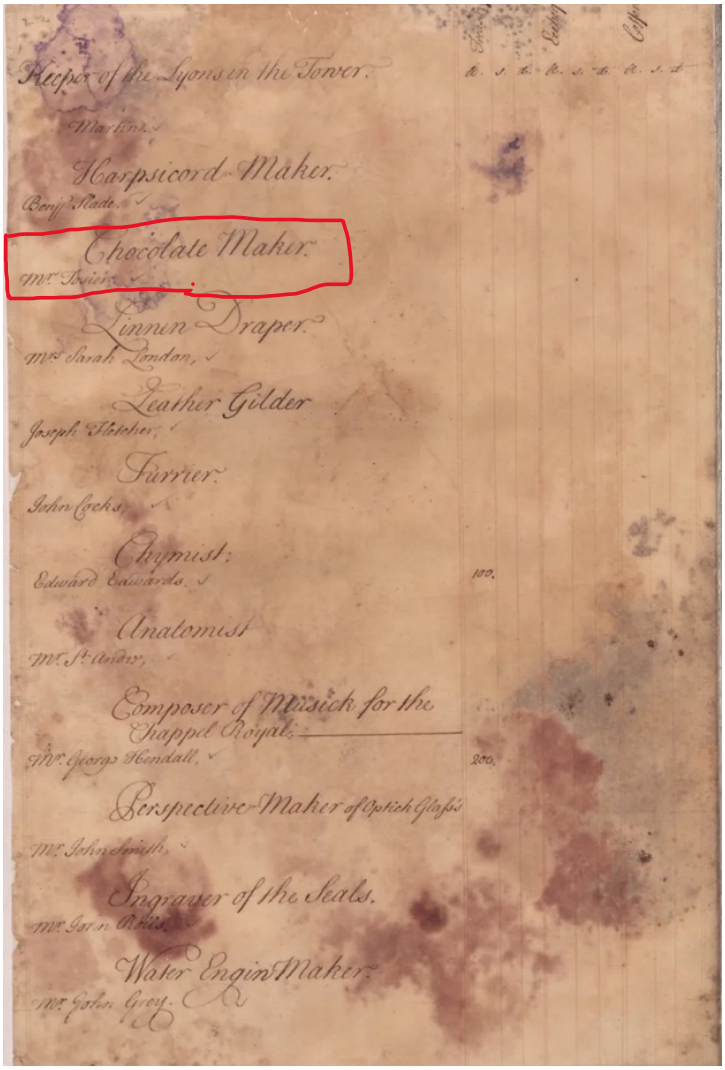


Figure 4.2: Record of staff, Royal Household Records (1727) including 'Chocolate maker Mr Tosier'. Displayed at the *Greenwich Chocolate House Exhibition* (March 2024-November 2024). Image © The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, UK.

Chocolate was never a single substance. Bitter, heavily spiced compounds and plain sweetened preparations circulated simultaneously throughout the century, so that the distinctions drinkers drew between them were made in the drinking and the selling, not given in the raw commodity.[495] Its anglicisation reflected not only culinary innovation but also broader processes of national self-definition. Combining local and imported ingredients served dual purposes: it rendered chocolate less 'foreign' — and less freighted

[495] Stubbe, *The Indian Nectar,* p.109; Loveman, 'The Introduction of Chocolate', 31.

with (or tainted by) Catholic associations — while simultaneously bulking out imported cacao, thereby making it cheaper. Such adaptations signalled a growing cultural assurance, embodied in the willingness to modify and domesticate foreign luxuries through culinary creativity.

Women's recipe collections: authority and innovation

Women's recipe collections reveal how chocolate consumption became a vehicle for personal expression as women shared their culinary knowledge first with their families and then with the wider community. Lady Ann Fanshawe's recipe collection, begun in 1651, exemplifies this cultural shift through her pioneering recipe, 'To dresse Chocolate' (1665) (Fig. 4.3).[496] Produced during her residence in Madrid as the ambassador's wife, and expanded throughout the 1660s, Fanshawe's compilation captures a pivotal moment of international cultural transmission. Her recipe is seemingly the earliest known chocolate recipe written by an Englishwoman, and marks a significant milestone in the adaptation of continental practices to English domestic culture. The manuscript's detailed sketches of specialised equipment, including a chocolate pot and *molinillo* (Fig. 3.2), together with its annotations, reveal an empirical approach that challenges stereotypes of female passivity.[497]

[496] Wellcome Library, MS 7113, Lady Ann Fanshawe Recipe Compilation, *c.*1651–1707, pp.332–33.
[497] Amy Tigner, 'Preserving Nature in Hannah Woolley's *The Queen-Like Closet; or Rich Cabinet*' in *Ecofeminist Approaches to Early Modernity*, ed. by Jennifer Munroe and Rebecca Laroche (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan 2011), pp.129–49, p.130.

The recipe has also been crossed out in its entirety, and this cancellation deepens rather than diminishes its significance. Recipe scholars have shown that striking-out was a standard practice within manuscript recipe culture, typically indicating that a recipe had been tested and found wanting, superseded by an improved version, or copied into another collection and thus no longer needed.[498] Whichever occurred here, someone — Fanshawe herself, or a later custodian of the manuscript (which remained in use within the family into the eighteenth century) — returned to this recipe, evaluated it and passed judgement upon it. The crossed-out recipe thus captures the experimental process in action: chocolate preparation was not fixed knowledge to be passively transcribed but a technique under continual trial and revision.[499] In this sense, the deletion is the strongest evidence in the manuscript for the empirical, iterative approach — a recipe deemed worth recording in the 1660s, and worth reassessing thereafter. Fanshawe's manuscript thus operates not just as a record of culinary technique but as a testament to women's active participation in knowledge production and cross-cultural innovation.

[498] Elaine Leong, *Recipes and Everyday Knowledge: Medicine, Science, and the Household in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), pp.107–129.
[499] Tigner, 'Preserving Nature', 138–9.

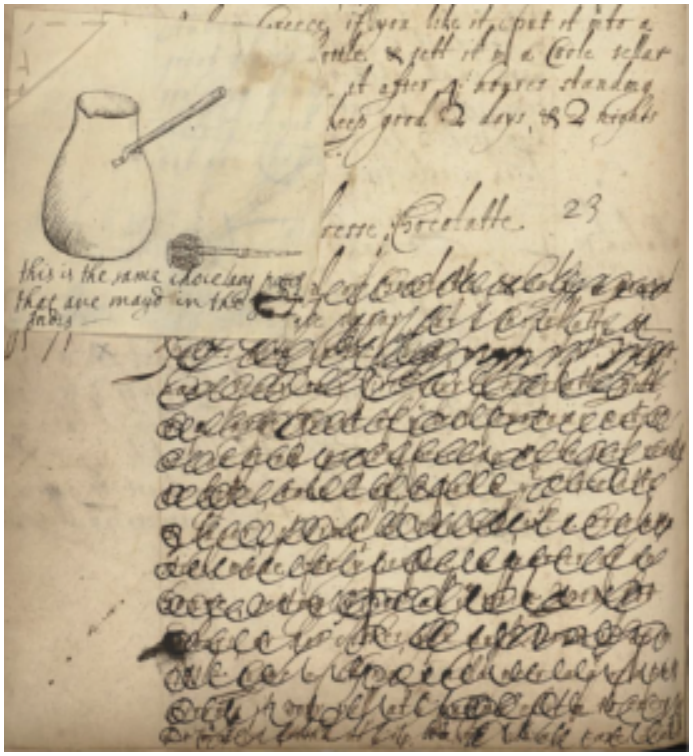
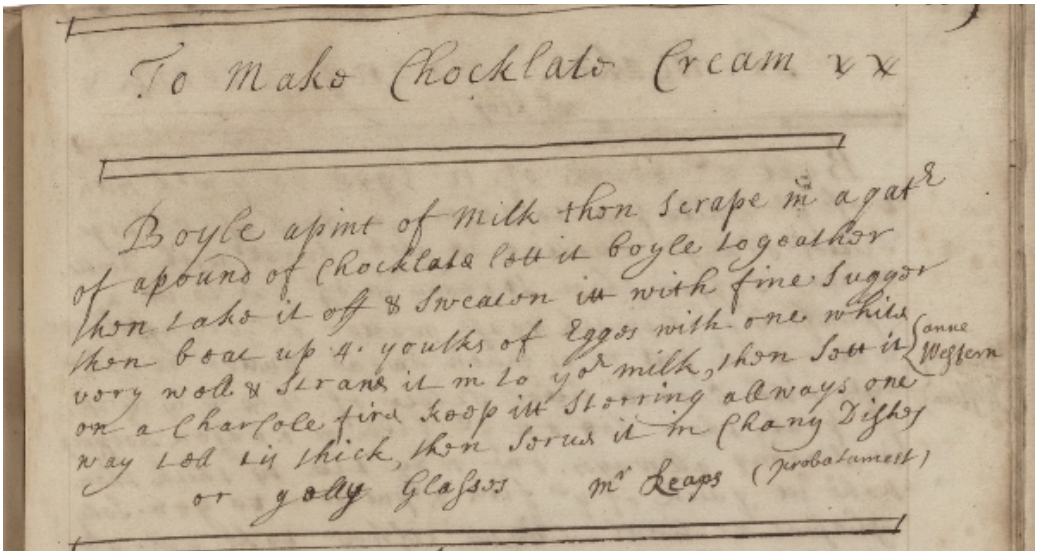


Figure 4.3: Lady Ann Fanshawe, *Recipe Book*, Recipe 'To dresse Chocolatte', (1665) Wellcome Collection 7113. (Images © Wellcome Collection. CC BY 4.0).

Beyond the rarefied atmosphere of royal palaces, women drove chocolate's broader cultural domestication by asserting authority over its preparation within established household systems of health and nourishment. Control over a substance so closely associated with royal luxury enabled women to wield a measure of social power, as they mediated access to its prestigious rituals and its perceived therapeutic uses. As the apothecary John Quincy noted in 1718, chocolate's medicinal applications were advanced by women because 'the good women delight to be their own apothecaries as far as they can be.'[500] This observation attests to both the scope of women's medical practice and the recognition it received from contemporary male commentators. Loveman reinforces this, noting that '[g]entlewomen — who were often charged with tending to the health of their household — were active in testing preparations of chocolate and proposing new

[500] John Quincy, *Pharmacopœia Officinalis* (London: 1718), pt. IV, p.544.

therapeutic uses.'[501] Women's authority over chocolate preparation thus emerged at the intersection of two established feminine domains: domestic management and household medicine.


To Make Chocklate Cream xx

Boyle a pint of milk then Scrape in a gat[t] of a pound of Chocklate Sett it Boyle together then take it off & Sweaten it with fine Sugar then beat up 4. youlks of Eggs with one whites very well & Strane it in to yor milk, then Sett it on a Charcole fire keep it Stirring always one way till it thick, then Serue it in Chany Dishes or jolly Glasses mr Leaps (Probatum est) Jeanne Wessern

Figure 4.4: 'To Make Chocklate Cream' from *English Cookery and Medicine,* (*c.*1677-1711), Folger Shakespeare Library MS V.b.380, p. 119. (Image © Folger Shakespeare Library).

As Enlightenment scepticism gradually undermined chocolate's medicinal credibility, women adeptly redirected their expertise from therapeutic applications to culinary innovations.[502] The manuscript *English Cookery and Medicine* (*c.*1677-1711) (Fig. 4.4) captures this transitional moment, when medicinal and culinary applications overlapped. Quincy acknowledged by 1718 that chocolate was 'not well met with medicine', though it still featured in electuaries to make medicines more palatable.[503] Once chocolate was redefined as a source of pleasurable taste rather than medicinal benefit, women applied

[501] Loveman, 'The Introduction of Chocolate', 38.
[502] The same happened with perfume which was initially used as a way of preventing the intake of infectious airs before transitioning to its modern use.
[503] John Quincy, *Pharmacopœia Officinalis*, pt. II, p.118 (London:1718).

their accumulated empirical knowledge of its chemical and physical properties to develop increasingly sophisticated recipes and confections.

Sara Pennell has characterised recipes as an increasingly 'gendered knowledge form', with women serving as 'conduits for this knowledge.'[504] Recipes circulated among family members, social acquaintances and neighbours, creating networks of communication and interdependence in which, as Pennell argues, the 'exchange of domestic information was a crucial medium of female association, conversation and friendship.'[505] The manuscript containing the recipe 'To Make Chocklate Cream' both illustrates and complicates this picture.[506] Compiled over an extended period, it is not the record of a single moment of exchange but an accretive document, its recipes gathered, tested and annotated across more than three decades and passing through several hands. Two names are attached to this recipe: Mr Reaps, from whom it evidently derived or through whom it was transmitted, and Anne Western, whose name — written in the margin and seemingly in a different hand from the main recipe — appears to identify her as a later cook or owner of the manuscript. The recipe was thus part of a chain of transmission that crossed both gender lines and generations: received from a man, recorded in the household collection, and taken up by a woman at a later stage of the manuscript's working life.

[504] Sara Pennell, 'Perfecting Practice? Women, Manuscript Recipes and Knowledge in Early Modern England', in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, ed. by Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 237–58 (p.237).
[505] *Ibid.,* p.242.
[506] 'To Make Chocklate Cream', in *English Cookery and Medicine*, *c*.1677–1711, Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.b.380, p.119.

This mixed and extended provenance enriches rather than undermines the significance of domestic recipe culture. Household knowledge networks were not hermetically female: men — as cooks, confectioners, physicians, apothecaries and correspondents — supplied and received recipes within circuits that women frequently organised, maintained and put to use.[507] The chocolate cream recipe, moreover, does not stand alone: it sits within an integrated sequence of related preparations — 'Barly Cream', 'Almon Creams' and 'Rasboris Creams' — suggesting the systematic accumulation of a specialised repertoire of creams into which chocolate was deliberately incorporated.[508] Chocolate here is not an exotic novelty but one exchange among many: absorbed into an existing genre of English confectionery, its recipe subjected to the same processes of trial and validation as its companions. Most significantly, the notation *'probatum est'* ('it is proven') at the end of the recipe indicates that it had not just been recorded but tested and successfully executed. This Latin annotation, more usually found on scientific, medical and legal documents, conferred legitimacy upon domestic knowledge. Whoever first supplied the recipe, the labour of testing, verifying and preserving it, took place within the household — a domain of practice in which women predominated. By repeatedly testing, recording and transmitting findings across decades, the manuscript's users employed methods comparable to those being developed in the new experimental science of the period even if such domestic contributions were rarely recognised as science. The manuscript therefore challenges rigid distinctions between 'scientific' and 'domestic' knowledge, and it does so by revealing an epistemic community that was collaborative, empirical, extended over time and, crucially, not confined to a single sex.

[507] Leong, *Recipes and Everyday Knowledge,* p.36
[508] To Make Chocklate Cream', pp.118–9.

A second Folger manuscript corroborates this pattern.[509] The recipe book of Jane Dawson (c.1670–1700) gives more than half its contents to the banquet or dessert course — fruit preserves, confections, cakes and cordial waters — and includes among them an early recipe for a chocolate cream. Like the collection discussed above, it is a working household book rather than a printed text, and one organised on the same principles: indexed, with many recipes attributed to the people from whom they came, and with culinary and medical knowledge bound together in a single volume, the medical recipes written upside-down from the back cover inward. That chocolate cream appears in two separate late seventeenth-century households, in each case seated within an established repertoire of creams and confections rather than singled out as a novelty, indicating that the absorption traced above was not peculiar to one collection.

These recipe exchanges also served as vehicles for demonstrating what patriarchal society prescribed as 'desirably female' attributes including 'self-sufficiency […], frugality and domestic expertise.'[510] Through recipe writing and implementation, women were thus able to display resourcefulness, receptiveness and adaptability. Men acknowledged women's domestic authority 'despite the lamentable legal status of women in marriage' — a concession that established seemingly independent spheres which, in practice, functioned to contain women's broader ambitions.[511] As Vickery concludes, '[o]nce the happy home was made, most genteel and middling men needed to park a woman in it as domestic manager, the better to prosecute their business affairs elsewhere.'[512] Here, Vickery's

[509] Cookbook of Jane Dawson, Folger Shakespeare Library, V.a. 461 (*c.*1680). <https://digitalcollections.folger.edu/bib226753-281361>
[510] Pennell, 'Perfecting Practice?', p.239.
[511] *Ibid.,* p.239.
[512] Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p.104.

deliberate use of the word 'park' reduces married women to functional household fixtures — objects strategically positioned to serve male convenience — meanwhile men's ability to 'prosecute their business affairs elsewhere' highlights the vastly broader scope of male freedom, mobility and opportunity.

Print culture and the commodification of female expertise

The ideology of separate spheres was actively disseminated through print culture. Published recipe books systematically targeted women, initially appealing to 'ladies' before expanding to encompass housekeepers and cooks — a hierarchical progression downwards that mirrored the class structure within the household. Although precise figures are elusive, literacy rates[513] among upper servants such as housekeepers may have exceeded fifty per cent, suggesting a limited yet genuine democratising potential in print culture.[514] However, as Gilly Lehmann notes, this expansion in readership merely disseminated patriarchal domestic ideals across class lines rather than subverting them.[515] The progression of intended audience, clearly evident in the recipe books' titles, prefaces and marketing strategies, signals not female emancipation but rather the systematic reinforcement of patriarchal expectations across the entire social hierarchy.

[513] Defined here as the ability to read straight-forward printed texts, rather than full educational proficiency.
[514] R. A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe: Culture and Education 1500–1800* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp.161–192.
[515] Gilly Lehmann, *The British Housewife: Cookery Books, Cooking and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Totnes: Prospect Books, 2003), p.62.

Hannah Woolley's promotion of her 1670 collection epitomises women's constrained agency within emerging print culture. She advertised her 'rare receipts' as beneficial to 'all Ingenious persons of the FEMALE SEX' on her title page — language that simultaneously celebrated women's intellect while firmly cementing their sphere of 'ingenuity' within domestic confines.[516] The paradox is striking given that Woolley herself, as a woman who published under her own name, was transgressing the very limits she prescribed for her female readers. Woolley's self-positioning suggests a shrewd awareness that female authority could be rendered acceptable only when framed as an extension of traditional domestic virtue rather than as a challenge to it. Her simple recipe for 'chaculato' addressed to ladies, gentlewomen and others 'who do delight in, or be desirous of, good Accomplishments' encapsulates the double bind: women could aspire to cultural 'accomplishments' but only within domains judged suitably feminine.[517] The four reprintings of Woolley's works throughout the late seventeenth century testify to the commercial profitability of equating domestic competence with female worth.[518] While readers may have valued her practical recipes, the persistence of this formula indicates how readily the print market commodified women's knowledge.

By 1747, Hannah Glasse's *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* reflected both continuity and subtle transformation in women's culinary authorship. Explicitly writing for literate servants ('the lower Sort'), her consistent use of 'their' and 'them' reveals her primary audience remained elite and middling women, with servants positioned as

[516] Hannah Woolley, *The Queen-Like Closet, or, Rich Cabinet*, 5th edn (London: 1670), title page.
[517] *Ibid.,* preface.
[518] It was also translated into German in 1674.

secondary beneficiaries.[519] Glasse's stated aim was 'to improve the servants and save the Ladies a great deal of Trouble' by writing recipes that servants could follow independently.[520] This explicit rationale exposes the underlying class dynamics at work: these books aimed to make lower-class women more efficient domestic workers, thereby reducing the supervisory burden on elite and middling women. By identifying herself as 'A Lady' in *The Compleat Confectioner,* Glasse (or her publisher) reaffirmed her social superiority while purporting to bridge social divides through shared culinary knowledge.[521]

Elizabeth Raffald's *The Experienced English House-keeper* (1769) reinforced this structure through economics. At six shillings, the book cost a maidservant earning £6 or £7 a year around two weeks' wages, so it was more likely to be bought by employers than by the servants it addressed.[522] Cheaper second-hand copies may have circulated, but the price meant that, in the first instance, domestic knowledge passed through the mistress's hands. As Karen Harvey observes, the commercial linking of women, housewifery and cookery succeeded precisely because it reinforced rather than threatened established gender hierarchies.[523]

The frontispiece of William Henderson's *The Housekeeper's Instructor* (*c.*1795) (Fig. 4.5) captures this delegation of domestic responsibility with remarkable clarity. The central

[519] [Hannah Glasse], *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy; Which Far Exceeds any Thing of the Kind Ever Yet Published* (London: 1747); facsimile edn published as *First Catch Your Hare*, intro. by Jennifer Stead and Priscilla Bain (London: Prospect Books, 1995), p.145.
[520] [Glasse], *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* (London: 1755), p.1.
[521] Glasse, *The Compleat Confectioner* ([London: [1760]), p.vi.
[522] Elizabeth Raffald, *The Experienced English House-keeper: For the Use and Ease of Ladies, House-keepers, Cooks, &c.*, 2nd edn (Manchester: J. Harrop, 1769), title page, which gives the price as 6s. Bridget Hill, *Servants: English Domestics in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 93–114.
[523] Harvey, *Little Republic,* p.28.

image depicts a mistress who is not only literally handing her female servant the recipe book but is also symbolically handing over the burden of daily domestic drudgery, thereby elevating herself through the subordination of another woman. This narrative, captioned clearly as the mistress presenting her servant with *The Universal Family Cook*, reflects female social hierarchy within the home. Yet, the image's composition adds a further layer: the foreground features a man, presumably the master, instructing another 'Young Man', probably the butler, in 'the ART of CARVING.' The exchange between the mistress and her female servant occupies a visually subordinate space to this male interaction, reinforcing the fundamental patriarchal hierarchy that placed men's domestic authority above women's, even within their supposedly designated sphere of influence. This artistic arrangement suggests that women's domestic management, however sophisticated or autonomous it might have appeared, operated under ultimate male oversight and approval.



Figure 4.5: Frontispiece, William Augustus Henderson, *The Housekeeper's Instructor* (W. & J. Stratford, *c.*1795), engraving, 6th edition, Wellcome Collection, EPB/B/28350. (Images © Wellcome Collection. CC BY 4.0).

The gendering of cookbook authorship was not absolute, however. While some men such as 'Mr Borella' and John Nott continued to write recipe books, by mid-century women dominated this market segment — a development that both subverted and perpetuated

patriarchal expectations.[524] As Lehmann argues, women writers excelled at adapting their content to their readers' changing household circumstances, suggesting genuine entrepreneurial innovation within prescribed feminine domains.[525] This market success created apparent opportunities for affluent women to gain new freedoms through consumer culture, but these liberties depended directly upon the labour of women who managed domestic tasks in their stead. The delegation of kitchen work created leisure time for elite women to pursue reading, shopping, and sociability — transforming, as Vickery puts it, 'domesticates of the morning' into 'polite adventurers of the afternoon.'[526] This freeing up of time for leisure, however, came at the direct cost of other women's increased labour.

Linguistic analysis of these culinary texts also reveals sophisticated negotiation strategies. Rhetorical devices such as Woolley's 'according to your taste' can be interpreted as discursive tactics that simultaneously established expertise while maintaining appropriate feminine deference to readers' preferences and circumstances.[527] As Wendy Wall argues in relation to the Renaissance but applicable here, it was a rhetoric of contingent authority — 'women might have been caught in legal, social, and economic nets, but some found a way to dance within them quite visibly […].'[528]

[524] Mr Borella, *The Court and Country Confectioner: Or the Housekeeper's Guide... by an Ingenious Foreigner* (London: 1770); John Nott, *The Cook's and Confectioner's Dictionary, Or, The Accomplish'd Housewife's Companion* (London: Printed for C. Rivington, 1723).
[525] Lehmann, *The British Housewife,* pp.165–66.
[526] Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p.9.
[527] Hannah Woolley, *The Queen-Like Closet,* p.102.
[528] Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), p.283.

Statistical analyses by Peter Earle[529] and Lorna Weatherill[530] further illuminate the transformation of chocolate consumption practices. Their quantitative research establishes important trends — particularly valuable as diaries and letters rarely mention utensils directly — though it cannot capture the finer social distinctions of ownership, and Weatherill's sample remains relatively limited. Her figures derive from probate inventories, a source that, as she herself acknowledges, over-represents the elites and 'middling sorts': those below the rank of yeoman rarely left inventories, so her percentages describe the propertied classes rather than English society at large.[531] Her most striking finding is metropolitan and must be read as such: among London inventories, ownership of equipment for hot drinks rose from virtually non-existent in 1685 to 57 per cent by 1725 (Weatherill, Table 3.4).[532] Within these parameters, however, the trend is unambiguous. Among precisely those Londoners of the middling and upper ranks who form the subject of this thesis, the adoption of chocolate (alongside tea and coffee) equipment within a single generation signifies not merely the spread of new drinking habits but a reconfiguration of domestic authority and consumer agency — even if the pace of adoption beyond the capital, and further down the social scale, was slower.

These trends demonstrate how chocolate's domestication enabled a subtle yet consequential form of female empowerment. The prescription in female-authored recipes for specialised equipment — mills, pots, cups, saucers and frothing whisks — established women as authoritative arbiters of proper consumption practices. Glasse's

[529] Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London, 1660–1730* (London: Methuen, 1989), pp.295, 387.
[530] Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp.25–32.
[531] *Ibid.,* pp.1–22.
[532] *Ibid.*, pp.26–8, 62.

recommendation that chocolate mills could be repurposed for syllabub preparation exemplifies this tension: it illustrates female ingenuity and adaptive use of material culture while reinforcing women's expertise in efficient household management.[533] Female recipe writers published texts that demystified chocolate preparation, thereby popularising its domestic consumption. In this capacity, women acted as cultural intermediaries, exercising intellectual authority over how foreign commodities were appropriated into English domestic practice.

Daniel Defoe's observation that chocolate pots had spread even to 'the meanest tradesman' reflects women's central role in chocolate's cultural assimilation, partly achieved through female-authored recipes that extended its reach beyond elite households into the middling ranks.[534] Yet, his explicit disapproval of this 'expensive humour of the times' exposes ongoing tension surrounding appropriate consumption patterns, particularly as chocolate-equipment ownership transcended traditional class boundaries. Women's recognised authority in determining appropriate chocolate equipment, preparation methods and consumption practices constituted a limited, but meaningful, form of domestic influence.

These evolving chocolate recipes thus reveal the household as a complex space, with domestic responsibilities stratified along both gendered and class lines. However, as Linda Colley argues, this system functioned more as a contractual arrangement requiring mutual participation from multiple parties rather than simple patriarchal domination.[535] Authors

[533] [Glasse], *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy*, new edn (London: 1780), p.218.
[534] Daniel Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman*, (London: Charles Rivington, 1726–27), vol. 2, p.31.
[535] Colley, *Britons* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), p.269.

such as Woolley demonstrated notable culinary innovation — particularly in chocolate confectionery, achieving commercial success while remaining within the domestic genre.

Nevertheless, recipe evidence defies simplistic interpretation. Glasse could become a bestselling author, but only by addressing household management. Elite women could exercise sophisticated consumer judgement about chocolate equipment, but this expertise marked them out as capable household managers rather than challenging their domestic confinement. Even the quantitative data presents ambiguities: Weatherill's finding that men and women owned hot drink equipment in equal measure could indicate shared domestic responsibility or women's successful control of a new sphere of consumption — or both at once.[536] It does not explain whether women acquired chocolate-making equipment because it was expected of them as household managers, or because they actively sought it out as participants in a fashionable new consumer culture. Equal ownership might reflect harmony and co-operation within the household, but it might equally reflect competing claims over a domestic space that was being reshaped by new commodities.

Gifting

The rest of this chapter examines the layers of meaning embedded within these luxury commodities — chocolate, snuff and perfume — when exchanged as gifts. These items became tools for deliberate messaging, with givers encoding messages about status,

[536] Lorna Weatherill, 'A Possession of One's Own: Women and Consumer Behaviour in England, 1660–1740', *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1986), 131–56.

intimacy or obligation that reflected contemporary ideals of masculinity and femininity. Marcel Mauss' *The Gift* provides helpful theoretical grounding for understanding these exchanges. He argues that gift exchange is structured around three interconnected obligations — to give, to receive, and to reciprocate — creating enduring social relationships that differed fundamentally from market transactions.[537] For Mauss, gifts are not simply material objects transferred between individuals: they carry the identity and social intentions of the giver and create continuing obligations between participants, binding them within extended networks of mutual obligation.

Interpreting historical gift exchange poses considerable challenges due to the fragmentary evidence available. While physical artefacts and textual references attest to the existence of gifts, they seldom capture the performative elements that imbued these exchanges with significant meaning. The ceremonial gestures of presentation, the recipients' physical and spoken responses, and the calculated intentions behind these rituals are rarely recorded.

Margot Finn has shown that gifting permeated nearly all social relationships in early modern England, creating a dense web of obligation that crossed boundaries of class, occupation and kinship.[538] By looking at what people choose to give and the manner in which they present their gifts, it is possible to understand what men and women value, both economically and morally.[539] Douglas and Isherwood provide an equally valuable framework for interpreting the social significance of gifting in eighteenth-century society. Eschewing a strictly gendered approach, they position gifting as a universal social lubricant

[537] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift* (Chicago: HAU Books, 2016), pp.34–7.
[538] Finn, 'Men's Things', *Social History*, 25.2 (2000), 133–55 (142).
[539] Felicity Heal, *The Power of Gifts* (Oxford: OUP, 2014), p.4.

that sustained relationships across gender and class lines. Their observation that ‘failure to participate in this constant neighbourly traffic in gifted goods and foodstuffs [...] detracted seriously from the defaulter's standing in the community’ reveals how gift exchange functioned not as optional generosity but as mandatory social participation.[540]

The social repercussions of neglecting such obligations are illustrated by an entry of 1781 in the diary of the Reverend James Woodforde, concerning his neighbouring landowner Mr Hall. Hall, Woodforde observed, 'is not looked upon in this neighbourhood so much as he used to be, as his visits are merely interested for himself, and that he never makes any kind of return for the same, not even the smallest Present to any Person.'[541] Gift-giving here operates as a moral barometer within the community, and the charge that Hall's visits were 'merely interested for himself' is particularly revealing: without reciprocal exchange, social interaction was read as extractive rather than mutually sustaining. Gift exchange took on heightened significance during courtship, transcending class divisions in ways that few other social practices achieved. Felicity Heal's observation in *The Power of Gifts* (2014) that courtship was ‘one of the few life experiences that involved gift giving for all but the poorest individuals’ highlights how romantic gift-giving provides opportunities to examine cultural practices that bridged multiple social strata.[542]

[540] Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1996), p.38.
[541] James Woodforde, *The Diary of a Country Parson, 1758–1802*, ed. by John Beresford (Oxford: OUP, 1978), p.173.
[542] Heal, *The Power of Gifts,* p.32.

Snuff

For wealthy participants, foreign luxury goods such as chocolate and snuff became powerful vehicles for expressing or performing emotion, carrying symbolic resonance through their exotic origins and sensory qualities. The touch, smell, taste and visual appeal of these gifts created intimacy between giver and recipient, as they travelled from one person's hand into the body of another through ingestion or through inhalation. This sensuality was noted by Lady Mary Coke in 1767 when she critically observed that:

> [Mr Walpole] made the Princess Amelia a present of his snuff box with the Picture of Harry the fourth of France, who She was expressing her admiration of. As he had wore it in his pocket for above a year, I don't think it was proper, at least I shou'd have thrown out the snuff; however, it was very politely received & accepted.[543]

Coke's discomfort at the intimate familiarity of the used snuff box — particularly her suggestion that the snuff should have been 'thrown out' — highlights how such gifts mediated a physical intimacy that could occasionally transgress propriety. Although this is not a courtship example and is atypical because it involves a princess and one of the king's subjects, Amelia's gracious acceptance of this gift (despite its unseemly undertones) demonstrates the delicate negotiation of proximity and decorum that characterised such exchanges. As Beaven and Martin conclude, 'the sensual dimension of snuff-taking was matched by an affective charge carried by the box.'[544] This observation helps explain why snuff boxes functioned so effectively as courtship gifts. As discussed in Chapter 3, their material qualities — they were often decorated with meaningful individualised imagery —

[543] Lady Mary Coke, *The Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke*, ed. by James A. Home, 4 vols (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1889–96), II, pp.430–31.
[544] Beaven and Martin, 'The Stuff of Snuff', 7.1 (2023), 95–118 (p.118).

further intensified their emotional significance, making them ideal vehicles for expressing desired intimacy.

Snuff boxes given as gifts could also become sites of tension within marriage, their emotional significance often exceeding their monetary value. The tension between family loyalty and romantic desire is evident in Laetitia Pilkington's *Memoirs* (1748), where she records her outrage when her husband, Matthew Pilkington, took her father's snuff box from her and gave it to his lover, Mrs Warren:

> [n]othing that ever she got vex'd me so much as Mr P___n's giving her my Father's Snuff-box, which he borrow'd from me, under pretence, that taking a little Snuff preserv'd him from catching Sickness in Places he was obliged to go to. He declar'd to me, he had lost it; but I afterwards saw it with her, as also several other Things belonging to me.[545]

Under coverture, the box was legally Matthew's already. His wife's personal property became his on marriage, so he had no need to borrow it and no legal obligation to return it. That he framed the transaction as a loan, with a pretext about his health, suggests that both of them recognised a claim the law did not: the box was hers because it had been her father's. His deception therefore wronged her twice. It removed an object bound up with her memory of her father, and it passed that object to Mrs Warren, so that a token of filial attachment became a courtship gift. Pilkington's phrase 'several other Things belonging to me' insists on an ownership that coverture denied her. Sally Holloway has argued that consumer societies struggled to separate market value from emotional connection, as material objects increasingly carried human relationships.[546] This episode shows that

[545] Laetitia Pilkington, *The Memoirs of Mrs Lætitia Pilkington …* 2 vols (London: 1748), I, p.238.
[546] Holloway, *The Game of Love*, p.95.

tension at its sharpest. A single luxury object passed from father to daughter, from wife to husband and from husband to mistress, and its meaning as a gift depended on that history, even when the history was one of betrayal.

While men traditionally initiated romantic gifting, wartime conditions — particularly during the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) — created opportunities for some women to adopt more active roles in romantic exchange. The evidence is thin and satirical, and the claim must remain correspondingly modest: it rests principally on a single mocking anecdote of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's, which is best read as evidence of what contemporaries found remarkable rather than of how women behaved more widely. Any shift that occurred was due to the physical absence of fighting men and what historians such as Julia Banister have identified as a crisis in masculine identity caused by military setbacks — most notoriously Byng's failure at Minorca in 1756, after which the press questioned English forces' masculinity (see Chapter 2).[547] This public undermining of martial masculinity, combined with male absence at home, seemingly created space for some women to behave more energetically in courtship, despite prevailing beliefs that 'a woman who tried to act like a man was manifestly unnatural.'[548]

Montagu's 1760 letter noted that 'Mrs Cartwright […] has pawned her diamond necklace, to buy Valentine a snuff-box. These wars make men so violent scarce, that these good ladies take up with the shadows of them.'[549] Though Montagu's satirical tone suggests

[547] Julia Banister, *Masculinity, Militarism and Eighteenth-Century Culture, 1689–1815* (Cambridge: CUP, 2018), pp.72–96.
[548] Colley, *Britons,* p.257.
[549] Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762)*, ed. by James Archibald Stuart (London: Richard Bentley, 1837), III, 135–36, 209.

exaggeration, the anecdote reveals that wartime disruption made unconventional courtship behaviour at least plausible. Mrs Cartwright's reported action of pawning her jewellery to purchase a snuff box for a man suggests both practical adaptation to male absence, and a temporary suspension of normative decorum. Montagu's characterisation of men as 'violent scarce' and women as settling for 'shadows of them' carries a double edge: while mocking women's supposed desperation and the inadequacy of available men, she simultaneously acknowledges how social disruption created new opportunities for women within courtship. Women ordinarily would not initiate such gifts to unrelated men and Montagu's satire depends on her audience recognising the behaviour as transgressive — so that the anecdote both disturbs and reaffirms gendered expectations.

Both men and women recognised that carefully chosen gifts held significant power in romantic negotiations. Even non-gifts could serve similar functions, as Frances Burney's 1775 letter demonstrates.[550] Though not technically a gift, Dr King's entrusting of Burney with his snuff was a deliberate attempt to establish intimacy with her. She wrote

> […] I have been just interrupted by a visit from Dr. King, […] he enquired of me for *his snuff*. […] *Shamming* a little confusion, I confessed I knew not where it was. He reproached me with great gravity, said he had depended upon *me*, but found he had *mistaken his man.*

By feigning confusion about the snuff's location, Burney subtly rejected his advances. His disproportionate response — reproaching her 'with great gravity' and declaring he had

[550] Frances Burney d'Arblay, *The Early Diary of Frances Burney, 1768–1778, with a Selection from Her Correspondence and from the Journals of Her Sisters, Susan and Charlotte Burney*, vol II, ed. by Annie Raine Ellis (London: George Bell and Sons, 1889), Letter from Miss Burney to Mr Crisp, April 1775, 45–6.

'mistaken his man' — reveals the emotional exposure in such exchanges. Dr King's use of ‘man’ to describe a woman (Burney) is particularly telling, as it reflects the gendered language of trust and reliability in eighteenth-century conversation, where masculine terms were often employed to denote dependability, regardless of the person's actual gender. As Felicity Heal explains, gift-giving was ‘a process, rather than exclusively a material entity’ that required ‘proper understanding between the transacting parties’ to succeed.[551] Dr King's hasty retreat when another male appeared further demonstrates how his attempt at dominance depended upon specific gendered circumstances. This example also shows how recipients could redefine the meaning of the exchange, transforming an assertion of masculine authority into a moment of masculine vulnerability.

Eighteenth-century courtship gifts increasingly emphasised romantic expression over the religious obligations that had structured earlier forms of gift-giving. Gifts such as chocolate, perfume and snuff were particularly desirable before any formal engagement because their perishable nature made them easier to accept than more durable romantic tokens – they could be consumed, rather than retained as potentially compromising or embarrassing evidence of intimacy.

Chocolate

Jonathan Swift's letters in his *Journal to Stella* (1710–1713) reveal how the effort invested in gift-giving could outweigh the gift's monetary value. His determined efforts to send

[551] Heal, *The Power of Gifts,* p.23.

chocolate to Esther Johnson (Stella) between 1710 and 1712 – coordinating carriers, arranging transport, and tracking packages across the Irish Sea – demonstrate his affection through careful logistical devotion.[552] Swift's meticulous orchestration of the delivery involving multiple intermediaries (Sterne, Curry and Hawkshaw) shows how gifting activated complex social networks, with each overcome obstacle serving as proof of emotional investment, which he publicised to Stella.[553] His mounting frustration when arrangements failed ('The D___ burst Hawkshaw') and his anxious defence of his own efforts ('I [...] packed them up with my own hands') reveal how personal reputation became entangled with successful delivery.[554] His correspondence exposes the multifaceted anxieties of long-distance gift exchange: concerns about contamination ('I hope that [Rebecca] Dingley's tobacco did not spoil Stella's chocolate'),[555] preservation, timing, and ultimately recipient satisfaction ('I would be glad to know whether you like it').[556] While Swift orchestrated the gift's journey with apparent masculine control, Stella ultimately held the power to validate his efforts through her response. His anxious inquiry about whether she was 'this minute drinking the chocolate' reveals how the gift's meaning remained incomplete until confirmed by the recipient's approval. Swift thus transformed a modest material gift into a sustained and highly performative demonstration of affection, where organisational effort became the truest measure of its emotional value. Equally, his concern could also be read as masculine 'performance anxiety' about appearing competent in Stella's eyes.

[552] Jonathan Swift, *The Journal to Stella: Letters to Esther Johnson and Rebecca Dingley,* 1710–1713, ed. by Abigail Williams (Cambridge: CUP, 2013), pp. 41, 56, 91, 107, 170, 176.
[553] Swift, *Journal to Stella*, Letter VI, 16 October 1710, p.41.
[554] *Ibid.,* Letter XII, vol XIV, 1 January 1711, p.107.
[555] *Ibid.,* Letter XI, vol XIV, 14 December 1710, p.91.
[556] *Ibid.,* Letter XIX, vol XIV, 26 March 1711, p.170.

Beyond their emotional resonance, expensive gifts also functioned as potent instruments for displaying social standing and consumer discernment. As Linda Levy Peck observes, both men and women 'knowingly used [and gifted] luxury goods to display status,' transforming objects from passive indicators of wealth into active performances of identity.[557] Although the exchange of gifts among the wealthy had long been established, the eighteenth century marked a pivotal expansion in this culture of consumption. The broadening of global trade networks brought an influx of imported luxuries into England, transforming both availability and meaning.[558] No longer confined to the aristocracy, luxury gifting increasingly extended to the prosperous 'middling sorts' who participated in the exchange of goods that had once signified exclusive gentility.[559] The adoption of fashionable gifting by this group was not merely imitation of elite behaviour but a way for them to reshape their own material culture and social aspiration, using imported consumables such as chocolate, snuff and perfume to express refinement, wealth and a worldly outlook.

Perfume

George O'Brien Wyndham, third earl of Egremont (1751–1837), was one of the richest men in England, and his household accounts at Petworth offer rare insight into aristocratic gifting at its most extravagant. They record his own consumption of perfume, chocolate

[557] Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor: Society and Culture in Seventeenth Century England*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2005) p.347.
[558] *Ibid.,* p.38.
[559] *Ibid.,* p.347.

and snuff, and they point to perfume bought in quantities that only extensive gifting could explain. As M. A. Lower notes, his spending reached extraordinary levels: 'in the course of sixty years in acts of charity and liberality the enormous sum of one million two hundred thousand pounds, or about £20,000 per annum.'[560] His lifetime's expenditure demonstrates how the gifting of expensive items functioned as both a personal expression and as a public performance of aristocratic munificence. Egremont's consumption shows what virtually unlimited resources could purchase, though his exceptional case clearly calls for caution in drawing wider conclusions. Unfortunately, Egremont's executors — disapproving of his libertine lifestyle — burnt most of his personal papers on his death, complicating efforts to distinguish personal consumption from gift-giving.[561] However, surviving records reveal substantial purchases of expensive items that far exceeded reasonable personal consumption.

Egremont's two Grand Tours (between 1770 and 1774) profoundly shaped his consumption habits and taste. His subsequent declaration that 'everything in fashionable life, dress, food, amusement, morals and manners […] must be French' reflected a broader Francophilia among the British aristocracy, though he embraced this continental aesthetic with notable zeal.[562] His extensive perfume purchases from the prestigious Raibaud et Louis Parfumiers beginning in 1774 demonstrate how imported European goods functioned as markers of social capital. French perfumes carried extraordinary significance

[560] M. A. Lower, *The Worthies of Sussex* (London: George P. Bacon, 1865), p.90, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
[561] S. Bucklow, 'The Third Earl of Egremont: A Patron and His Portrait: New Light on Petworth', *Apollo*, 137 (1 June 1993), 363–66 (365).
[562] Letter to Lord Holland, in H. A. Wyndham, *A Family History, 1688–1837: The Wyndhams of Somerset, Sussex and Wiltshire* (Oxford: OUP, 1950), pp.217–8.

beyond their exorbitant cost — their continental provenance amplified Egremont's performative assertions of taste, wealth and cosmopolitan sophistication, reinforcing his elevated social position through both personal use and strategic gifting.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of Egremont's gifting practices is the light it sheds on the unconventional social ecosystem he cultivated at Petworth House in Sussex. This remarkable household accommodated his mistresses, illegitimate children, a mistress-turned-wife, relatives, friends and resident artists — described succinctly by Lady Holland as 'a strange medley [of] artists and their wives and large numbers of children.'[563] Charles Greville later described Petworth as being 'open to all of [Egremont's] friends [...] and like a great inn.'[564] Petworth's current archivist, Alison McCann, has identified at least sixteen children by nine different women, with the likelihood of additional undocumented offspring.[565] This extensive *ménage* provides crucial context for understanding the extraordinary quantities of perfume that Egremont purchased, as his unorthodox household would probably have required continuous diplomatic maintenance through these imported gifts.

Egremont maintained a consistent and substantial financial commitment to perfume throughout many years of his adult life, with fragrance representing one of his most significant household expenses (see Table A4.1). The scale and persistence of this spending suggests its strategic importance to his social operations. In 1775, at just twenty-three

[563] Christopher Rowell, *Petworth: The People and the Place* (London: Scala Publishers, 2012), p.72.
[564] Charles Cavendish Fulke Greville, *The Greville Memoirs*, ed. by Henry Reeve, 8 vols (London, 1888), IV, pp.24–26.
[565] 'Petworth', *Secrets of the National Trust*, hosted by Alan Titchmarsh, Series 4, Episode 1 (*Channel 5*, transmitted on 23 July 2019).

years old, he was already spending over £181[566] on perfume — a household expense surpassed only marginally by payments to his tailor, Richard Raisby (Fig. 4.6). By this time, he had embarked on several love affairs, including a long-term relationship with Lady Melbourne that began in the 1770s. Given that his engagement to Lady Maria Waldegrave was broken off (most likely due to his philandering) in 1780, it is reasonable to conclude that some of his perfume spending was directed at his mistresses.[567] Some also served his personal use: as a flamboyant macaroni, he would most likely have worn copious quantities of scented powder, fragrant pomade and perfume itself.

Egremont's approach to relationships reveals the transactional nature of aristocratic social connections and the demonstrative aspects of elite masculinity. His numerous romantic entanglements before and after his marriage — including with Elizabeth Fox (mother of at least four of his children) — demonstrate the central roles gifts played. His cynical observation that '[t]here was hardly a young lady of fashion [that] did not think it almost a stain upon her reputation if she was not known as having cuckolded her husband' reveals his understanding of relationships between married couples as performances staged for social effect.[568] The Petworth House archives also contain numerous bills for clothing purchased by his wife, Elizabeth, from establishments around Piccadilly and Bond Street.[569] This is further evidence of how generosity could demonstrate wealth, facilitate relationships, maintain status and serve the giver's personal interests.

[566] This includes the 1774–1775 bill for £46:19:10. PHA/6/6608.
[567] Christopher Rowell, *Petworth: The People and the Place* (London: Scala Publishers, 2012), p.71.
[568] F. Wilson, 'The Courtesan's Revenge: Hariette Wilson, the Woman Who Blackmailed the King', *The Contemporary Review* (2004), 44.
[569] Sheila Haines, Leigh Lawson and Alison McCann, *Elizabeth Ilive, Egremont's Countess* (Petworth: Bakehouse Press, 2017), p.36.

This pattern of prioritising perfume buying continued throughout the following decades, with it consistently ranking among his top three or four expenditures alongside more essential services such as coach-making and the delivery of coal. Using the available evidence (Fig. 4.6), the earl's spending on perfume peaked during the mid-1780s, when Louis Perfumiers received his highest household payments for two consecutive years (1784 to 1786).[570] Although his perfume expenses decreased in the late 1780s, they were still dramatic — indeed, one new supplier, Bourgeois Perfumer, received over 11 per cent of his total household budget in 1787–1788, amounting to more than £180 of his £1650 in household bills.[571] This extravagant spending continued well into the 1790s, with Bourgeois & Co. consistently receiving the largest or second-largest household payments, culminating in a remarkable £254 perfume bill between 1792 and 1793 — his most expensive household bill of that year and representing over 16 per cent of his total £1,555 tradesman costs.[572]

[570] PHA/9/7539.
[571] PHA/9/7545.
[572] PHA/9/13485.

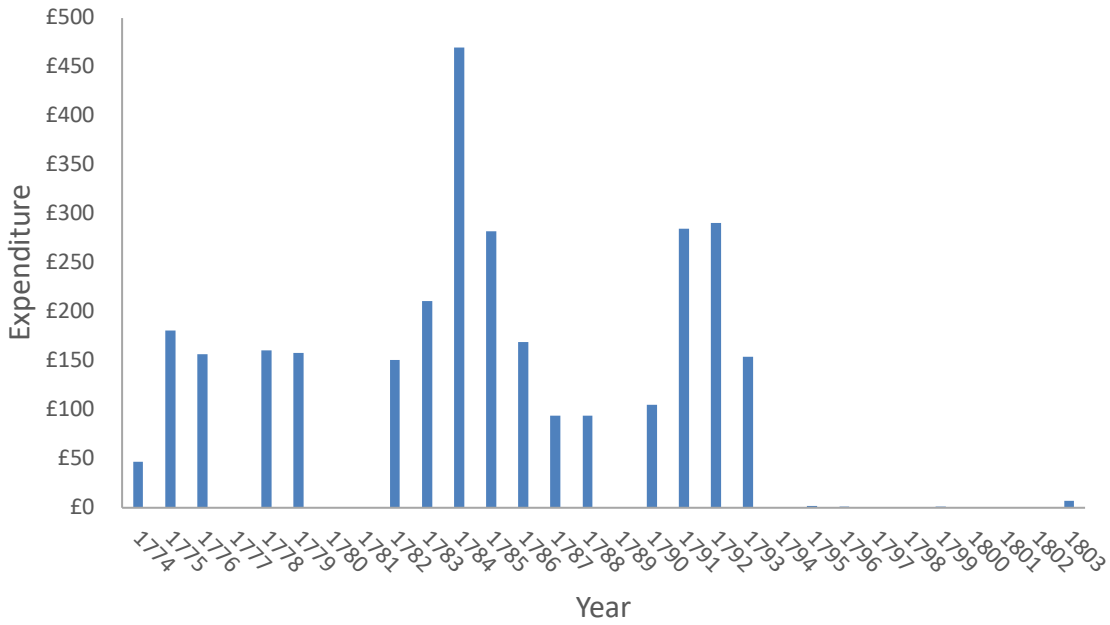


Figure 4.6: Bills from London and Parisian perfumers to the third Earl of Egremont, from 1774–1803.
Source: Author's graph; data from Petworth House Archives (PHA). Note: years of no bills probably represent missing data, i.e. no bills have survived (pers. comm. Petworth House archivist).

A dramatic escalation occurred in 1784, when Egremont's annual perfume expenditure rose to approximately £450 — more than double the previous year's outlay and roughly three times his spending in 1782 — before falling to £337 between June 1785 and June 1786 (Fig. 4.6).[573] This substantial shift coincided with the emergence of Elizabeth Ilive (then aged 16 or 17) as his 'principal mistress and the unofficial chatelaine of Petworth' and she most likely became the main recipient of lavish perfume gifts.[574] Ilive, who bore Egremont seven illegitimate children herself before marrying him, occupied an informal and unstable position within the household between 1785 and 1804. Her status would have been readily understood by Petworth's long-standing servants and work force, and it is precisely this recognition that would have rendered such gifts especially meaningful.[575]

[573] On totals, note that some bills covered a calendar year, while others ran from January to June, or June to June. PHA/9/7539.
[574] Rowell, *Petworth*, p.72.
[575] Haines, Lawson and McCann, *Elizabeth Ilive*, pp.19, 27.

Egremont's spending on fragrance looks different again when set beside the accounts of his contemporary Sir John Nelthorpe, 6th Baronet (1744–1799), which more closely reflect normative elite practice. Although Nelthorpe lacked Egremont's rank and extraordinary wealth, he nonetheless entered adulthood with considerable financial resources. At the age of 21, in 1765, he inherited extensive property holdings in London (in St James's, Charterhouse Square, Aldgate and Eastcheap) as well as significant estates in North Lincolnshire (around Scawby Hall)[576] and in the Home Counties. His marriage to Anna Willoughby in 1772 further consolidated his financial position: through her marriage settlement, he became entitled to over £8000.[577] Anna's lineage (her father served as secretary to Prince Charles Edward Stuart, the Young Pretender, who was her godfather) lent the union a frisson of Jacobite intrigue, but never the social latitude nor financial freedom enjoyed by Egremont.

Nelthorpe spent heavily too, but very little of it went on scent. While Egremont lavished over £180 annually on perfume by the late 1780s (a scale of expenditure without parallel in comparable households), Nelthorpe's recorded fragrance bills were unexceptional in comparison. In 1786, Sir John spent a modest £12 on perfume.[578] Even as late as 1798, a year before his death, his perfume bill from James Smyth & Nephew at the Civet Cat on New Bond Street only amounted to £7:7:9. This total included additional perfumery purchased for his daughter, probably Maria Charlotte Nelthorpe, listed separately as 'Miss Nelthorpe's bill.' Even accounting for his family's collective fragrance needs, the Nelthorpe

[576] Scawby Hall website: <https://www.scawbyhall.com> [accessed 15 February 2024].
[577] Equivalent to over £1,000,000 today.
[578] Lincolnshire Archives, NEL/4, NEL/8, NEL/9 and NEL/19.

household's annual perfume expenditure never approached £20 — roughly equivalent to a fortnight of Egremont's spending at its height.

After inheriting the full estate on the death of his father in 1788, Nelthorpe directed substantial expenditure at Scawby, re-fronting the house and commissioning William Emes to lay out lakes and a bridge in the home park.[579] Landed improvement and metropolitan display operated here not as alternatives but as complementary registers, and death was no exception. Nelthorpe died in Berkeley Square, where he maintained another house, on 14 June 1799 and was buried at Scawby a fortnight later; of funeral expenses totalling £728:14:2, £88:16:6 was spent on conveying the body north. His will provided Lady Nelthorpe with £10,000, an annuity of £600 and the lease of the Berkeley Square house, over and above her marriage settlement.[580] The carriage of the corpse from Mayfair to the parish where his ancestors lay was itself an act of display, staging dynastic continuity before a county audience at considerable cost. Egremont's expenditure on scent nonetheless separates him from Nelthorpe, though not along the axis of restraint. Both men spent heavily and visibly; what distinguishes them is what their spending left behind. Nelthorpe's outlay accumulated — in re-fronted elevations, landscaped water, a leasehold and an annuity that survived him — and could be settled, entailed and inherited. Egremont's dissipated in the using: an olfactory household had to be remade daily or it ceased to exist, which made scent an unusually demanding instrument for managing power, intimacy and household cohesion.

[579] Historic England, 'Scawby Hall', *The National Heritage List for England*, list entry no. 1083683 <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1083683>[accessed 4 September 2026].
[580] The National Archives, Will of Sir John Nelthorpe of Scawby, Lincolnshire, PROB 11/1327/139, 15 July 1799; Nelthorpe of Scawby papers, executors' accounts, 1799.

Egremont's perfume accounts (Table A4.1) point to a markedly different and highly unconventional form of household governance. For a man of his exceptional resources, perfume gifts seemingly functioned not as marginal luxury but as a central mechanism of patriarchal power. Lavish gifts to his current and former lovers materially expressed his economic dominance while sustaining emotional and hierarchical ties within an irregular household. Although this practice can be framed within Harvey's definition of '*œconomy*' — the management of household resources to preserve order and stability — Egremont's version stretched the concept beyond its normative bounds.[581] Through perfume gifting, Egremont demonstrated that 'men's engagement with the house was not in the manner of a distant patriarch, who retired to the refuge of home. The house was not a haven from the political world; on the contrary, it was central to the establishment of a secure manly and social status.'[582] As Lady Holland observed, Egremont was a 'patriarch,' but, given his lifestyle, his particular form of patriarchy was subversive.[583]

By accepting Egremont's generous perfume gifts, Elizabeth Ilive (and his other mistresses) became entangled in a network of obligation that extended far beyond the moment of exchange, binding her to his household authority through what Mauss termed the total social phenomenon of gift-giving.[584] Susan Whyman's study of the Verney family demonstrates how such dynamics operated in practice in England: gifts of venison, which the game laws rendered unpurchasable, circulated exclusively through networks of favour,

[581] Harvey, *Little Republic,* p.23.
[582] *Ibid.,* p.189.
[583] *Elizabeth Lady Holland to her Son, 1821–1845,* ed. by the earl of Ilchester (London: John Murray, 1946), p.72.
[584] Mauss, *The Gift*, trans. by Ian Cunnison (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), p.1.

creating carefully calibrated webs of debt and deference that mapped and maintained vertical relationships between giver and recipient.[585] While perfume, unlike venison, could be bought, Egremont's gifts functioned analogously: their value lay not in the market but in the relationship of dependence they enacted and renewed. Whyman also shows women receiving such gifts and passing them onward, a pattern that would help account for quantities exceeding any plausible personal consumption. If the women of Petworth redistributed what they received, the perfume accounts record not only Egremont's expenditure on them but a minor economy they administered — which would place them nearer the centre of the household's networks of obligation than the role of recipient alone suggests. The mistresses in Egremont's household, by apparently accepting his perfume, entered into emotionally-charged and hierarchically-defined relationships where costly items were exchanged for continued deference to his authority as household patriarch. The fact that Egremont's wife left him in 1803, after just over one year of marriage, because of his continuing affairs with other women in the household adds important context to these gifts. Here, perfume appears to function as a means of managing domestic disorder rather than expressing household harmony, carrying apparently unspoken expectations of loyalty in the absence of exclusivity.

Alternatively, Egremont's gift-giving can be interpreted as an act of paternalistic benevolence — accepting responsibility for the mothers of his illegitimate children while asserting hierarchical control. Despite Cindy McCreery's observation that some contemporaries were uncertain about the social position of mistresses, Egremont

[585] Susan E. Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late Stuart England: The Cultural Worlds of the Verneys, 1660–1720* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), pp.23–7.

demonstrates no such hesitation.[586] As Felicity Heal argues, an 'ethos of generosity' governed the aristocracy, creating an 'honour code' obliging the elites to project themselves as generous patrons, and their households as 'open suppliers' of the needs of dependents.[587] Whyman similarly shows that elite givers kept careful accounts of the quantity and quality of what they bestowed, with the scale of a gift calibrating the precise degree of honour conferred upon its recipient. Egremont's perfume purchases, conspicuously costly, work on exactly this basis.[588] Viewed through this framework, Egremont's provision for his mistresses and illegitimate children fulfilled societal expectations of aristocratic responsibility, though the scale and frequency of these gifts set him apart even within it. As Mauss argues, such gifts bound their recipients to reciprocate; for Egremont, the obligation his perfume created was arguably as valuable as the perfume itself.

Egremont's dramatic reduction in perfume spending in the latter part of 1793 (Fig. 4.6) demonstrates another, more coercive, dimension of patriarchal authority. Annual perfume expenditure plummeted to less than £10 — coinciding with his withdrawal from fashionable London society and the sale of his substantial mansion in Piccadilly. This was not a crisis of liquidity but a deliberate financial restructuring: having purchased a smaller house in Grosvenor Place, Egremont redirected capital toward Petworth and art collecting. His wealth remained immense, with the diarist Thomas Creevey observing as late as 1828 that 'there were more servants in that house, of both sexes and in all departments than in

[586] Cindy McCreery, 'Keeping Up with the Bon Ton: The Tête-à-Tête Series in the *Town and Country Magazine*', ed. by Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England* (Harlow: Longman, 1997), p.218.
[587] Heal, *Hospitality*, p.391.
[588] Whyman, *Sociability and Power,* pp.27–9.

any House in England.'[589] Unlike Nelthorpe's steady and predictable household economy, Egremont's oscillation between excess and restraint itself operated as a display of masculine power, shaping the material lives of his (mostly female) household through his unilateral control. However, the account books admit an inversion of this reading. The surge of 1784 may register not Egremont's vanity but Ilive's leverage: costly perfume extracted as the price of tolerating his philandering and of sustaining her 'ambivalent position at Petworth as the mistress of Lord Egremont but, seemingly, not the Mistress of the House'.[590]

Women's gifting

Elite women's gifting practices differed from men's in both scale and intention. Women more typically exchanged gifts to maintain friendships, express affection and navigate social networks — though the boundaries between these categories were fluid. When eighteenth-century women gave gifts, they typically did so to their female friends and relatives of both genders. They were often active givers and recipients of luxury commodities — and their gifting generally reflected their varying levels of economic or social independence. Married women's gifting operated within the constraints of coverture, though many exercised considerable practical autonomy in selecting and presenting gifts. Unmarried women of independent means, and widows controlling their own finances, enjoyed greater freedom in their gifting practices. Pointon's assertion that

[589] Creevey MSS (18 August 1828) private collection, cited in Christopher Rowell, *Petworth: The People and the Place* (London: Scala Publishers, 2012), p.75.
[590] Haines, Lawson, and McCann*, Elizabeth Ilive*, p.38.

items acquired by women were 'given away in a systematic exercise of power,' significantly underestimates the more complex dimensions of female gifting.[591]

As discussed in Chapter 3, the gold chocolate cups that Lady Palmerston gifted to her husband exemplify this complexity. While her ability to commission such luxury items certainly reflected her unusual economic independence, reducing this gift to a mere assertion of financial autonomy misses its profound emotional significance. The cups' tender inscriptions conveyed marital devotion within what Vickery describes as the 'vast territory wherein couples imagined, negotiated and created their own practical contract,' beyond the formal legal structures of marriage.[592] This example thus reveals how domestic gifts could serve as instruments of private affection that defined many eighteenth-century marriages in practice, rather than merely through legal formalities.

Women also frequently exchanged snuff boxes within their social circles to strengthen bonds of friendship. As Amanda Vickery argues, 'the regular exchange of produce and trinkets was a significant currency in elite sociability.'[593] The correspondence between Elizabeth Carter and Catherine Talbot illustrates this. Carter's letter of July 1769, expresses profound appreciation for Talbot's gift of a snuff box:

> […] I am spending this afternoon in great luxury, in spite of a feverish head-ache: drinking tea out of Mrs Handcock's white tea-pot, and taking snuff out of the sweet pretty snuff-box that you gave me, and thinking with tenderness and gratitude on all your kindness for me.[594]

[591] Pointon, *Strategies for Showing*, p.38.
[592] Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors,* p.105.
[593] Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p.207.
[594] *A Series of Letters between Mrs Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot from the Year 1741 to 1770: To Which are Added Letters from Mrs Carter to Mrs [Elizabeth] Vesey between the Years 1767 and 1787*, vol III (London: n.pub., 1809), Letter XLV, 28 July 1769.

Carter's distinctly feminine language ('pretty', 'sweet', 'tenderness' and 'gratitude') frames the gift exchange within a feminine discourse of sentiment rather than transaction. The snuff box functions here as 'the precious symbolic nourishment which keeps interpersonal relationships alive' serving as a tangible representation of the absent friend — practical yet emotionally resonant.[595] This snuff box exchange not only reinforces the intrinsic value of woman-to-woman friendship but also exemplifies the deep attachments that women often forged through such possessions.[596]

Women's gifting cannot, then, be reduced to simple displays of power or wealth. Their gifts (whether snuff boxes exchanged between friends or chocolate cups presented to spouses) operated simultaneously as material objects, as forms of emotional communication, and as social performances that reinforced relationships. Yet they could do more: because female gift-giving was coded as emotional rather than transactional, it afforded women a degree of agency that more direct forms of negotiation would not have permitted. A woman who selected an object with unusual care, or inscribed it with private meaning, was quietly asserting her role as the relationship's emotional arbiter. Women also used such exchanges to build lateral networks among friends and female correspondents that operated with considerable autonomy from male oversight.

[595] *The Gift: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* ed. by Aafke E. Komter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), p.3.
[596] Stana Nenadic, 'Middle-Rank Consumers and Domestic Culture in Edinburgh and Glasgow 1740–1820', *Past & Present*, 145.1 (November 1994), 122–56 (151–52).

Counter-gifting could be laden with social subtleties, particularly when asymmetry existed in the social rank of the participants. The challenge of appropriate counter-gifting across status divides is vividly illustrated in Elizabeth Montagu's letter to her friend Mary Robinson. After receiving 'the most beautiful, rich, & elegant snuff box I ever saw' from the duchess of Portland, Montagu faced a delicate dilemma. She explained that 'I could only return her thanks, for I thought it wd be putting myself too much upon a par with her to make a return in kind.'[597] Instead, she hoped to reciprocate by finding 'any natural curiosity to add to her collection' that would acknowledge the gift without presuming equality. This example demonstrates how gift-giving navigated the intricate terrain of politeness and hierarchy, where reciprocity could be interpreted as either appropriate gratitude or presumption, depending upon the social distance between the giver and the receiver.

This exchange highlights how gift-giving could simultaneously reinforce and help navigate class boundaries. Though Montagu and Portland had known each other for thirty years as friends — their relationship remained shaped by a mutual consciousness of rank. Portland, born aristocratic, and Montagu, from the gentry, maintained this distinction even within their intellectual friendship. As Ben-Amos argues, '[s]ome of these gifts, especially those offered in […] aristocratic and gentry households, were ripe with symbols of the host's power in comparison to the guest's dependency.'[598] Portland's lavish gift demonstrated her superior resources, while Montagu's measured response acknowledged this social inequality without surrendering her dignity. Mauss' insight that gift exchange

[597] Elizabeth Montagu, *Letter to Mary Robinson*, 19 August 1772, Elizabeth Robinson Montagu Papers, The Huntington Library, Calif., MO 4741, p.2.
[598] Ilana Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), p.165.

simultaneously involved economic, legal, religious and social dimensions helps explain why Portland and Montagu's friendship could not simply transcend their status differences — the material imbalance in the exchange inevitably reinforced the very distinctions their intellectual friendship might have seemed to bridge.

Cross-gender and cross-class gifting

These dynamics were not confined to women's social worlds, but also shaped how men navigated relationships, hierarchy and exchange. The strategic use of tobacco gifts by Samuel Johnson and James Boswell during their 1773 Hebridean tour illuminates how men employed gifts to facilitate social integration and to smooth potentially awkward encounters. In his account of the journey, Johnson recorded that '[w]e had, by the direction of the officers at Fort Augustus, taken bread for ourselves, and tobacco for those Highlanders who might show us any kindness.'[599] This can be read as a 'civilising' gesture that brought the supposed benefits of global trade into a region that had only recently been in rebellion. It reflects metropolitan assumptions about Highland backwardness and the role of trade goods in establishing British authority in formerly Jacobite strongholds. Practical considerations may also have been at play: tobacco was difficult to obtain in the Highlands, making it costly and therefore a meaningful offering, and it had the added advantage of being highly portable. That the two men deliberately carried tobacco as a social lubricant nonetheless demonstrates how men, like women, mobilised gifts as instruments of relationship-building.

[599] Samuel Johnson, 'A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland,' ed. by Celia Barnes, and Jack Lynch, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and the Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides:* (2020; online edn, Oxford World's Classics, Jan. 2022), p. 33.

This gifting of snuff and money for tobacco by men of the 'middling sorts' (such as Johnson) to elderly labouring women provides compelling evidence for Douglas and Isherwood's view that gifting operated beyond strictly defined gender or class boundaries. Boswell's 1773[600] account of meeting an elderly woman near Loch Ness exemplifies these exchanges: 'Dr. Johnson was pleased at seeing, for the first time, such a state of human life. She asked for snuff. It is her luxury, and she uses a great deal. We had none; but gave her sixpence a piece. She then brought out her whisky bottle.'[601] This encounter reveals multiple dimensions of cross-gender and cross-class reciprocity. Though Johnson viewed the woman anthropologically as 'a state of human life' unfamiliar to him, the interaction established mutual recognition — their monetary gift for snuff was met with the woman's whisky offering. This temporary reciprocity both suspended and reaffirmed social hierarchy: the exchange created a moment of genuine affinity.

Mauss' framework helps explain this paradox: reciprocal exchange created fleeting social bonds that transcended class differences yet simultaneously reaffirmed them through the inherent acknowledgment of hierarchy in giving and receiving. The ambiguity of the woman's position — as both host in her own home and 'outsider' in the metropolitan social order — illustrates how gifting operated within liminal social spaces. Johnson's generosity

[600] The Hebridean tour was in 1773; the *Journal* was published in 1785.
[601] James Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson, vol V, The Tour to the Hebrides and The Journey into North Wales*, ed. by George Birkbeck Hill, rev. by L. F. Powell, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934-64), V, p.134.

reflected the principle that 'the outsider was deserving of special generosity because of the ambiguity of [their] status.'[602]

Reverend James Woodforde's diary, kept between 1758 and 1802, provides further rich evidence of how tobacco gifting in the provinces (in Norfolk) helped foster community bonds across gender and class lines. His 12 September 1786 diary entry recounts visiting 'Sally Poyntings who had a Mother 87 Years of Age,' leaving 'to buy Tobacco for her [£]0. 1. 0.'[603] Similarly, his 2 April 1788 entry reveals the social bonds reinforced through such gifting: 'Mary Brand an old Woman of 80 […] I found her spinning by the fire tho' she almost is blind. I gave her to buy Tobacco as she smokes [£] 0.1.0.'[604] These small yet personal gifts demonstrate how clergymen like Woodforde often mediated generosity across social and gender divides. Rather than imposing gentrified values through charity, these tobacco gifts acknowledged personal pleasure and autonomy among the poor, suggesting that paternalism was a more nuanced exchange than simple top-down benevolence — one that demanded attentiveness to recipients' preferences as a condition of sustaining cross-class social bonds.

Woodforde's personalised gifts to his extended family further demonstrate an attentiveness to individual recipients' preferences that exceeded mere social obligation. His 1778 presentation of a tobacco box to his cousin Lewis following a period of

[602] Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) p.389.
[603] James Woodforde, *The Diary of a Country Parson, 1758–1802*, ed. by John Beresford (Oxford: OUP, 1978), p.278.
[604] *Ibid*., pp.318–319.

hospitality[605] corroborates Felicity Heal's argument that gifting was directly linked to the obligations of hospitality.[606] Yet this exchange also operates at a deeper level: it exemplifies James Carrier's observation that the 'gift transaction affirms and reproduces […] mutual dependence,' revealing how material reciprocity did not merely reflect familial bonds but actively constituted and renewed them.[607]

Familial gifting

Barrister Timothy Burrell's meticulous journal (1683-1714) provides additional evidence of the gendered complexity of familial gifting. He itemises reciprocal exchanges with his sister Kit Goring, who received chocolate from him worth £1:13s in 1697,[608] and who later gifted him 'six bottles of brandy, and preserved lemon, chocolate and citron.'[609] In 1703 alone, he received sixty-four gifts, including chocolate from his sister; and chocolate, tobacco, snuff and a snuff box from his brother.[610] This repeated pattern of luxury consumable exchanges between siblings who could clearly afford these items for themselves suggests motives beyond mere provision — specifically, the reinforcement of sibling solidarity and mutual obligation through continual reciprocity.

[605] *Ibid.,* p.142.
[606] Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) p.2.
[607] James G. Carrier, *Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism since 1700* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.43.
[608] Timothy Burrell, 'Extracts from Journal and Account-Book of Timothy Burrell', ed. by R. W. Blencowe, *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 3 (1850), 132.
[609] *Ibid.,* p.141.
[610] *Ibid.,* pp.144-145.

These exchanges suggest that elite women contested their supposed economic dependence on men while also asserting autonomy through personalised choices. By participating as equal partners in luxury exchange, gentrified women such as Kit Goring displayed consumer sophistication. However, Kit's married status — as 'Lady Goring', married to Sir William Goring, who died in 1724 — complicates this interpretation of female economic independence. Under the structure of coverture, her gift-giving capacity would have derived primarily from her husband's wealth rather than her own resources. Yet her sophisticated taste and active participation in reciprocal exchanges with her siblings suggest that some married women exercised considerable autonomy in managing social relationships through material gifts, even while remaining legally and economically dependent on their husbands. This interpretation aligns with Karen Harvey's observation that 'married women were necessarily acknowledged to be economic agents in the home for the purposes of consumption.'[611] However, a competing interpretation suggests that these same exchanges reinforced traditional gender distinctions by channelling masculine and feminine identities into appropriate material expressions. While both the brothers and sister gifted and received chocolate, only the brothers received tobacco and brandy, suggesting a symbolic gender coding of consumables. Rather than dissolving gender boundaries, these practices may have subtly preserved them through the meanings embedded in these gift-giving patterns.

The exchange of gifts between Woodforde and Miss Nancy Rooke complicates these interpretations further. Their mutual exchange of snuff boxes on 3 October 1761 'by way

[611] Harvey, *Little Republic,* p.24.

of Remembrance,'[612] followed by his gift of 'a roll of Pigtail Tobacco' in November 1769, and her counter-gift of 'half a cheese for toasting,' demonstrates how individuals navigated gender expectations through material culture in ways that neither wholly reinforced nor entirely subverted conventional gender roles.[613] That Miss Rooke, an unmarried woman, could engage in this gift exchange suggests a degree of independence — particularly in her ability to participate in the exchange of pigtail tobacco, a commodity conventionally coded as masculine. The careful maintenance of a debt balance through immediate counter-gifting indicates an awareness of potential impropriety in cross-gender exchanges, revealing the constraints within which this agency operated.[614]

The materiality of these gifts — their physical properties, cultural resonances and sensory associations — provided tangible means through which individuals could express conformity to, or deviation from, gender expectations in ways that verbal discourse alone could not achieve. In these exchanges men usually made the first gift, but the women who received them did much to settle what a gift meant. Burney's feigned confusion turned Dr King's gesture into a rebuff, and Nancy Rooke's prompt return of cheese for tobacco kept her exchange with Woodforde on a footing of balanced obligation.

Conclusion

The circulation of recipes and gifts in eighteenth-century England reveals domestic consumption as a contested terrain where gender hierarchies were enacted and

[612] Woodforde, *The Diary of a Country Parson*, p.8.
[613] *Ibid.,* p.62.
[614] Dimitri Mortelmans and Dave Sinardet, 'Reflecting Culture and Society? Norms and Rules Governing Gift-Giving Practices', *The Netherlands Journal of Social Sciences*, 40 (2005), 176–201.

sometimes disrupted. Chocolate recipes and luxury gifts functioned as instruments through which individuals — particularly women — claimed authority within spaces that patriarchal ideology designated as their natural domain, while male gift-giving reinforced structures of obligation and control even as it appeared to express sentiment.

Women's recipe networks demonstrate how domestic knowledge production operated through collaborative, empirical practices that paralleled — yet remained excluded from — formal scientific institutions. From Lady Ann Fanshawe's pioneering chocolate recipe (1665) to Hannah Glasse's commercially successful publications (1747), women transformed culinary expertise into cultural capital. The annotation '*probatum est*' on manuscript recipes reveals systematic experimentation, suggesting that domestic spaces functioned as sites of knowledge production that historians have too readily dismissed as merely derivative or practical. Yet this authority remained bounded: recipe books targeting 'ladies' and 'servants' both celebrated female ingenuity and confined it within appropriate feminine domains.

Men's gifting practices reveal equally complex negotiations between sentiment, strategy and social management. Swift's anxious chocolate logistics demonstrate emotional investment through organisation; Egremont's extraordinary perfume expenditures mobilised luxury goods to manage an unconventional household. Together, these examples position masculine gift-giving on a spectrum between genuine affective expression and the calculated deployment of material goods to secure deference and absorb domestic disorder. Most suggestively, Egremont's perfume spending appears to have peaked around the time Elizabeth Ilive consolidated her position as principal mistress,

then fallen sharply with his withdrawal from London society — though the gaps in the surviving bills mean this correlation must be read with care. The pattern is consistent with a reading of male luxury consumption as household governance: a mechanism of control exercised through material means. Yet, as this chapter has argued, the same accounts sustain the opposite reading, in which the spending registers Ilive's leverage rather than Egremont's mastery — and the two readings are not exclusive. A gift can be simultaneously an instrument of control and a concession extracted; the accounts record the transaction, not the balance of power within it.

Women's gifting operated under different constraints and served different ends. The examples here — Elizabeth Carter's treasured snuff box, Lady Palmerston's commemorative chocolate cups, Elizabeth Montagu's careful reciprocity with the duchess of Portland — might suggest that women's exchanges prioritised emotional bonds over the assertion of authority. But the division is too neat, and the chapter's own evidence resists it: Montagu's calibrated counter-gifting was strategic status management conducted in the language of sentiment, just as Swift's chocolate logistics were anxious sentiment conducted in the language of masculine control. The more accurate formulation is that women's exchanges were coded as sentimental — and that this coding was itself their strategic resource, permitting forms of negotiation and network-building that overt assertions of authority would have rendered improper. Sentiment, in short, was not the opposite of power but one of its gendered instruments. Agency nonetheless remained ambiguous. When Lady Goring exchanged chocolate with her brother Timothy Burrell, her gifts technically derived from her husband's wealth under coverture, yet the sophistication of her choices enacted a practical autonomy that the law formally denied her.

Cross-class and cross-gender exchanges further complicate these patterns. When Woodforde gave tobacco to the elderly poor women in his parish, when Johnson and Boswell provisioned their hosts in the Highlands, or when the Burrell siblings exchanged chocolate, something more than generosity was at work. Each gesture created a temporary bond across social distance, yet that distance was never truly dissolved. The gift depended upon the very hierarchy it appeared to soften and, in making it, the giver quietly reaffirmed their position even in the act of reaching across it.

What emerges is not a linear narrative of expanding female agency or eroding patriarchal control, but a more fractured picture of perpetual negotiation within structures that remained fundamentally unequal. The achievements were real — women built networks, accumulated expertise, and exercised consumer judgement — but they were won within the very domestic boundaries that continued to exclude elite women from political life, and often depended on those boundaries for their legibility. Men, meanwhile, were no less caught within the period's culture of giving: their gifting was entangled with obligation, anxiety, and the need to perform a benevolence that was never simply chosen. The eighteenth-century culture of domestic exchange thus discloses neither straightforward female empowerment nor simple subjugation, but rather the intricate, granular, quotidian processes through which gender hierarchies were materially produced, emotionally inhabited, and perpetually remade within the intimate spaces of household, friendship and courtship.

Appendix to chapter 4

Table A4.1: Bills from London and Parisian perfumers to the third Earl of Egremont, from 1774-1803. Petworth House Archives (PHA). Note: perfumers' billing periods overlap, and several tradesmen billed the household concurrently. Annual totals cited in the text are calculated by apportioning each bill across the months it covers; where two bills cover the same months for the same supplier, the larger is taken and the smaller treated as a part-payment against it.

Date	Tradesman	Bill (£:s:d)	Points of interest
Jan 1774- Jan 1775	Raibaud et Louis Parfums	£46:19:10[615]	Multiple orders for perfume each month in 1774: January – 8 orders. February – 5 orders. March – 4 orders.
1775	Mr Vendre Perfumery	£48:19:10[616]	
1775	Raibaud et Louis Parfums	£66:3:5[617]	
1775	Mr Vendre Perfumier	£66:3:6[618]	
Jan 1776 – Dec 1776	Raibaud et Louis Parfums	£157:8:2[619]	
August 1776 – June 1777	Bourgeois & Co. Perfumiers, Haymarket		25 bottles Arquebusade water.[620]
1777	Raibaud et Louis Parfums		
Jan 1778 – Dec 1778	Louis Perfumier	£160:12:0[621]	
Jan 1779 – December 1779	Louis Perfumier	£158:2:9	Bill settled 30th June 1780.[622]
Jan 1782 – Dec 1782	Louis Perfumier	£151:15:6[623]	
Jan 1783 – May 1783	Louis Perfumier	£62:8:6[624]	

[615] West Sussex Record Office, PHA/6/6608, Petworth Tradesmen's Bills.
[616] *Ibid.*
[617] WSRO, PHA/9/7528.
[618] *Ibid*.
[619] WSRO, PHA/9/13482.
[620] WSRO, PHA/8/13484.
Arquebusade water was a concoction of distilled water and aromatic plants.
[621] WSRO, PHA/6/6611.
[622] In general, consumers bought on account and settled their bills within a few months.
[623] WSRO, PHA/9/7534.
[624] *Ibid.*

June 1783 – Dec 1783	Louis Perfumier	£141:3:9[625]	
July 1783 – May 1784	Bourgeois, Amick & Huguenin Perfumiers	£14: 13: 0[626]	
Jan 1784 – May 1784	Louis Perfumier	£81: 19: 4[627]	Receipted bill signed 'by me Mary Louis', demonstrating that some females assumed significant responsibility within a business.
June 1784 – Dec 1784	Louis Perfumier	£229: 8:10[628]	
June 1784- June 1785 Vincents Perfumiers	Louis Perfumier	£190: 10: 10 £36: 8: 6[629]	
1784-1785	Bourgeois, Amick & Huguenin Perfumiers	£39: 13: 6[630]	
June 1785- June1786	Louis Perfumier Vincent Perfumiers Bourgeois, Amick & Huguenin Perfumiers	£255:14:10 £39: 9: 6 £41: 17: 3[631]	
June 1787 – June 1788	Bourgeois Perfumiers	£188:12:1[632]	
June 1790 – June 1791 Jan 1791	Bourgeois Perfumiers Mr C. Vincent Perfumier Bourgeois, Amick and Huguenin, perfumers	£211:7: 4 £28: 1: 0[633]	Items on this perfumer's bill include Gruyère Cheese. Also numerous French dressing combs, ribbons and puffs, showing extensive diversification of the products sold in one shop.

[625] *Ibid.*
[626] WSRO, PHA/9/7536.
[627] *Ibid.*
[628] WSRO, PHA/9/7534.
[629] WSRO, PHA/9/7539.
[630] *Ibid.*
[631] *Ibid.*
[632] WSRO, PHA/9/7545.
[633] WSRO, PHA/9/13149.

25 June 1791- 25 June 1792	Bourgeois & Co Perfumiers	£273:14:0.	
July 1791- May 28, 1792	Mr Vincent Perfumiers	£27:6:11.[634]	Vincent noted that he had 'received of the Rt. Hon.ble The Earl of Egremont … for Bill for Perfumery - for Partner and Self.' Receipt signed by Vincent on behalf of himself and his business partner.
Midsummer 1792 – midsummer 1793 Sept 1792- May 1793	Bourgeois & Co Perfumiers Mr C. Vincent Perfumier Lowe & Co Perfumiers	£254: 18: 3 £24: 0: 6 £0:12: 0[635]	Bill settled on 4 July 1793
19 July 1793 May 1, 1795 August 1793	Bayley & Lowe, Perfumiers to their Royal Highnesses', the Duke and Duchess of York. Bourgeois, Amick & Huguenin, Perfumiers to The Prince and Princess of Wales, Duke of Clarence and Prince Edward Mr Vincent	 £1 £11: 17s: 6d[636]	6 canisters of herb snuff.
Midsummer 1795 – midsummer 1796	Bourgeois & Co Perfumier		Mason & Co grocer's bill is the highest, at £272: 2: 10.

[634] WSRO, PHA/6/6635.
[635] WSRO, PHA/9/13485.
[636] WSRO, PHA/6/6640.

			Followed by the wax chandler and coal merchant's bills.
Midsummer 1798-1799	Bourgeois & Co Perfumier	£2: 4: 6[637]	
1800	Fribourg & Treyer, Pall Mall		1 box Schneberger. This delivery is accompanied by a note: 'The Perfumery is for the use of Mr Hollobrook.'[638] It is not clear who 'Mr Hollobrook' was, but this reference may suggest Egremont was not using perfume himself any more nor gifting it by this time.
'Bills chiefly for articles sent to Petworth, up to the end of 1803'	Bourgeois & Huguenin Perfumiers	£7: 6:10[639]	

[637] WSRO, PHA/9/8081.
[638] Fribourg & Treyer, tobacconists, cigar merchants, snuff manufacturers, *Accounts, Ledgers, Journals, Order Books, 1764–1977*, Westminster City Archives, NRA 10807, pp.347–48.
[639] WSRO, PHA/9/10619.

CHAPTER 5

Public and Domestic Representations – Satirical Art and Literature

This chapter places visual representations of chocolate consumption at the centre of its analyses, arguing that images constituted a primary site through which acceptable forms of masculinity and femininity were performed, regulated and negotiated in eighteenth-century England. Satirical texts are drawn in alongside satirical images, their verbal wit and cultural commentary throwing the visual into sharper relief. Read together, the two sources reveal how chocolate consumption operated as a cultural shorthand for gendered performance. Building on chapter 4's analysis of gifting and recipe exchange as gendered modes of negotiation, this chapter shifts from social practice to representation in order to trace chocolate's movement across distinct social spaces — from the all-male chocolate house, to mixed-gender pleasure gardens, to the domestic interior. In doing so, it demonstrates that 'appropriate' gender performance was contingent upon location, audience and the expectations attached to each setting: each space functioned, in effect, as a different stage, with its own script and its own spectators. Yet however much the performances varied from stage to stage, the theatre itself remained under patriarchal management: the legal, economic and institutional conditions of eighteenth-century life — coverture, male control of property and public office, the exclusion of women from formal institutions — set the limits within which any performance, however audacious, took place. Gender roles could be recalibrated; the underlying distribution of power proved far more resistant to change.

The satirical works examined across these spaces focus in particular on exaggerated or transgressive gender performances in public settings. They target dissipated masculinity among elite gamesters; audacious effeminacy among fops and macaronis; and what contemporaries perceived as the increasingly strident behaviour of women in mixed public company. Representations of domestic chocolate consumption — both satirical and idealised — bring a different set of tensions into view, demonstrating emerging ideals of refined masculinity, companionate marriage and female domestic authority on one hand, while registering persistent anxieties surrounding women's leisure, morality and the perceived neglect of their traditional duties on the other.

Artworks (prints, watercolours and oil paintings) are treated here as historical sources requiring contextual interpretation. While visual evidence necessarily involves some subjective analysis, art also possesses a unique capacity to reveal aspects of past mentalities that may be inaccessible through other sources.[640] As Vic Gatrell argues, 'squeamishness about using pictures as evidence is uncalled for […]. The fact remains that texts and images are both embedded in the world that produced them, and in that sense have comparable evidential standing.'[641] Analysing them effectively requires a holistic approach that considers the artist's intentions, the intended audience, the context of display and the subject matter itself, enabling visual material to illuminate the values, beliefs and anxieties of the society that produced it — what Gatrell terms 'shifting

[640] Theodore Rabb and J. Brown, 'The Evidence of Art: Images and Meaning in History', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 17.1 (1986), 1–6, (2). Francis Haskell, *History and Its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).
[641] Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth Century London* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006), p.11.

attitudes, sensibilities and anxieties' across generations.[642] Art functioned not just as a passive reflection of social reality but as an active participant in contemporary debates, with artists themselves grappling with evolving social norms and often contributing to their negotiation.

Mark Hallett and Vic Gatrell have demonstrated how eighteenth-century graphic satire both reflected and critiqued London's social fabric.[643] Their work provides broad analyses of gender and social norms; this chapter focuses specifically upon how chocolate consumption functioned as a lens through which contemporaries examined and questioned those gender roles. Hallett's examination of Hogarth situates satirical prints within the wider cultural marketplace of pamphlets, plays and exhibitions.[644] Gatrell explores how graphic satires challenged and exposed social conventions surrounding sexuality, gender roles and urban life throughout the later Georgian period (1770-1830).

Eighteenth-century satirical artists and commentators used chocolate consumption to critique the hypocrisy, excesses and pretensions of the wealthy across gender lines. While satire traditionally employs exaggeration and distortion to ridicule societal behaviour for entertainment, these works transcend mere mockery to deliver sophisticated social commentary. As Freya Gowrley observes, Georgian satirical prints achieved a delicate balance between serious social critique and playful commentary on contemporary social

[642] *Ibid*., p.5.
[643] Gatrell, *City of Laughter,* p,10; Mark Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference: Graphic Satire in the Age of Hogarth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p.2.
[644] Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference,* p.2.

and political anxieties, creating works that were both entertaining and provocative.[645] The approach that Gowrley identifies finds its fullest expression in the works of Thomas Rowlandson and William Hogarth, whose depictions of gendered behaviour combined pointed social criticism with engaging humour. Their capacity to create characters and scenarios that their audience found both amusing and uncomfortably familiar underpinned their remarkable commercial success. Satire's exaggeration requires caution: extreme depictions cannot be assumed typical, and, as the analysis below argues, the durability of a formula is not in itself durability of the anxiety behind it.

These satires reached an audience of unprecedented breadth. As Hannah Greig observes, the fashionable world was 'a source of fascination and also concern in the century's burgeoning press', its members becoming the subject of popular prints both celebratory and satirical.[646] Gatrell documents some 20,000 different satirical prints published in London between 1770 and 1830,[647] sold cheaply enough — 6d plain, 1s coloured — to circulate well beyond the elites they satirised, and rented out in folios for an evening's entertainment.[648] Print-shop windows became impromptu public galleries and informal news outlets, particularly for the illiterate: contemporary etchings of the caricature shops (Fig. 5.1) show men, women and children of varied classes, ages and races gathered before the bay windows, united in amusement at what was displayed.

[645] Freya Gowrley, 'Representing Camp: Constructing Macaroni Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Visual Satire', *Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts 1640–1830* **,** 9.1 (2019), art. 4.
[646] Greig, *The Beau Monde,* (Oxford: OUP, 2020), p.20.
[647] Gatrell, *City of Laughter,* p.9. This figure refers to satirical prints known to have survived or to be documented in collections, catalogues, and contemporary records; as Gatrell notes, many cheaply produced and ephemeral prints from this period will not have survived, making this a minimum rather than a comprehensive total.
[648] Jerry White, *London in the Eighteenth Century* (London: The Bodley Head, 2012), p.288.



Figure 5.1: Anonymous, *The Caricature Shop of Piercy Roberts*, *28 Middle Row, Holborn* (1801), hand-coloured etching, 26.5 x 31.5cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, 53.502.5. (Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art).

The widespread consumption of satirical prints created a paradoxical relationship between artists and their wealthy subjects, who were often the primary purchasers of works mocking their own *milieu*. Rather than causing the wealthy to 'tremble' at seeing their defects publicly ridiculed, as Francis Grose's *Rules for Drawing Caricaturas* (1788) suggests, the dynamic appears far more nuanced.[649] After all, if this was the case, they would hardly have been keen to purchase them. Gatrell offers a more persuasive interpretation, arguing that the ruling classes remained 'secure in their privileges and supported by self-serving philosophies [...]', suggesting their psychological detachment from satirical critique.[650] The appeal of generalised character types rather than identifiable individuals may have actually

[649] Francis Grose, *Rules for Drawing Caricaturas with an Essay on Painting*, (London: 1788) p.4.
[650] Gatrell, *City of Laughter,* pp.8–9.

reinforced rather than threatened elite self-image — serving to 'affirm their subject's importance and flatter their narcissism.'[651] Jonathan Swift's astute observation that 'Satyr [was] a Sort of Glass, wherein Beholders generally discover[ed] every body's Face but their Own' further suggests the complex psychology at play.[652] While impossible to quantify accurately, this sustained satirical scrutiny of excess and pretension may nevertheless have exerted subtle pressure toward behavioural self-awareness among its privileged targets, even if it fell short of any radical reform.

This interaction between satirical critique and conduct emerges with particular clarity in depictions of chocolate consumption. The mid-century shift in locations for consumption, from exclusively male chocolate houses to mixed-gender pleasure gardens, provided satirists with abundant material for exploring changing social dynamics. The inherently performative aspects of chocolate consumption — whether enacted in the theatrical setting of the chocolate house or within the intimacy of the home — offered fertile ground for exploring and ridiculing manners of the elites and 'middling sorts' across gender lines. As a commodity consumed by both sexes, chocolate's changing associations encapsulated broader shifts in ideals of masculinity and femininity, and examining a single luxury commodity across multiple artistic and literary contexts offers a focused means of analysing how gender, class and sexuality were portrayed in metropolitan life.

[651] *Ibid.,* p.220.
[652] Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub: To Which Is Added The Battle of the Books and the Mechanical Operations of the Spirit,* ed. by A.C. Guthkelch and David Nichol Smith, (Oxford: OUP, 1958), 'The Preface of the Author', p.215.

Satirical and idealised imagery also intervened directly in the chocolate market: idealised images on trade cards and in advertisements promoted chocolate as a marker of refinement and health (as identified in Chapter 2), while satirical prints exposed its associations with idleness and sexual impropriety.

The public consumption of chocolate

Masculinity and the chocolate house

Public all-male sociability reveals varied and intersecting models of masculinity across social classes.[653] Men of different social ranks participated in homosocial environments — from taverns and alehouses to chocolate houses and exclusive gaming clubs — where conversation, consumption and performance contributed to the construction of masculine identity.[654] While some gender conventions transcended class boundaries, others were shaped by particular social hierarchies. From the 1690s, the chocolate house became an important arena for elite male sociability and status formation, with some establishments later developing into gentlemen's clubs. These spaces enabled privileged men to assert their status within established social networks while experimenting with different forms of masculine identity.

[653] Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century,* rev. edn (London: Penguin, 1990); *English Masculinities 1660-1800,* ed. by Hitchcock and Cohen (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016); Karen Harvey, *The Little Republic* (Oxford: OUP, 2012).
[654] John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp.63-77.

Within these chocolate houses, the wealthy elites tested competing ideals of masculinity through a wide spectrum of behaviour, from serious political conversations to demonstrations of duelling, gambling, excessive drinking, sexual bravado and ostentatious dress, under the tacit forbearance of their social equals. As Philip Carter observes, eighteenth-century elite masculinity was fundamentally not just 'a social but sociable category in which gender identity was conferred, or denied, by men's capacity for gentlemanly social performance.'[655] John Tosh also emphasises the centrality of peer endorsement in validating elite masculinity.[656] These venues operated as theatrical arenas in which masculinity was enacted and validated through ritualised practices of taste and display: the rich, exotic aroma of chocolate signalled sophistication; the performative preparation and serving invited theatrical gesture; and the tactile pleasure of handling delicate porcelain cups enabled demonstrations of refined sensibility, even as boisterous conduct asserted alternative forms of manhood. By the early eighteenth century, chocolate houses thus combined civility and excess, making visible the situational nature of gender norms.

The geography of London's chocolate houses both reflected and reinforced patterns of social exclusivity that were fundamental to their function as sites of masculine identity formation. The majority were clustered around St James's, a purpose-built aristocratic quarter in London's West End, where neoclassical architecture and proximity to St James's Park created the ideal *milieu* for elite sociability. While other chocolate houses flourished throughout London (such as The Spread Eagle in Covent Garden, The Hermitage in Conduit

[655] Philip Carter, *Men and the* Emergence of Polite Society (Harlow: Longman, 2006), p.209.
[656] Tosh, 'The Old Adam', in *English Masculinities, 1660–1800,* pp.217–238, (229).

Street and Lindheart's in Bloomsbury), the St James's establishments gained particular prominence when the court relocated to St James's Palace after the 1698 Whitehall fire (see Chapter 2) — a boon for the area's three leading venues, White's (1693), Ozinda's (1694) and The Cocoa Tree (1698), whose aristocratic patronage cemented their status as pre-eminent sites of elite male sociability.

The association with refinement attached to the chocolate house early and travelled beyond the aristocratic quarter. In David Craufurd's comedy *Love at First Sight* (1704), Sir Nicholas asks, 'Lord, I hope you will not go into a Barbarous Street where there's not a Chocolate House to be found?'[657] This line wittily exaggerates the stakes of urban civility, but the joke only works if the premise is already familiar: within a few years of the first St James's establishments opening, the presence or absence of a chocolate house had become legible shorthand for whether a street was cultivated. From the outset, then, these venues carried a double function — sites of elite sociability, and a recognisable, if playfully satirical, measure of a district's claim to genteel respectability. Even peripheral establishments such as The Chocolate House in Blackheath (Chapter 6), on the outskirts of expanding London, traded on that association.

Early in the eighteenth century, chocolate houses were predominantly male enclaves, in which women appeared chiefly in roles that served men: as proprietors, as serving staff or

[657] David Craufurd, *Love at First Sight: A Comedy, Acted at the New Theatre in Little Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. By Her Majesties Servants. Written by David Craufurd, Gent.* (London: [1704]), I. i, p.9, <link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0113639643/ECCO?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=452867ca&pg=6> [accessed 28 April 2025].

as prostitutes.[658] This exclusivity characterised the St James's establishments specifically; suburban chocolate houses such as Grace Tosier's at Blackheath admitted and entertained mixed elite company by 1721 (Chapter 6), so any claim about when women 'entered' chocolate culture depends upon which establishments are meant. What the St James's houses offered, moreover, was company as much as chocolate: Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* defined the chocolate house simply as a place 'where company is entertained with chocolate'.[659] After all, chocolate could be easily sourced from a string of unremarkable coffee houses now strewn across the capital and frequented by the ever-expanding 'middling sorts'.[660] For elite and affluent gentlemen, however, the chocolate houses offered the opportunity, *inter alia*, to see and be seen by other men in their social circle. As Mulvey-Roberts notes, these spaces provided socially sanctioned venues for men to 'bond together for the purpose of confirming and enhancing masculinity.'[661]

This social function became so integral to elite masculine identity that regular attendance was considered a hallmark of gentlemanly conduct by the early 1700s. John Macky's *Journey through England* (1714) describes the typical daily routine: 'Gentlemen rise by nine, and those that frequent Great Men's Levees find Entertainment [for a couple of

[658] Direct evidence for women in chocolate houses is thin, and this characterisation draws on the fuller scholarship on coffeehouses, which were often run on the same lines and sometimes by the same proprietors: Loveman, 'The Introduction of Chocolate', 29–30. On prostitution, see Berry, 'Rethinking Politeness', 65–81.

[659] Samuel Johnson *A Dictionary of the English Language,* vol XIV, (London: 1799) 147, posthumous edition, <link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0111665287/ECCO?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=865e2df5&pg=157> [accessed 6 May 2024].

[660] Contemporaries counted 3000 coffee houses in London at the start of the eighteenth century. For more on the 'middling sorts', see Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People* (Oxford: OUP, 1992); Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks (eds), *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550–1800* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994).

[661] Marie Mulvey-Roberts, 'Pleasures Engendered by Gender: Homosociality and the Club', in *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey-Roberts, p.51.

hours. At noon], the *Beau Monde* assembles in several […] *Chocolate* Houses, including the Cocoa Tree and White's'.[662] There they read newspapers and periodicals recounting the day's domestic and foreign news and engaged in the informed conversation expected of their rank.[663] When rain confined them indoors, they were often seduced by the gaming tables, particularly 'Picket or Basset at White's'.[664] While Macky's account, written to restore his finances after his release from debtor's prison, most likely embellishes the truth in order to boost readership, it nevertheless illuminates how these venues enabled elite men to display their status, their capacity for leisure and their mastery of polite conversation — the hallmarks of eighteenth-century masculine refinement.

Dissipated masculinity

By the early eighteenth-century, the chocolate house *beaux* had become emblematic of aristocratic decadence, drawing sustained attack from moralists and social critics alike. Richard Steele's inaugural edition of *The Tatler* (1709) explicitly linked White's Chocolate House with 'Gallantry, Pleasure, and Entertainment' establishing its reputation for frivolous pursuits.[665] In *The Spectator* (1711), Joseph Addison amplified this critique, mockingly portraying beaux who 'shift [...] chocolate houses from hour to hour, to get over

[662] Macky, *A Journey Through England,* (London: 1714), 167.
[663] *The Daily Courant*, London's first daily newspaper, began on 11 March 1702. See table in Ch. 2 for the growth of newspapers.
[664] J. Ashton, *Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne Taken from Original Sources* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1897) vol I, 79, notes that 'basset was a very gambling game'.
[665] *The Tatler*, no. 1, 12 April 1709, p.1 <https://go.gale.com/ps/navigateToIssue?volume=&loadFormat=page&issueNumber=1&userGroupName=oxford&inPS=true&mCode=7670&prodId=GDCS&issueDate=117090412> [accessed 6 May 2024].

the insupportable labour of doing nothing.'[666] By 1720, these men were being condemned in familiar terms as 'Fine Fellows [who] are prodigiously ignorant and prodigiously wicked, insomuch that they are Jest of Men of Wit, and pity'd by Men of Virtue; and shun'd by both.'[667] From 1709 therefore, the satirical criticism of this group of *beaux,* whose affectation masked vacuity, became unequivocal.

The moral critique gained additional force through its appearance in widely-read periodicals and newspapers, reaching beyond elite circles to shape broader public opinion. The *Prompter* crystallised public sentiment in 1736, describing these men as 'gilded Flies, in the Sun of Fortune' who were 'good for no one earthly thing, except to shine and buz [sic], for a Short Space of Time, and die without being Remembered.'[668] Readers, particularly from the middling ranks, seemingly viewed chocolate house *habitués* as (en)titled wastrels, whose parasitic existence contributed nothing to the welfare of the nation.

William Hogarth (1697-1764) provided perhaps the most penetrating visual critique of this form of hedonistic and unproductive masculinity, particularly targeting elite men's failure to fulfil their civic and patriotic responsibilities. This critique finds powerful expression in *The Rake at a Gaming House* from *The Rake's Progress* (1734) (Fig. 5.2), which exposes

[666] *The Spectator*, no. 54, 2 May 1711, p.2, <link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0113077719/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=6162e4ff&pg=261> [accessed 6 May 2024].
[667] 'The Sequel of the West Country Squire's Travels, Being His Description of London,' *London Journal*, 2 July 1720, issue 49, p.1. <link-gale-com.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/apps/doc/KIGFIA772209582/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=357b4121> [accessed 6 May 2024].
[668] *The Prompter,* 6 February 1736, issue 130, p.1.

London's gambling culture through a cautionary moral narrative.[669] The scene is set in what some contemporary viewers may have recognised as White's — identifiable by the background smoke referencing the establishment's actual blaze on 3rd May 1733.[670] The composition centres on the wigless Tom, desperate and dishevelled after his crippling losses at the gaming tables, surrounded by society's dregs: brawlers, predatory moneylenders and fallen clergymen. This chaotic gaming scene, suffused with palpable tension, nervous energy and suffocating smoke invites viewers to imagine themselves within this charged space.



Figure 5.2: William Hogarth (1697-1764), *The Gaming House* (scene VI) (1734), from *The Rake's Progress*, oil on canvas, 625 × 755 mm, Sir John Soane Museum, P45.
(Image courtesy of the Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum).

[669] Philip Carter 'Men About Town: Representations of Foppery and Masculinity in Early Eighteenth-Century Urban Society' ed. by Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, *Gender in the Eighteenth Century*, (London: Longman, 1997), p.41.
[670] John Ireland, *Hogarth Illustrated,* vol I (London: J & J Boydell, 1791), <link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0106127455/ECCO?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=7735c5ac&pg=207> [accessed 6 May 2024], p.54.

Through Tom's psychological and financial ruin, Hogarth joined other middle-class moralists in critiquing elite debauchery, presenting such behaviour as corrosive to both civic virtue and the ideal of authentic urban masculinity. Hogarth's social impact was amplified through mass dissemination of his engravings, sold by public subscription and further circulated through unauthorised pirated editions, thereby ensuring that his moral message reached a heterogeneous public far beyond the elite audiences he satirised.[671]

As chocolate houses evolved into gentlemen's clubs, debates surrounding the proper contours of masculine conduct persisted. White's restricted access informally before formalising it through paid membership in 1736, a model adopted in other establishments.[672] This transformation intensified its association with excessive drinking and high-stakes gambling — practices that attracted sustained censure from moralists and social commentators. In 1774 Horace Walpole captured the scale of this culture at Almack's (another St James's club), where he claimed 'a thousand meadows and cornfields are staked at every throw, and as many villages lost as in the earthquake that overwhelmed Herculaneum and Pompeii.'[673] His rural imagery pointedly critiques elite urban decadence, implying that these men carelessly destroyed their ancestral estates through metropolitan vices, and reinforcing broader concerns that urban masculine excess threatened to erode the foundations of the nation's rural social order.

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[671] Mark Hallett, *Hogarth* (London: Phaidon, 2000), pp.45–50.
[672] The Cocoa Tree converted into a club around ten years later.
[673] Horace Walpole, *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, ed. by Peter Cunningham, vol. 5, (London: Richard Bentley, 1857), p. 227.

Yet this irresponsible behaviour among the privileged male elites was by no means new. Captain James Wadsworth's 1652 chocolate treatise translation and his poem also lampooned the prodigal, pampered and reckless young men who would rather lose their inherited estates than be 'weaned' off chocolate (discussed in Chapter 1).[674] His verse underlines how entitled (in both senses of the word) young men had long risked their worldly goods through indulgent behaviour, revealing a cultural continuity and indicating a tacit acquiescence among the landed classes of ruin through luxury:

> Young *Heires* that hath more *Land* then Wit,
> Where once they doe but *Tast* of it,
> Will rather spend their whole *Estate*,
> Then *weaned* be from *Chocolate*.[675]

Despite the exaggerated tone of contemporary satire, the losses were real. In February 1780 Walpole told Mann of a cast at hazard at the Cocoa-Tree in St James's Street on which £180,000 turned.[676] The Irish gamester O'Birne won £100,000 from a young Mr Harvey of Chigwell, newly in possession of his brother's estate; O'Birne kept £10,000 and let Harvey throw for the remaining £90,000, which Harvey then won back. Walpole reported the episode as club gossip, its interest lying as much in Harvey's composure in the face of potential ruin as in the sum involved. The setting is significant: the Cocoa-Tree had begun as a chocolate house but by 1780 had been a subscription club for a generation, its chocolate now incidental to its gaming tables. How a gentleman lost mattered as much as how much he lost. In 1730, Swift similarly recounted hearing that the late Earl of Oxford

[674] Wadsworth, *Chocolate: Or, an Indian Drinke.*
[675] *Ibid*., Introduction, stanza 11.
[676] Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann, 6 February 1780, in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. by W. S. Lewis, 48 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937–83), XXV, pp.10-12 (p.12) <https://libsvcs-1.its.yale.edu/hwcorrespondence/> [accessed 7 September 2026].

had condemned White's as 'the common Rendez-vous of infamous Sharpers [swindlers], and noble Cullies'[677] and 'the bane of half the English nobility.'[678]

The gamesters of White's, self-styled as 'The Last Guinea Club', vowed to die like gentlemen upon spending their final guinea.[679] In 1755, Henry Bromley, 1st Lord Montford and his best friend Sir John Bland, 7th Baronet, of Kippax Park, both committed suicide to escape insurmountable gambling debts, demonstrating the tragic consequences of this masculine performance.[680] Fortunes were won and lost on absurd bets such as 'the colour of a coach horse, an article in the news, or a change in the weather.'[681] In a typical (but financially modest) bet, 'Sir Charles Wyndham bett Lt. Col. Perry five guineas that Lady Trentham is brought to bed of a child, alive or dead, before Lady Harrington.'[682] In 1702, Thomas Brown wrote of the shameful debts run up by these gamesters and the scandals that ensued: 'See, there's a Beau that has Play'd away his Estate at a Chocolate-House, going to sell himself to *Barbadoes*, to keep himself out of *Newgate*, and from Scandalising his Relations at *Tyburn*.'[683] The confidence, social ease and profligacy of these men of the 'imperial master class' marked them out as different from less elevated social groups

[677] Cullies were gullible fools who were easily tricked into giving away their money.
[678] Jonathan Swift and Thomas Sheridan, *The Intelligencer,* 2nd edn., No. 9, (London: 1730) p.101, <link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0113441334/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=0334075b&pg=108 > [accessed 6 May 2024].
[679] Colman, George, and Bonnell Thornton, *The connoisseur. By Mr. Town, critic and censor-general. ...* 3rd ed., vol. 2 (London: printed for George Faulkner, 1756), *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, <link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0116863516/ECCO?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=2b733b71&pg=2> [Accessed 7 Sept. 2026], iii.
[680] Karl Shaw, *Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know: The Extraordinary Exploits of the British and European Aristocracy* (London: Robinson, 2017), pp.51–52.
[681] Algernon Bourke, *The History of White's.* vol I (London: Waterlow and Sons, 1892), p.101.
[682] Algernon Bourke, *The Betting Book of White's from 1743–1878,* pt 1, vol II, bet dated April 15th1748, (London: Forgotten Books, 2018), p.17.
[683] Thomas Brown, *Amusements Serious and Comical. Calculated for the Meridian of London* (London: 1702), p.34.

(including the expanding 'middling sorts') — and from their female counterparts, though occasionally aristocratic women, such as the countess of Bristol, also became addicted to gambling.[684]

White's betting book (kept between 1743 and 1878) records a catalogue of outrageous wagers, exemplified by Horace Walpole's account of patrons betting on the survival of a man who had collapsed outside White's in 1750. When a physician attempted to intervene, 'the wagerers for his death interposed, and said it would affect the fairness of his bet.'[685] Although there is no surviving record of this episode in Bourke's *Betting Book of* White's — an almost verbatim copy of the original — it is plausible that Bourke omitted it 'on account of its indelicacy.'[686] While such anecdotes were undoubtedly embellished, they illuminate a cultural desire to perform fearlessness through risk, affirming a competitive mode of intra-class masculinity. This group's behaviour can be seen as an elaborate charade, with flippant and immoral performances over-riding moral integrity, while simultaneously differentiating elite men from women, who were increasingly regarded as society's virtuous moral custodians. Even critics such as Walpole — themselves insiders to this privileged world — portrayed these venues as breeding grounds for idle, callous and morally vacuous conduct.

[684] Lucy Worsley, *Courtiers: The Secret History of the Georgian Court* (London: Faber & Faber, 2011), p.49.
[685] Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann, 1 September 1750, in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. by W. S. Lewis, 48 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937–83), XX, p.74.
[686] Bourke, *The Betting Book of White's,* pt 1, vol II (London: Forgotten Books, 2018), preface.

These chocolate houses and clubs thus operated as theatrical arenas where masculinity could be performed, tested and redefined among accepting peers.[687] As Michèle Cohen argues, masculine identity was shaped primarily by homosocial relationships rather than being contingent upon men's interactions with women.[688] Her argument is a persuasive one for the first half of the century, when such bastions of sociability excluded women and where men evidently felt they could freely experiment with competing modes of masculine expression. Hogarth's *Rake at a Gaming House* (Fig. 5.2) certainly suggests there was a multitude of 'manly' ways to behave when fraternising in all-male company, whether through convivial repartee, hedonistic drinking or reckless gambling — making them layered landscapes ripe for satirical scrutiny.

What was new, however, was that they functioned as semi-public hubs where men of the ruling class could 'play deep' in private, yet theatrically visible, spaces. Unlike older, more clandestine male gatherings in taverns or private homes, the chocolate house and gaming club offered environments that were both exclusive and conspicuous: spaces where elite men could indulge in forms of behaviour deemed improper elsewhere, yet which were nonetheless observed, imitated and circulated through gossip, print culture and satire.

[687] Michèle Cohen, 'Manliness, Effeminacy and the French: Gender and the Construction of National Character in Eighteenth-Century England', *English Masculinities* ed. by Hitchcock and Cohen (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp.44-61 (47).
[688] Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.9.

Effeminacy

Within these spaces of masculine experimentation, the effeminacy displayed by some elite men directly challenged conventional masculinity. As Mulvey-Roberts has argued, 'the rituals practised [in chocolate houses] could open up a means for assessing the otherness denied to men on the life outside.'[689] These establishments thus provided arenas to challenge socially- and morally-acceptable standards of behaviour. Here, fops freely indulged in effeminate parading by discussing the latest flamboyant fashions, sporting elaborate perruques and wearing clouds of perfume until they resembled 'a Perfumer's Shop.'[690] One visitor to White's in 1727 described the 'intolerable stink of perfumes, which almost poisons the miserable chairmen that besiege the door.'[691] These fops lounged indolently, engaging in trivial gossip and obsessive self-display, thereby testing behavioural limits and revealing how a segment of early eighteenth-century elite society (particularly members of the aristocracy rather than gentlemen of humbler means) experimented with fluid and ambiguous forms of masculinity.

The public nature of this gendered experimentation carried significant cultural implications. Philip Carter argues that the public sphere provided opportunities for men to either display their masculinity or 'expose [themselves] to ridicule' — a particularly salient observation given the conspicuously mockable effeminacy displayed in chocolate houses.[692] While Randolph Trumbach contends that effeminacy became inextricably linked

[689] Mulvey-Roberts, 'Pleasures Engendered by Gender', in *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century* ed. by Porter and Mulvey-Roberts, p.75.
[690] Judith Drake, *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex*, (London:1696), pp.69–70.
[691] James Peller Malcolm, *Anecdotes of the Manners and Customs of London during the Eighteenth Century* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1810), p.158.
[692] Philip Carter, 'Mollies, Fops and Men of Feeling', p.24 and 'Men About Town: Representations of Foppery and Masculinity in Early Eighteenth-Century Urban Society', in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (eds), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Longman, 1997), p.57.

to male homosexuality during the first half of the eighteenth century, this interpretation arguably omits crucial distinctions in contemporary understanding of gender performance.[693] Carter offers a more nuanced reading, acknowledging the periodic conflation of foppery with homosexuality whilst emphasising that effeminate behaviour among fops was 'more common[ly]...explained in terms of social, not sexual, inadequacies and misdemeanours.'[694]

This distinction is crucial: effeminacy functioned primarily as a marker of gender transgression and social pretension, rather than as a reliable signifier of sexual identity. The figure of the fop emerged as a self-consciously and excessively refined heterosexual man who felt at liberty to question gender boundaries through the adoption of traditionally-feminine mannerisms and appearance. His sartorial and behavioural choices stemmed not from homoerotic desire but from an impulse to demonstrate conspicuous politeness and cosmopolitan sophistication, thereby expanding (or perhaps distorting) the parameters of acceptable masculinity. Carter persuasively frames politeness as a fluid social code born of commercial and urban modernity, that enabled the aristocracy and gentry to distinguish themselves from the middling and lower orders.[695] Foppery thus enacted a paradox: it reinforced class hierarchies even as it transgressed conventional gender norms.

[693] Trumbach, 'Sex, Gender and Sexual Identity in Modern Culture: Male Sodomy and Female Prostitution in Enlightenment London', *Journal of the History of Sexuality,* 2.2 (1991), 186–203.
[694] Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society,* (Harlow: Longman, 2006), p.139.
[695] *Ibid.,* p.210.

Class and gender distinctions achieved their most vivid expressions in the figures of the effeminate fop and *beaux*, whose ostentatious displays became irresistible targets for contemporary satirists. Writing of London in the 1690s, the French traveller Henri Misson observed that 'The Play-houses, Chocolate-houses, and Park in Spring, perfectly swarm with them' — 'them' being the men 'in English call'd Fops and Beaux', creatures compounded, in his account, of a periwig, a coat laden with powder and 'a Face besmear'd with Snuff'.[696] Alexander Pope created memorable foppish characters including the effeminate 'Sporus' (satirising Lord Hervey) in *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, and the vain Sir Plume in *The Rape of the Lock*,[697] while Jonathan Swift targeted foppish affectation more broadly through social commentary in works such as *Gulliver's Travels*.[698] Material evidence — from haberdashers', tailors' and wig-makers' ledgers — reveals the commercial infrastructure sustaining foppish culture, particularly in the luxury shopping districts around Bond Street. Fops were thus a readily identifiable type and a sustained target of opprobrium, yet probably represented only a small minority of London's aristocratic men, their visibility wildly disproportionate to their numbers. This imbalance reveals much about contemporary anxieties: fops and *beaux* functioned as lightning rods for broader fears about changing masculine norms, class mobility and the corrupting power of luxury consumption.

[696] Henri Misson, *M. Misson's Memoirs and Observations in his Travels over England*, trans. by John Ozell (London: D. Browne and others, 1719), p.16.
[697] Alexander Pope, 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot (1735)', in William Harmon (ed.), *Classic Writings on Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); D. W. Nichol (ed.), *Anniversary Essays on Alexander Pope's 'The Rape of the Lock'* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).
[698] In Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, the people of Laputa needed to be reminded to speak and listen, as they were too distracted to manage basic conversation.

While fashionable men were nothing new — the word '*fop*' dates to 1676, defining it as 'one who is foolishly attentive to and vain of his appearance, dress or manners' — this iteration marked a distinct departure from the Restoration gallant.[699] Though both dressed flamboyantly, it was these newer fops' obsession with fashion and their preference for gossip over courtship that distinguished them.[700] The term 'beau' was used from *c.*1700 and was defined as 'a man who gives particular, or excessive, attention to dress, mien, and social etiquette; an exquisite, a fop, a dandy.'[701]

Among the many characteristics distinguishing fops from their predecessors was their pronounced self-absorption, most blatant in their preoccupation with mirrors — as satirised in *How D'ye Like Me?* (1772) (Fig. 5.3). This print mocks an elderly macaroni's extravagant appearance, depicting him in an affected pose with an oversized wig and constrictive breeches that accentuate his spindly legs and girlish feet. The voluminous swathe of blue fabric at his hip is most probably a snuff handkerchief: it hangs from the pocket in the manner described in Chapter 3, half-displayed to appear conspicuously fashionable, as was the conventional way. If the identification holds, the contrast with the surviving example examined there (Fig. 3.9) is instructive. That handkerchief is dark for a practical reason — brown snuff stains would be less visible on it — and printed with commemorative imagery its owner could display as a statement of allegiance. It is an object with a job. Here the placement is retained and everything else discarded: plain silk, no design, a colour that would show every stain, and a scale that makes discreet use

[699] Fop, *n.*, sense 3, *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: OUP, 2024) <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6813794400 > [accessed 12 May 2022].
[700] Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society,* p.144.
[701] Beau, n., sense 1, OED <https://www.oed.com/dictionary/beau_adj?tab=meaning_and_use#25092764> [accessed 12 May 2022].

impossible. The print does not invent foppish excess so much as strip an ordinary object of its function, leaving the gesture of carrying it and nothing else — which is precisely the charge against the macaroni himself. The mirror behind him aligns with Loveman's observation that full-length mirrors were integral features of chocolate house *décor*, facilitating prolonged self-admiration and performance.[702] Strategically positioned throughout establishments such as White's, The Cocoa Tree and Ozinda's, these mirrors created theatrical spaces of surveillance and display. The narcissistic rituals performed in such spaces were captured with mordant wit in a character sketch of the *beau:* '[…] after a quarter of a Hour's compliment to himself in the great Glass, he faces about and salutes the company: when he has made cringes round and play'd over all his Tricks, out comes the fine Snuff-Box, and his Nose is regal'd a while; After this, he […] starts some learned Argument about the newest Fashion […].'[703] This sketch appeared in Abel Boyer's *English Theophrastus* (1708), but Boyer was recycling: the passage derives substantially from Judith Drake 'An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex' (1696).[704] That a character sketch of the 1690s could be reprinted essentially unaltered indicates how durable the *beau* had become as a satirical type; that it originated in a female-voiced polemic demonstrates that the critique of male self-display was not confined to male moralists.

[702] Loveman, 'The Introduction of Chocolate', 35.
[703] Abel Boyer, *The English Theophrastus: Or The Manners of the Age. Being the Modern Characters of the Court, the Town, and the City,* 3rd edn. (London: 1708) p.55.
[704] Published anonymously in 1696 and long attributed to Mary Astell; the case for Drake is made by Hannah Smith in 'English 'Feminist' Writings and Judith Drake's An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex (1696)', *Historical Journal*, 44.3 (2001), 727–47 and is followed here.



Figure 5.3: Anonymous, *How D'ye Like Me?* (1772), hand-coloured mezzotint on paper, 350 × 248mm, British Museum 1877,1013.837. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum).

The persistence of foppish behaviour in London's chocolate houses reveals how deeply embedded performative practices became within the architectural and social fabric of these venues. Sources as late as 1795 characterised fops and *beaux* as men 'who spent most of [their] time in ogling [themselves] in a glass,' suggesting that these establishments functioned as spaces in which the boundaries of self-presentation could be tested before a watchful social audience.[705] The physical environment actively facilitated performative masculinity, with specially designed furniture (particularly *chaises-longues*) encouraging

[705] Cleland, *A Dictionary of Love* (London: 1795), p.55.

languid postures. As Loveman observes, the fop not only admired himself but deliberately overplayed his absurdity, courting both laughter and admiration.[706] The satirical title 'How D'Ye Like Me?' epitomised this desire to be noticed and to elicit a reaction, highlighting how these men actively performed their identity within spaces uniquely equipped to amplify exaggerated displays of selfhood.

Despite their association with effeminacy, these clubs also accommodated traditionally masculine displays of violence. In 1720, a gambling dispute at the Royal Chocolate House in St James's Street escalated into a brawl where 'Squire Shepherd, Captain Grimes and another Gentleman were mortally wounded' requiring guards to subdue patrons 'with the Butt Ends of their Musquets.'[707] Similarly, in 1723, two gentlemen from a Pall Mall chocolate house quarrelled over a snuff box then promptly engaged in a duel, and 'both were separately wounded.'[708]

This coexistence of foppery and violence reveals competing versions of masculinity in action, demonstrating that it was not evolving linearly toward refinement or politeness, but rather being continually challenged through simultaneous performances of civility and aggression. While duels and brawls ostensibly demonstrated manly courage and honour, such explosive displays actually undermined gentlemanly ideals of rational self-control. This tension exposed how even traditionally 'masculine' behaviour could mark a man as deficient in true gentility. Daniel Defoe criticised the theatricality of duelling in *Reformation of Manners* (1702), arguing that such passionate outbursts and attention-seeking

[706] Loveman, 'The Introduction of Chocolate', 35.
[707] *Original Weekly Journal*, 13 February 1720, p.1664, column a.
[708] *St James's Evening Post,* 23 April 1723, p.4, column a.

behaviour betrayed true gentility. His fictional character Prigson was depicted as a young fop whose blend of profanity, vanity and chocolate-drinking epitomised moral decline:

> *Prigson* from Nurse and Hanging-sleeves got free,
> A little smatch of Modern Blasphemy;
> A powder'd Wig, a Sword, a Page, a Chair,
> Learns to take Snuff, drink Chocolate, and swear:
> Nature seems thus far to ha' led him on,
> And no Man thinks he was a Fop too soon;
> But 'twas the Devil surely drew him in,
> Against the Light of Nature thus to sin.[709]

As Stephen Gregg points out, Prigson indulges in 'swearing, chocolate drinking and the accoutrements of the Wig, Sword and equipage [which] emphasise his masculinity as a performance of an outmoded version of gentility, dependent upon the outward trappings of status rather than inner virtue.'[710] By mid-century, such boorish behaviour clashed with emerging ideals of politeness as the true mark of gentility — though duelling would briefly resurge in the early nineteenth century before effectively ceasing in the 1850s.[711]

English masculine identity in the chocolate house rested on an irony. White's and Ozinda's, the two houses established by 1698, both soon in St James's and later emblems of English sociability and political faction, were both founded by immigrants: Francesco Bianco (or Bianchi),[712] anglicised as Francis White, and Dominico Osenda, who traded as Ozinda.[713]

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[709] Daniel Defoe, *Reformation of Manners, a Satyr* (London: 1702), p.53.
[710] Stephen H. Gregg, *Defoe's Writings and Manliness: Contrary Men*, (London: Routledge, 2009), p.40.
[711] The practice of 'trial by combat' was abolished in 1819 and was banned by the military in 1844. The last recorded duel in England occurred in 1852.
[712] Brian Cowan's entry in the ODNB for Francis White speculates his name was Bianco or Bianchi.
[713] Dominico Osenda, or Ozinda, kept the chocolate house adjoining St James's Gate from 1694 until his death in 1722: 'Pall Mall, South Side', in *Survey of London: Volumes 29 and 30, Part 1*, ed. by F. H. W. Sheppard, p. 384. His nationality is nowhere stated, but the evidence points to an Italian or possibly French origin: he is described as the keeper of 'the Italian Coffee House' in *The British Weekly Mercury*, 536 (5 October 1715), p.5 column b; his will leaves the business to his brother Onorato (London, The National

Englishmen asserted a national identity in premises shaped by the foreignness against which that identity was defined. The process was less rejection than domestication — continental practice rearticulated within an English discourse of politeness — as patrons refashioned foreign-owned spaces into arenas of national and political display while consuming beverages prepared through continental methods.

The physical and sensory dimensions of these venues often retained conspicuously foreign characteristics. Preparation remained visibly indebted to Spanish practice: chocolate was frothed with the *molinillo*, the Spanish milling stick (Fig. 3.2), and served from tall chocolate pots whose distinctive lids were designed to admit the mill — both implements sketched by Lady Ann Fanshawe in the manuscript she began in 1651 (Fig. 4.3).[714] The visual opulence of the chocolate houses was likewise an assemblage of the foreign and the imperial: mirrored walls evoking French interior fashion, and mahogany panelling hewn from Caribbean colonial forests — so that the very room in which the English gentleman performed his sociability was materially constituted from Spanish technique, French style and imperial extraction.[715] The foreign was not erased but hierarchically managed: continental practice was appropriated as cultural capital while its origins were neutralised through repetition, so that Englishness in these rooms was produced rather than innate.

Archives, PROB 11/585/15); and Onorato sold up in 1724, being 'dispos'd to return to France' (*Daily Post*, 1405, 28 March 1724), 2a.

[714] On the Spanish transmission of preparation techniques and implements, see Coe and Coe, *The True History of Chocolate,* pp.129–40.

[715] For mahogany's colonial provenance, see Jennifer Anderson, *Mahogany: The Costs of Luxury in Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp.89–124.

Xenophobic anxiety resurfaced in the macaroni phenomenon of the 1760s and 1770s, when young Englishmen returned from Grand Tours in Italy and France flaunting continental fashions — including long curls, spying-glasses and luxuriant fabrics.[716] Though macaronis were a distinctive subset of the earlier fops, they represented an intensification rather than a departure, pushing sartorial extravagance to new extremes while attracting the same critical charge: sensory overload compounded by foreign affectation. *The Universal Magazine* captured this ridicule in 1772, describing a macaroni carrying 'a huge nosegay which hid one side of his face, in the middle of which was one huge essence bottle.'[717] William Tullett reads such descriptions as evidence that the macaroni was known by smell before sight, diffusing perfume into the space of others.[718] The nosegay, though, is a visible object, and the bottle set in the middle of it was worn to be seen. The satire thus attacks the apparatus of perfumery as much as its scent. The irony was sharp: the macaronis had returned from the very regions — Italy and France — whose commodities, proprietors and practices had shaped the chocolate houses from their beginnings. The principal establishments of the 1690s had been founded by men with Italian or French connections; the drink itself had arrived by way of Spain and Italy; and its preparation and service retained conspicuously continental forms. Yet the macaronis now faced condemnation for an ostentatious continentalism not fundamentally different from that which the chocolate houses had always embodied. Foreign elements, once absorbed, had been quietly reframed as authentic English traditions; new continental influences were cast

[716] Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society* (Harlow: Longman, 2006), p.138.
[717] 'A New Description of a Macaroni', *Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure*, 51 (October 1772), p. 173, ProQuest British Periodicals [accessed 7 September 2026].
[718] William Tullett, 'The Macaroni's 'Ambrosial Essences': Perfume, Identity and Public Space in Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 38.2 (2015), 163–80 (pp. 163-4).

as threats to them. Their example exposes the precariousness of English cultural identity — forever defined against, yet fundamentally indebted to, the foreign.

While fops and macaronis drew criticism for their continental affectations, more serious masculine pursuits flourished in chocolate houses. These establishments also served as venues for sober political engagement, quite distinct from the fashion-focused conversations of fops, or the macaronis' discussions of Italian customs.[719] The politicisation of these venues amounted to process of anglicisation, as English patrons appropriated premises established by foreign proprietors and redefined them as arenas of English political masculinity. Party allegiance shaped patronage: Ozinda's was a recognised Tory rendezvous in the early years of the century,[720] and John Macky observed in 1714 that 'a Whig will no more go to the Cocoa Tree or Ozinda's than a Tory will be seen at the Coffee-house of St James's'.[721] The Cocoa Tree emerged as the unofficial headquarters of the Tory party, functioning both as a social venue and as a political forum in which MPs could engage freely with colleagues and visiting constituents.[722] In the years after the Hanoverian succession, when Tory loyalty was itself under suspicion, such associations were not merely social: to frequent a particular house was to declare an allegiance. This political dimension reflected how far the ability to discuss government, legislation and foreign policy had become central to educated masculine identity. Ironically, these displays of English political masculinity took place in rooms still imbued with the sensory and cultural legacies of their

[719] Valérie Capdeville, 'The Ambivalent Identity of Eighteenth-Century London Clubs as a Prelude to Victorian Clublife', in *Cahiers Victoriens & Édouardiens*, no. 81, (Montpellier: 2015), p. 2.
[720] 'Pall Mall, South Side, Past Buildings: Ozinda's Chocolate House', in *Survey of London: Volumes 29 and 30, St James Westminster, Part 1*, ed. by F. H. W. Sheppard (London: London County Council, 1960), p. 384.
[721] Macky, *A Journey Through England* (London: 1714), p.168.
[722] Linda Colley, *In Defiance of Oligarchy: The Tory party, 1714–60* (Cambridge: CUP, 1982), p.74.

continental founders, so that patriotic discourse was quite literally flavoured by foreign tastes.

The evolution of masculine ideals in these contexts aligned with broader Enlightenment values. As Roy Porter and John Tosh have argued, rationality, reason and public virtue increasingly defined eighteenth-century English masculinity. Men — especially among the educated elites — were encouraged to demonstrate restraint, industry and civility. Morally, they were also expected to be honourable, virtuous, emotionally resilient and dutiful in their civic responsibilities. These ideals contrasted sharply with libertine hedonism; as Fletcher argues, the 'charge of effeminacy was laid against the man who lacked all restraint.'[723] Self-mastery, moderation and moral regulation had become the hallmarks of ideal manhood.

This emphasis on self-regulation extended into public service by mid-century, as benevolence and civic responsibility became increasingly important markers of elite masculine virtue alongside older ideals of courtliness and sociability. Carolyn Williams notes that benevolent men were typically 'wealthy, well-educated members of the upper or middle classes, who exercised power in the public arenas of local or national politics'.[724] This changing conception of manliness manifested itself in tangible ways: in 1754, patrons of White's Chocolate House established a fund to reward chairmen who fought street robbers,[725] while in 1744 they financed a privateer to combat French

[723] Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p.411.
[724] Carolyn Williams, 'The Luxury of Doing Good' in Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey-Roberts (eds), *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996) pp.77–107 (p.79).
[725] *Whitehall Evening Post,* 12–14 November 1754, issue 1325, p.3 column b.

vessels.[726] Although the latter initiative most likely offered financial as well as patriotic returns, both demonstrate the willingness of White's patrons to associate male sociability with forms of public action. The anti-robbery fund in particular suggests an emerging ideal of masculine responsibility towards the wider community. Politeness was increasingly held out as a form of virtue rather than mere manner — though the claim was contested throughout, and the figure of the fop marked the point at which refinement was thought to have gone too far.[727]

By the 1770s, sensibility had emerged as a central tenet of masculinity — a refinement of politeness rather than its repudiation, aligning external conduct with internal morality – such that the 'man of feeling' reconciled emotional responsiveness with virtue.[728] Carter identifies sensibility as the second major shift in eighteenth-century concepts of gentlemanliness, though the term 'shift' should not be mistaken for wholesale replacement: as he himself acknowledges, models of masculinity remained in flux throughout the century, with new ideals layering upon, and coexisting with, earlier models rather than displacing them.[729] Sensibility is thus best understood as incremental modification within ongoing negotiations of masculine ideals.

As these ideals evolved, elite men faced new challenges in navigating the terrain of shifting social expectation. One increasingly accepted path to cultivating politeness and sensibility lay in social interaction with virtuous women, whose supposed softness and modesty were

[726] *Daily Advertiser*, 31 May 1744, issue 4172, p.1, column a.
[727] Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, esp. Ch.4 ; ——, 'Men About Town', in Barker and Chalus (eds), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England* (Harlow: Pearson, 1997), pp.31–57.
[728] Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, pp.27–32.
[729] *Ibid.,* p.211.

held to refine male manners. Women thus played a vital role in fostering politeness and sensibility and, by extension, masculinity itself.[730] Male refinement increasingly depended upon socialising with women, rather than exclusively male interactions. The cultivation of London's sixty-four pleasure gardens, where chocolate was routinely served, exemplified this shift.

Mixed-gender venues such as Vauxhall (opened in 1732, though it had been developed from 1729 and had operated informally from the 1660s), Marylebone (1738), and Ranelagh (1742) became a central part of polite Hanoverian society.[731] Yet mixed-gender mingling in commercial venues for sociability was not entirely new to the eighteenth-century. Mark Hailwood's work on *Alehouses and Good Fellowship in Early Modern England* (2014) demonstrates that women comprised a substantial minority of alehouse patrons, perhaps as much as thirty per cent, and that mixed-gender drinking companies were relatively common, though all-female groups were rare.[732] Women typically attended alehouses with their husbands or as part of mixed-gender friendship groups, with these venues serving as important sites for courtship among young people. However, the nature and meaning of mixed-gender socialising had shifted significantly by the 1730s. While earlier alehouse culture involved women primarily in the company of known male companions for protection against assault or accusations of impropriety, it operated outside the emerging discourse of politeness altogether, governed instead by older norms of neighbourliness

[730] Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity* (London: Routledge, 1996); Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660–1800* (Harlow: Longman, 2006), pp.190–191.
[731] Kate Newnham, 'Public Entertainments', in *Design and the Decorative Arts*: *Georgian Britain,* 1714–1837 ed. by Michael Snodin and John Styles (London: V&A Publications, 2004), 126–29, (126).
[732] Mark Hailwood, *Alehouses and Good Fellowship in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), pp.153–170.

and communal familiarity. The pleasure gardens represented something new: a model of mixed-gender interaction that was self-consciously refined, in which elite women (and increasingly the 'middling sorts' at Vauxhall and Marylebone) were active participants whose presence helped shape evolving ideals of polite masculinity.

Mixed-gender spaces and shifting social boundaries

Having established how chocolate consumption often operated within homosocial masculine spaces, this chapter now examines the commodity's role within mixed-gender environments, where gender norms — negotiable and relatively fluid in single-sex contexts — became more rigidly policed once women were admitted. The emergence of public venues accommodating both sexes redefined the cultural meanings of chocolate consumption, particularly among the affluent, as women's participation was framed not as a threat to masculine privilege but as an expression of idealised femininity, refinement and disciplined pleasure.

Pleasure gardens created novel opportunities for mixed-gender interaction, where the rituals of public breakfasting, centred around chocolate and coffee, became carefully choreographed performances of civility and taste. The 1742 opening of the rococo rotunda at the Ranelagh Pleasure Gardens exemplified this shift: conceived as both an architectural and sensory spectacle, it offered a setting in which the consumption of hot drinks and sherbet coincided with music and polite conversation. Canaletto's *London: Interior of Rotunda at Ranelagh Gardens* (1754) (Fig. 5.4) captures this transformation, depicting men and women in near-equal numbers moving beneath a vast, illuminated dome. Here,

architecture itself became performative — the interaction of height, light and ornament created a theatrical environment that invited both observation and participation.



Figure 5.4: Canaletto, *London: Interior of Rotunda at Ranelagh Gardens* (1754), oil on canvas, National Gallery, London NG1429. (Image © The National Gallery, London).

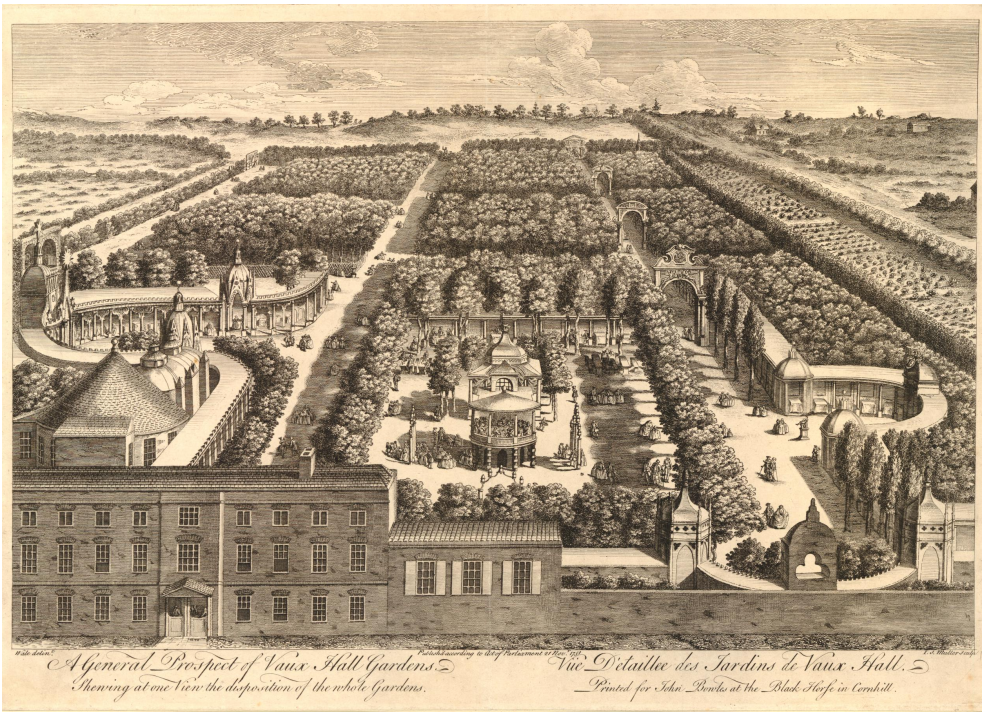

Figure 5.5: Anonymous, *A General Prospect of Vauxhall Gardens, shewing at one View the disposition of the whole Gardens,* (1751), etching, 288 x 408mm, British Museum 1880,1113.5465. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum).

These gardens served as stages for performances of masculinity and femininity. Marriage remained the primary objective for many women, and promenading through Ranelagh Gardens provided an ideal hunting-ground for suitable partners. These occasions increased the visibility of genteel women, allowing them to display their social status, through their fashionable attire, their appreciation of sophisticated 'foreign' luxuries including chocolate, their refinement and the reputable company they kept. As Langford notes, '[t]he *ton* or the *bon Ton*, that is to say the fashionable taste which was paraded from every conceivable venue from Ranelagh […] was particularly associated with female snobbery.'[733] The two images document this choreography at different scales. Canaletto shows bodies in proximity beneath the dome; the Vauxhall prospect (Fig. 5.5) shows the ground plan that governed their movement — walks, supper boxes (covered dining alcoves) and bandstand laid out to direct circulation and sightlines. These were rich sensory environments where bands played, fireworks exploded, and water features mingled with artificial birdsong and the aromas of chocolate, coffee and food.

'Strident' behaviour of women

This growing mixed-gender socialisation sparked deep anxieties about the blurring of gender distinctions. By mid-century, leisured women faced increased press scrutiny, often through satirical criticism of their supposedly unfeminine behaviour. The *Gentleman's Magazine* (1732) warned that women were '[s]eeking to supplant men in some of their prerogatives [including] wearing breeches, riding astride, shaking hands, ordering the men to get the coffee rather than serving them as they should, carrying pistols, and even taking

[733] Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People,* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), p.601.

the initiative in love affairs.'[734] Critics claimed women were abandoning domestic roles while demanding that men assume traditionally feminine duties. Some even compared gentrified women's public consumption of 'male' beverages to street gin-drinkers, arguing that '[t]he lady at St James's who paints her face with frequent applications of coffee or chocolate water, looks as hideous as the trollop of St Giles's (Fig. 5.6), who has laid on the same colours by repeated half quarterns of Gin Royal.'[735]



Figure 5.6: Thomas Rowlandson, (1756-1827), *St James's, St Giles's* (1792), hand-coloured etching, British Museum 1878,0511.1398. (Image © The Trustees of the British Museum).

[734] *Gentleman's Magazine or Monthly Intelligencer,* July 1732, 58, pp.222–4.
[735] George Colman, *The Connoisseur: By Mr Town, Critic and Censor-General* [pt. 1], 30 January 1755 (London: 1755), p.313.

Such analogies betrayed deeper concerns about women transgressing feminine conduct norms, while revealing both xenophobic and racialised undertones that associated darkened skin (from chocolate and coffee consumption) with compromised feminine purity and moral degradation. The comparison between the elite women of St James's and the impoverished women of St Giles's collapsed class distinctions in ways that revealed anxieties not only about gender transgression but also about the instability of social hierarchies themselves — if elite women could be compared to street prostitutes through their consumption habits, then what distinguished the upper classes from the lower orders? The concern was that the new consumption habits of 'polite' women could erode distinctions that were fundamental to the maintenance of order.

As John Brown and John Gregory had both warned (and as noted in Chapter 2) such blurring of gender distinctions provoked sustained moralist anxiety throughout the eighteenth century, with women's 'Boldness'[736] and men's 'Effeminacy'[737] repeatedly invoked as symbols of national decline. Yet these concerns were hardly new: similar complaints about women's public presence had circulated since the seventeenth century, attesting to a longstanding patriarchal unease rather than any sudden social revolution. Each generation thus rearticulated these anxieties in new forms, presenting them as urgent responses to contemporary crises rather than the inherited prejudices they actually were — and, in so doing, kept the same underlying assumptions about gender and control intact while appearing to offer something new.

[736] John Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times*, (London: 1757), p.51.
[737] John Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (London: 1784), p.41.

Central to these critiques was the charge that women were neglecting their domestic duties. An account from 1748 condemned fashionable women who met for public breakfasting,[738] claiming that

> '[M]y Lady of Fashion neglects her domestic affairs of her family, and leaves them to the management of careless servants, in order to be every morning […] at a place where her person and behaviour are the jest of the whole company and where she can have no real delight since, like my friend Dick, she has no appetite for music, but she has a strong appetite for scandal, which she sucks in with greater appetite than her tea or chocolate.'[739]

The double standard here did not rest on timing. Men drank chocolate by day too: as discussed, Macky's account of the fashionable round placed gentlemen in the chocolate houses of St James's through the morning and at noon, where their attendance signified polite and political sociability rather than idleness.[740] The identical act carried opposite moral meanings according to the sex of the consumer. What was moralised was not the chocolate but the woman drinking it.

Eliza Haywood's critique remained sharp, notably when she depicted public breakfasting as fundamentally disruptive to domestic order: '[It] robs husbands of their wives, children of their parents, and houses of their mistresses. […] tradesmen bring her bills, she is in too much of a hurry to notice them; the chapel bells ring to call her to her usual devotion, she hears it not.'[741] Here, Haywood portrayed women as neglectful three times over: of their religious duties, household management and family responsibilities. While exaggerated for

[738] Public breakfasting took place at London's pleasure gardens such as Ranelagh and Marylebone Gardens , and Grace Tosier also put on public breakfasting events in Blackheath.
[739] J. Wildair, *Three Letters to the Young Gentlemen of the Present Age* (London: Printed for W. Owen, near Temple-Bar, 1748), pp. 83-4.
[740] Karen Harvey, 'Ritual Encounters: Punch Parties and Masculinity in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, 214 (2012), 165–203.
[741] Eliza Haywood, *The Wife by Mistake; or, The Wife of Mira,* 2nd edn (London: 1762), Section XI.

satirical effect, her critique reflected genuine tensions over women's expanding public presence and the perceived threats to patriarchal household discipline. The language of 'robbery' — husbands robbed of wives, children of parents — translates moral disobedience into an analogy of property crime, revealing the extent to which female leisure was construed as theft from male authority.

However, not all contemporary observers shared these narratives of moral decline. Though some moralists worried that women had recently lost their femininity, others believed that young men and women had always behaved giddily, and that this generation was no different from any other. An article in *The Connoisseur* (1754) offered a corrective, arguing that:

> [t]he present race of Bucks, Bloods and Free Thinkers, are but the Spawn of the Mohocks and the Hell-Fire-Club: and if our modern fine ladies have their Masquerades, their Vauxhalls, their Sunday Tea-drinking at Ranelagh and their Morning Chocolate in the Haymarket,[742] they have only improved upon the Ring, the Spring-Gardens, the New-Exchange Assignations and the Morning Puppet-Show, which employed the attention of their grandmothers.[743]

This perspective demonstrates generational continuity rather than radical social rupture, revealing that satirical complaints about declining standards were themselves conventional rhetorical tropes. The article's deliberate pairing of male and female leisure activities — 'Bucks' and 'fine ladies' — suggests that the moral criticism over declining gendered behaviour operated less as a response to genuine social chaos than as a ritualised cultural performance. Each generation, it seems, required its own moral disapproval of

[742] The reference to Haymarket appears to allude to the fashionable morning entertainments associated with Samuel Foote's New Theatre in the Haymarket. On 24 April 1747, Foote invited his audience to 'drink a dish of chocolate with him' at noon. The chocolate was used as a pretext for an unlicensed theatrical performance. *General Advertiser,* issue 3897, page 1c.
[743] *The Connoisseur,* Thursday, 27 June 1754, vol I, no. 22, p.2.

youthful irresponsibility and gender transgression, regardless of actual behavioural change.

Nevertheless, opposition to public breakfasting intensified in the latter half of the eighteenth century. In 1774 public breakfasting (where chocolate, cordials and sherbet continued to be consumed) was again denounced by John Gregory as being 'detrimental to society.'[744] By the century's close, Ranelagh's star had waned, and its wooden rotunda (Fig. 5.4) was demolished in 1805. Though mixed-sex events in Vauxhall Gardens were still being advertised in 1790, including concerts '[with] tea, coffee and chocolate included', the intense sensory mix and the perceived inversion of gendered behaviour proved to be unsustainable.[745] In the context of alarming uprisings abroad and at home — including the American War of Independence (1775-1783), the French Revolution (1789-1799) and the Gordon Riots (1780) in London — Gatrell argues that the fashion for walking in pleasure gardens while sipping chocolate and partaking in 'transgressive gender play' appeared increasingly discordant with the moral seriousness of the revolutionary era.[746] Greig agrees that, from the 1770s, a 'gradual 'cultural transformation' and a move towards moral reform [was] driven by the elite themselves.'[747] Though interest in such pastimes lessened from the 1780s, it was perhaps not as terminal as Gatrell suggests — after all, *Vanity Fair*'s Becky Sharp was still visiting Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens *c.*1814-1815, and Vauxhall did not finally close its gates until 1859.[748]

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[744] *The Ambulator; or, The Stranger's Companion in a Tour Round London; within the Circuit of Twenty-Five Miles* (London: 1774), p.144.
[745] M.H. Keymer, *Public Breakfasting, at Keymer's Pavilion & Vauxhall Gardens on Wednesday and Friday mornings, in the assize week*, (Norwich, 1790).
[746] Gatrell, *City of Laughter,* p.355.
[747] Greig, *The Beau Monde*, p.26.
[748] William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* ed. by John Carey (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), Ch. 6.

Female snuff-taking also provoked significant controversy, again for its perceived destabilisation of gender norms — women were rebuked, as noted in Chapter 3, for the unfemininity and unwonted independence the habit engendered. Residual snuff beneath the nose was likened by satirists to a moustache, symbolising the erasure of feminine appearance. It acted as a potent metaphor for gender transgression, reflecting the unease around women adopting 'masculine' habits and clothing.

More broadly, female snuff-takers were often associated by critics with social impropriety, an assertion of independence, and a perceived decline in deference toward men. In *The Spectator* (1712), Addison mocked women who offered snuff around during sermons: 'a lady of fashion too often pulls out her box full of good Brazile in the middle of the sermon; and to show that she has the Audacity of a well-bred Woman offers it to the men as well as the women who sit near her.'[749] Such behaviour not only transgressed norms of decorum and religious morality but also embodied anxieties about expanding female presence and authority in public spaces.[750] Addison's ironic use of 'well-bred Woman' underlines the inversion of polite femininity: the very traits of refinement and sociability that defined genteel womanhood are here recast as evidence of immodesty and self-assertion. In this way, female elegance becomes a vehicle of transgression, its outward markers reinterpreted as signs of moral disorder. In 1709 *The Tatler* underlined anxieties about blurred gender boundaries in Isaac Bickerstaff's satirical description of his sister

[749] *The Spectator*, no. 344, 4 April 1712, pp.1-2. <https://go.gale.com/ps/navigateToIssue?volume=&loadFormat=page&issueNumber=344&userGroupName=oxford&inPS=true&mCode=7690&prodId=GDCS&issueDate=117120404> [accessed 3 September 2026].
[750] One hundred years earlier, such conduct would probably have warranted proceedings in church courts.

sitting at night with 'her Nose full of Snuff and a Man's Nightcap on her Head, reading Plays and Romances.'[751] She retains some traditionally feminine behaviour (reading plays and light romances) while also adopting male clothing and an excessive appetite for snuff. Through its humour, this vignette exposes the broader cultural unease surrounding the permeability of gender boundaries and the empowering possibilities of female consumption.

Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones, A Foundling* (1749) illustrates this intersection between gender and material culture through the figure of Mrs Western. She confronts her pipe-smoking brother while 'standing with her Back to the Fire,' and holding 'a Pinch of Snuff' in one hand.[752] She insists, 'Women in a free Country are not to be treated with such arbitrary Power? We are as free as Men, and I heartily wish I could not say we deserve that Freedom better.' [753] This invocation of 'freedom' and 'arbitrary power' resonates with contemporary discourse on 'English liberties', which were frequently contrasted with Continental absolutism in this period. The vocabulary was not just rhetorical: 'arbitrary power' was the language of contemporary argument about the limits of the executive, and Mrs Western borrows it to describe her brother's authority over her. Later, Mrs Western asserts her authority over her niece's affairs, proclaiming, 'Lord have Mercy upon all Affairs which are under the directions of Men. The Head of One Woman is worth a thousand of yours.'[754] In Fielding's representation, snuff consumption thus becomes a symbol of female

[751] *The Tatler*, no.75, 30 September 1709, p.2.
[752] Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones, A Foundling*, ed. by Thomas Keymer and Alice Wakely (London: Penguin Books, 2005), p.708.
[753] *Ibid*., p.749.
[754] *Ibid.,* p.750.

independence and expressive authority — a small but pointed act through which women could voice something close to a critique of their own subordination.

Transitional spaces and interpretive ambiguity

As mixed-gender chocolate consumption in public expanded beyond pleasure gardens, the social spaces associated with its consumption became key sites for negotiating changing gender identities. Even as pleasure gardens declined, other social venues reflected evolving gender dynamics. As Carter observes, masculinity in this period constituted 'a complex series of shifting social and cultural constructions.'[755] The same can be said of femininity. These evolving gender roles in public spaces are identifiable in Rowlandson's watercolour *The Chocolate House* (1787) (Fig. 5.7) which depicts male and female customers at the Conduit Chocolate House in Islington. Though this establishment was less elitist than its St James's counterparts (as chocolate and cheaper cocoa were now being extensively enjoyed by the 'middling sorts' and below), the scene encapsulates the new ambiguities of mixed-gender sociability.

[755] Carter, 'Men About Town' in Barker and Chalus (eds), *Gender in the Eighteenth Century,* p.36.



Figure 5.7: Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827), *The Chocolate House* (1787), watercolour and ink on paper, 256 x 364 mm, London Museum, A6860. (Image © London Museum).

The central woman's assertive positioning and behaviour demand careful visual scrutiny. Her direct, unwavering gaze toward the officer, combined with her prominent placement, creates interpretive ambiguity. Several readings are plausible: she may represent a respectable woman confidently asserting her presence in a newly accessible public space — evidence of genuine female progress. Alternatively, she may be actively soliciting male attention in ways that transgress conventional feminine propriety — evidence of moral decline. Or she may embody something between these extremes: a woman navigating uncertain social terrain where the rules governing female public behaviour remained unsettled.

The male officer beside her presents a similar interpretive challenge. His relaxed posture on the bench, with legs positioned at a suggestive angle, and the phallic positioning of his sword, initially appear to invite sexualised interpretation. Yet, closer examination reveals these details could equally signal nothing more than comfortable repose in a public social space — the sword's position determined by practical considerations rather than symbolic intent, his posture reflecting the informal atmosphere characteristic of such establishments. This multiplicity of readings is not a weakness but the painting's analytical strength: Rowlandson captured a historical moment when the social semiotics of gendered behaviour were genuinely in flux.

Rowlandson's composition both confirms and questions the respectability of this mixed-gender space. The customers' refined appearances, the bright, airy room with decorative cornicing, and the orderly scene (at least for Rowlandson) with well-dressed women, all suggest legitimacy. Two women sit composedly at the back table playing cards, and even the dog waits patiently — all markers of decorous restraint. This is manifestly not the 'meeting Place for Vice, Idleness, Corrupt Discourses' that Gailhard described in 1700.[756] Yet, beneath this veneer of respectability, chocolate's earlier associations with sensual indulgence and impropriety linger, creating a tension between surface respectability and latent moral anxiety.

This painting reveals shifting but unresolved power dynamics between the sexes. In the background, male servants assume deferential, quasi-feminine roles as they serve drinks

[756] J. Gailhard, *The Trumpet of Sion. Sounding a General Alarm to the Nation,* (London: 1700), p.21.

to women, subtly inverting traditional hierarchies of service and authority, although not social class. Meanwhile, the male customers appear captivated by the lively women who are no longer portrayed as demure and virtuous. Whether this represents women's genuine empowerment or the performance of a new, socially-sanctioned mode of femininity remains deliberately ambiguous. Moreover, the work succeeds in capturing the sensory density of the chocolate house — the clustering of animated figures, the hum of conversation, and the imagined aroma of chocolate that permeates the air — a saturation of sensory stimuli that mirrors the complexity of the social negotiations occurring within, where boundaries of class and gender were both challenged and reaffirmed.

Debate over these women's precise social status epitomises this interpretive uncertainty. While they might be respectable middle-class patrons enjoying a newly acceptable form of mixed-gender sociability, their fashionable dress and confident demeanour could equally mark them out as courtesans — skilled women who, as Susan Griffin argues, possessed impressive conversational abilities and social acumen and 'had to be highly cultivated.'[757] Crucially, they lack the overt markers typically used to identify less urbane sex workers (flushed cheeks, undone hair, wine glasses), yet their similarity to the courtesans in Rowlandson's *St James's, St Giles's* (Fig. 5.6) suggests this possibility cannot be entirely dismissed. By the 1780s, the visual markers separating respectable women from courtesans had become porous, reflecting broader social uncertainty rather than artistic indecision. Contemporary viewers, depending upon their class and moral outlook, would have interpreted the scene differently — and Rowlandson's composition accommodates

[757] Susan Griffin, *A Book of Courtesans: A Catalogue of Their Virtues,* (London: Pan, 2003), p.4.

this plurality of readings without resolving them. This plurality was itself commercially astute: a print legible as celebration to one purchaser and as caution to another sold to both publics, and the crowded print-shop window (Fig. 5.1) — where prints succeeded or failed before a socially mixed audience — rewarded precisely this calculated openness.

Despite this apparent acceptance of women in chocolate houses, at least some establishments retained their primary identity as male retreats. *The Spectator* had lampooned the type in 1712: Will Sparkish, unable to put on his periwig or adjust his cravat to the glass 'for the noise of those damned nurses and squaling [sic] brats', ends 'with a gallant reflection upon the comforts of matrimony, runs out of the hearing and drives himself to the chocolate house'.[758] That this passage was still being reprinted in 1788 is itself telling: the joke evidently remained legible to readers three generations later, when the establishment that Sparkish flees to had become a subscription club. Such satire reveals the enduring ideal of the chocolate house as a refuge from suffocating domesticity and as a place where 'social pleasures and business contacts [could be] oiled'. [759] Though gentlemen were evidently spending more time with their wives in public, married men retained their club memberships and the freedom to escape domestic obligations, secure in the knowledge that 'married women would become mothers and assume responsibility for their children'.[760]

[758] Steele, *The Spectator*, no. 479 (9 September 1712), in *The Spectator*, ed. by Donald F. Bond, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), IV, p.198.
[759] Tosh, 'The Old Adam' in *English Masculinities,* ed. by Hitchcock and Cohen, pp.228–9.
[760] Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, p.53.

The satirical tone of this article reveals that, while domestic duties might temporarily encroach upon masculine leisure, the fundamental structures of male privilege remained intact. Men retained autonomous access to homosocial spaces and the freedom to escape domestic obligations, while women's access to public sociability remained contingent upon fulfilling their primary maternal and domestic responsibilities. The apparent 'blurring' of gender boundaries through mixed-gender spaces thus operated within carefully maintained asymmetries that preserved masculine autonomy while regulating female respectability. In this light, chocolate houses can once again be read as sites where gender ideals evolved and crystallised — but where patriarchal authority ultimately endured. The apparent democratisation of these spaces, allowing for mixed-gender interaction and women's increased public presence, operated within carefully maintained boundaries. The chocolate house thus stands as a microcosm of eighteenth-century life: it was an arena where the appearance of social progress coexisted with the persistence of structural inequality.

The Domestic Consumption of Chocolate

Having followed chocolate's journey from homosocial masculine spaces to mixed-gender public venues, this chapter now moves inward to the domestic environment. Despite the camaraderie of the chocolate house and gaming establishments, the majority of privileged men did spend substantial parts of their lives at home rather than in homosocial activities

in public.[761] Domesticity was central to the construction of masculine identity formation, with men's roles as husbands, fathers and heads of households closely intertwined with notions of authority, responsibility and emotional expression.

The patterns of chocolate consumption within these domestic spaces evolved significantly over the eighteenth century. From *c.*1690 to the 1730s, affluent men and women alike consumed chocolate at home, as evidenced by artefacts such as the 1700 Palmerston gold cups (discussed in Chapter 3). Patterns shifted markedly in the 1740s, as chocolate houses increasingly became associated with exclusive male sociability and gaming, while domestic chocolate consumption surged. This expansion was facilitated by the expanding trade in cacao and Britain's expanding imperial networks. Women — still largely excluded from the St James's chocolate houses at this stage — were central to chocolate's domestic adoption, at least within the elite and middling households documented by the recipe collections, cookbooks and inventories examined in Chapter 4.

Home consumption was distinctly structured by both time and space. Both genders consumed chocolate at specific daily intervals: as a drink for breakfast and at morning *levées* (often held in bedchambers); with afternoon tea (in drawing rooms); and in dishes at dinner including, as the century progressed, by the 'middling sorts' (in dining rooms). That chocolate moved so fluidly across these settings — from the intimate bedchamber to the formal dining room — makes it an unusually revealing lens through which to examine the gendered organisation of eighteenth-century social life.

[761] Benjamin Heller, 'Leisure and the Use of Domestic Space in Georgian London', *Historical Journal*, 53.3 (2010) 623-45, (624).

Female domestic authority



Figure 5.8: William Hogarth, *Marriage à la mode: The Toilette* (scene IV) (*c.*1743), oil on canvas, 705 × 908 mm, National Gallery, London, NG116. (Image © The National Gallery, London).

Hogarth's *Marriage à la Mode: The Toilette* (Fig. 5.8) emphasises the permeable nature of the home as not simply private but also a semi-public place — there is no evidence of a distinct or strictly-enforced 'separation of spheres' here. This painting depicts a countess at her *toilette*, surrounded by assorted male and female visitors and opportunistic hangers-on. As he so often did, Hogarth critiques continental influences through an array of stereotypical figures: a bejewelled Italian castrato; an effeminate French dancing master sipping chocolate; and a French hairdresser styling the countess's hair. He contrasts these supposedly corrupting foreign elements against ideal English virtues, portraying the group as superficial and dissolute — preoccupied with appearance, idle conversation and *de rigueur* chocolate consumption. In this scene chocolate belongs to the countess's corruption, even though elsewhere it signalled refinement.

Hogarth's satirical portrayal also exposes the deep contradictions within patriarchal ideology and the structural limits of female agency**.** While ostensibly moralising about the dangers of women abandoning their traditional roles as wives and mothers, he reveals that the institution of patriarchal marriage itself generates the conditions for female transgression. The absent husband's loss of domestic control is emphasised here by his wife's affair with the lawyer Silvertongue, signalled by the masquerade tickets in his hand. Although the countess commands her space and has convened this gathering, Silvertongue's sprawled posture (his feet up, spread-eagled on her sofa) visually reasserts male dominance within a space nominally coded as feminine.

The symbolism links domestic disorder to moral decay: the black child's gesture toward Actaeon's horns alludes to cuckoldry while the paintings of *Jupiter's Rape of Io, Lot's Corruption by his Daughters,* and *The Rape of Ganymede* extend the themes of sexual transgression and inversion. The abandoned coral teething rope, a poignant sign of maternal neglect, reiterates contemporary critiques of 'pleasure-garden women' who ignored their maternal duties. Nevertheless, despite recycling earlier tropes linking chocolate to female indolence and deception, chocolate's domestic popularity only intensified, as did mixed-gender gatherings in the home.

While Enlightenment thought influenced notions of femininity through its emphasis on reason and individualism, its challenge to patriarchal stability was arguably more limited in

practice than Karen O'Brien suggests.[762] In arguing that 'Whig Anglican Enlightenment' was favourable to female learning and influence, she risks underestimating the persistence of social and legal constraints: although Enlightenment ideas created new intellectual opportunities for women, they did not necessarily translate into corresponding changes in women's social or political authority. Furthermore, her claim that women writers constituted one 'broad English Enlightenment' risks simplifying a more diverse and contested intellectual landscape.[763] More compelling for the argument developed here is Vickery's demonstration that expanding opportunities for genteel women coexisted with persistent expectations of female duty and deference.[764] This tension is evident in Hogarth's *The Toilette* (Fig. 5.8). Despite the countess's ostensible command over her inner sanctum, male dominance pervades the composition, from the lawyer's sprawl to the castrato's self-assured posture. The female friend's exaggerated response to the music (arms open wide and her body awkwardly leaning towards the musicians) contrasts with the more measured male composure, again reinforcing the visual hierarchy. Even the chocolate consumption reflects power dynamics: the men are drinking it first. Although leisured women evidently gained visibility through new forms of heterosocial interaction, Hogarth seemingly suggests here that their autonomy remained carefully circumscribed. The countess may orchestrate her *toilette* and pursue her extra-marital affair, but she operates within a system in which female transgression remains subject to male authority.

[762] Karen O'Brien, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), pp.35–69.
[763] *Ibid.,* p.27.
[764] Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp 9–10.

Hogarth's treatment of male dissipation, painted a decade earlier, offers a useful comparison. In *A Rake's Progress*, Tom Rakewell's losses at the gaming table (Fig. 5.2) are the direct cause of his fall: the scene leads to the debtors' prison and then to Bedlam, and his ruin is financial and self-inflicted. The countess also meets a catastrophic end. In the final scenes of *Marriage A-la-Mode*, her affair leads to her husband's death at Silvertongue's hands, Silvertongue's execution, and her own suicide. Yet the way her fall unfolds differs in two respects. First, in *The Toilette* her transgression is not the focus of the scene. It is spread across the room, one element among the castrato, the hairdresser and the chocolate, and it is presented as vanity and idleness rather than as a decisive act. Second, when ruin comes, it is brought about by men: the husband's discovery of the affair, the duel and the lawyer's hanging. Rakewell destroys himself through his own consumption. The countess's consumption only makes her complicit, and her punishment follows from the consequences of her sexual transgression rather than from her spending or her pleasures. Both artist and target class are the same, but Hogarth treats male and female excess according to different moral logics.

The anxieties around female autonomy visualised in Hogarth's painting found extensive literary expression in satirical poetry of the period that frequently targeted chocolate drinkers. Like Hogarth's absent husband who has lost domestic control, male poets explored female leisure through repetitive satirical tropes. While fops were being lampooned for their self-indulgence in public, women encountered parallel criticism in private, particularly regarding their morning chocolate rituals. Male satirists often emphasised what they perceived as women's cultivated laziness and fashionable excess at the start of the day. One stanza from an anonymous 1704 poem again mocked affluent

women as purposeless, requiring a ten o'clock awakening solely for a sip of chocolate before succumbing to sleep again:

> But when no great Affair
> Excited her peculiar Care,
> She without Fail was wak'd at Ten
> Drank Chocolate, then slept again.[765]

This image persisted with remarkable consistency. An anonymous 1760s song echoed almost verbatim:

> When her mind undisturb'd was with troubles and cares
> And her thoughts disengag'd from domestic affairs
> She would wake in the morning about nine or ten
> Drink her chocolate and fast asleep fall again.[766]

The near-identical repetition of this trope — across half a century and into Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848), where 'Miss Crawley […] did not leave her room until near noon – taking her chocolate in bed in the morning […]' — demands careful handling as evidence.[767] Repetition this exact testifies first to the durability of a literary formula, rather than necessarily to the persistence of the anxiety behind it: as *The Connoisseur* recognised in 1754, each generation's moral panic recycled the material of its predecessor. What the formula's persistence does demonstrate, however, is a gendered asymmetry within the genre itself. No equivalent verse tradition mocked the gentleman taking his chocolate at noon at White's — consumption that, as this chapter has shown, was functionally identical but read as sociability rather than sloth. Whether or not readers believed the trope, what matters historically is that the formula existed only for women: satirical conventions,

[765] Anonymous, *Poetical Miscellanies: The Fifth Part. Containing a Collection of Original Poems, With Several New Translations. By the most Eminent Hands* (London: 1704), p.223.
[766] Anonymous, *The Buck's Merry Companion* (Songs, Catches and Cantatas) (London: 1766), p.47.
[767] William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (London: Penguin Classics, 2001) p.181.

whatever their relationship to actual behaviour, encoded and transmitted the double standard that made female leisure uniquely mockable.

The satirical emphasis on women being 'disengag'd from domestic affairs' also points to broader shifts in household management. The rise of staff-directed cookery, with mistresses overseeing rather than performing culinary tasks (as discussed in Chapter 4), afforded women new degrees of domestic freedom — freedom that male writers often recast as moral degeneration. Just as Hogarth depicts the countess surrounded by servants and hangers-on who enable her to enjoy her leisure and her extra-marital affair, these satires thus reveal as much about men's fears of losing supervisory control as about women's supposed frivolity.

A poem by Robert Gould (1660-1709), entitled *The Corruption of the Times by Money* (1693) intensified this critique, addressing not only women's late rising and chocolate consumption but explicitly linking the beverage to female sexuality:

> Who'd think, at twelve a clock it should be said
> That the great Lady's soaking in her Bed?
> When, to repair the sensible Decay
> that ten hours hearty sleep has took away,
> Dish after Dish, for Chocolate she calls,
> (She must be often rais'd that often falls)
> That strong-back'd Liquor hoops 'em in the Chine,
> No other Nectar they allow Divine?
> Vain Sex! At once both Foolish and Unjust,
> To think they need Provocatives to Lust …[768]

[768] Robert Gould, 'The Corruption of the Times by Money', in *The Works of Mr. Robert Gould: In Two Volumes. Consisting of those Poems and Satyrs which were Formerly Printed, and Many Others Never Before Publish'd*, 2 vols (London: W. Lewis, 1709), I, 280.

Gould's satire operates through a calculated double-edge. The passage initially attributes restorative and aphrodisiac powers to chocolate — the 'strong-back'd Liquor' that repairs the lady who 'must be often rais'd that often falls' — but the closing couplet turns the accusation back on women themselves: women are 'both Foolish and Unjust' not because they require ‘Provocatives to Lust’, but because they think they do. The insult is doubled. Gould implies that female desire is already excessive enough to require no further stimulation, while the very act of seeking such stimulation becomes evidence that women deliberately cultivate their own appetites. In the poem, chocolate matters less as an aphrodisiac than as evidence that women sought out their own pleasure. This sexualisation parallels Hogarth's visual strategy. Both transform the domestic act of chocolate consumption into evidence of moral and sexual transgression. Where Hogarth surrounds the countess with symbols of adultery and sexual inversion, Gould presents the lady's morning chocolate as fuel for an appetite that needs no fuelling. His characterisation of women as the 'Vain Sex' shows how male satirists could turn chocolate consumption against female pleasure: chocolate becomes a means of associating women’s enjoyment with sexual excess and of questioning the legitimacy of their expanding domestic freedoms.

However, morning chocolate was not always such a decadent or erotically-charged affair. It was also served, with more decorum, at receptions and assemblies held by both sexes at home, highlighting the reductive nature of these satirical representations. These private and semi-private gatherings were forums in which women and men could converse with some freedom. As Vickery argues, these emerging opportunities for heterosocial interaction (publicly and domestically) demonstrate elite women’s active pursuit of social

recognition and participation.[769] Chocolate's place in this hospitality was not confined to the morning. Throughout the century, genteel women in London hosted evening gatherings for one or both sexes, particularly when Parliament was sitting and the food served on these occasions was one way for a hostess to display her taste. The recipe collections examined in Chapter 4 show chocolate increasingly entering this repertoire. By the time of Glasse and Raffald, it appeared not only as a drink but in creams, confections and other dishes suited to formal entertaining. Because such dishes were usually prepared by servants under the mistress's direction, the credit they earned belonged to her choices rather than her labour. Serving them was therefore one way a hostess could build her reputation for taste, and with it her standing in polite society.

Context, therefore, profoundly shaped the moral meaning of chocolate consumption. The scene Hogarth depicts (Fig. 5.8) exemplifies this instability: within the *toilette* ritual, for instance, the same act of chocolate drinking could be reinterpreted, shifting from a marker of domestic leisure into a sensual spectacle. After private grooming, select visitors were admitted to watch the mistress dress. The scene was full of scent, texture and staged intimacy: reclining poses, exposed décolletage, perfumed waters and powders, and chocolate. In wealthy aristocratic homes, these rituals followed French customs, beginning with lace-trimmed *manteaux de lit* [bed jackets] for morning ablutions, followed by a loose robe over chemise and stays — at which point visitors, including men, were admitted.[770] This was a protracted performance, with the mistress of the house free of her husband's presence for hours. As Çevik has noted, it created 'an intimate and informal space where

[769] Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p.9.
[770] Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality* (London: Batsford, 2003), p.96.

upper class women could liberate their bodies from the constraints of social constructs.'[771] Within these protected confines, women temporarily escaped rigid gender expectations, enjoying freedoms unavailable to them in their husbands' presence.

Women controlled who was invited into their bedchambers, which gave them a degree of autonomy and social power, if only for part of each day. As Nicole Reynolds has shown, the mid-eighteenth-century bedroom was increasingly understood as a feminine space. [772] Men's claims on domestic space were differently organised. The gentleman's study or closet was his own, and after dinner the dining room itself became a male space once the women had withdrawn to the drawing room. These *toilettes* sometimes ran into the afternoon, with a considerable cast of friends and attendants present, and gained a reputation for being highly charged affairs. Their exclusivity generated particular fascination among male observers. As Çevik notes, the inaccessibility of women's private quarters 'prompted authors (especially men) to write about the sensual qualities of these spaces.'[773] Hogarth's painting exemplifies this fascination. Access to an aristocratic *toilette* was restricted to a small circle chosen by the mistress herself, but the engravings of *Marriage A-la-Mode*, published in 1745, carried the scene to a far wider audience. Most of these viewers, male and female, would never have been admitted to such a gathering. Hogarth thus opened an intimate female space to public view, turning a privilege the hostess controlled into a spectacle anyone who bought the print could inspect. This

[771] G. Çevik, 'Boudoirs and Harems: The Seductive Power of Sophas', *Journal of Interior Design*, 43.3 (2018) 25–41 (27).
[772] Nicole Reynolds, 'Boudoir Stories: A Novel History of a Room and Its Occupants', LIT: *Literature, Interpretation, Theory*, 15.2 (2004), 103–30 (p.105).
[773] G. Çevik, 'Boudoirs and Harems', p.27.

preoccupation with women's private chambers shows how spatial boundaries became charged with social and sexual meaning, and how everyday domestic rituals became contested ground in relations between the sexes.

Family life

Van Aken's conversation piece *An English Family at Tea* (*c.* 1720) (Fig. 5.9) further illustrates chocolate's integration into respectable family life. Though tea is primarily being served here, reflecting its growing dominance by 1720, a male servant on the far right is bringing in the chocolate pot on a tray. Far from being satirical, this painting functions as a piece of commissioned meta-theatrics, reflecting the desire of this (unidentified) family to display their gentility, wealth and sophistication. It again reflects the performative nature of gentrified domesticity.[774] The mannered elegance of this mixed group is made explicit through the cultivated neo-Classical backdrop, exotic beverages and the stylish equipage on display. The theatrical quality is emphasised by the presence of immaculate servants and luxury imports such as chocolate and tea (the sizeable tea caddy at the edge of the carpet is hard to ignore). By closely observing the porcelain, textiles and the ritualised gestures of polite society, this painting offers beholders a sensory framework for understanding refined social interaction. It also invites viewers to vicariously experience an ephemeral world of luxury and spectacle.

[774] Kate Retford, *The Conversation Piece: Making Modern Art in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), p.67.



Figure 5.9: Joseph van Aken, *An English Family at Tea* (*c.*1720), oil on canvas, 994 × 1162 mm, Tate, London, N04500. (Image © Tate, London. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).

Van Aken's composition reveals important shifts in family dynamics and gendered roles.[775] The matriarch's central position suggests women's curatorial authority in orchestrating domestic sociability from refreshment selection to the arrangement of guests. Meanwhile, the men's dignified yet attentive presence suggests a distinct model of domestic masculinity: polite, emotionally responsive, yet still authoritative. Standing in carefully-arranged poses, they appear elegant but also freighted with gravitas. In *The Rambler* (1750), Samuel Johnson similarly located the measure of a man's character in his conduct at home, arguing that '[t]o be happy at home is the ultimate result of all ambition'.[776] Though men are portrayed as protectors of the women here, through their positioning on the outside of the group, they are also shown to be integral to family life.

[775] *Ibid.*

[776] Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, ed. by W.J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss, no. 68, Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, III (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), p.360.

Through their gracious demeanour, they exemplify the combination of politeness and masculinity that Cohen asks whether eighteenth-century men could achieve.[777]

The painting might seem to lend visual support to Lawrence Stone's argument that companionate marriage emerged among the propertied classes in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the balanced grouping of men and women suggests marital and familial harmony.[778] Stone's chronology has, however, been widely challenged. Keith Wrightson and Amanda Vickery, among others, have identified affectionate marriages well before Stone's supposed turning point, emphasising continuity alongside change.[779] The painting cannot settle that debate, and a single image should not be made to carry it. The scene is evidently an aspirational construct, commissioned by the family as a statement of genteel identity rather than a record of domestic life. In this sense the painting is prescriptive rather than descriptive: it stages how genteel families ought to appear, not how they necessarily behaved behind closed doors. Yet this investment in such imagery is itself historically significant, for it shows the cultural force these ideals had come to exert. Families did not simply aspire to virtue in private; they sought to perform it through visual representation, making the painted surface itself a site of social negotiation.

Set side by side, the two interiors differ at almost every point. Van Aken's company stands in arranged poses, while Hogarth's figures sprawl. Van Aken's servant is still bringing in the

[777] Cohen, 'Manliness, Effeminacy and the French' in *English Masculinities,* ed. by Hitchcock and Cohen, p.47.
[778] Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990) pp.325–334.
[779] Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter, p.44–49*; Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580–1680* (London: Hutchinson, 1982) pp.75–81.

chocolate pot; in Hogarth's scene the chocolate is already in the hand of an effeminate French dancing master. Both paintings place a woman at the centre, but Hogarth's countess is surrounded by signs of adultery that Van Aken's matriarch is not. The meaning of chocolate depended on where, and in what manner, it was drunk. Together, these contrasting representations — satirical and aspirational — created a dialogue that established the parameters of acceptable gendered behaviour. Satire marked the transgressive boundaries (the neglectful wife, the dissipated gamester, the effeminate fop), while idealised images offered models of proper conduct (the harmonious family, the refined gathering, the companionate marriage). Neither form operated independently of the other; rather, they worked in tandem to define the range within which gender could be negotiated. Real social behaviour probably lay somewhere between these two extremes.

The highly charged sensuality of morning chocolate in Hogarth's *The Toilette* contrasts sharply with typical morning gatherings, which generally maintained formality and decorum. Swift's *Journal to Stella* shows how these occasions worked in the early 1710s. In March 1713, he told Stella that 'I give chocolate almost every day to two or three people that I suffer to come to see me in a morning.'[780] Later that month he described 'a mighty levee' of about half a dozen guests, Addison among them, at which he 'had chocolate twice, which I don't like'.[781] In these entries chocolate is a routine courtesy of morning hospitality, offered and accepted out of obligation rather than pleasure. The women in Swift's circle

[780] Jonathan Swift, *Journal to Stella: Letters to Esther Johnson and Rebecca Dingley, 1710–1713* ed. by Abigail Williams, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift (Cambridge: CUP, 2013), Letter 61, 8 March 1712/3, pp.505–515.
[781] Ibid, Letter 62, 28 March 1713, p.516–25.

also used it to form social ties. He records Lady Jersey seeking his acquaintance and extracting 'a promise from me to drink chocolate with her in a day or two'.[782] This is slight evidence, but it shows a well-connected woman taking the initiative in forming a social connection, with chocolate as the pretext. Swift's grudging tone may suggest some discomfort at women directing polite sociability. It may equally reflect his usual irreverence, and, as he admits himself, a plain dislike of chocolate.

By the 1770s, chocolate could also accompany the kind of mixed domestic gathering largely absent from Swift's levées. Frances Burney's account of Samuel Johnson's first visit to her family's house in St Martin's Street in March 1777 provides one well-documented instance: 'Chocolate being then brought, we adjourned to the dining room. And there, Dr Johnson […] entered freely and most cleverly into conversation.'[783] The occasion brought together men and women of more than one generation. It also placed the most celebrated talker of the age in a family dining room rather than a coffee house or tavern. Yet the scene also shows the limits of that change. Burney herself mostly watched and recorded rather than spoke, and the conversation she describes was led by others. Domestic settings of this kind gave women access to intellectual sociability, and in Burney's case the material for a writing career. They did not necessarily make women equal participants in it.

[782] *Ibid.,* Letter 59, 25 January 1713, pp.488–97.
[783] Burney, Letter to Samuel Crisp, 27 March 1777, in *The Early Diary of Frances Burney, 1768–1778, with a Selection from Her Correspondence*, ed. by Annie Raine Ellis, 2 vols (London: George Bell and Sons, 1889), II, p. 55.

Conclusion

The graphic and textual satires examined in this chapter illuminate certain social tensions in eighteenth-century Britain by distorting and exaggerating reality, to provoke both reflection and reform. They were effective because they amplified anxieties already circulating in polite society, not because they were accurate.

Chocolate consumption has proved uniquely valuable as an analytical lens here precisely because it crossed multiple social domains while remaining symbolically charged. The same commodity denoted elite masculine leisure at White's, female indolence in the bedchamber, heterosocial sociability at Ranelagh, and refined domesticity in the drawing room. This instability made chocolate an ideal vehicle for social critique: its meanings shifted depending upon who was consuming it, where, when and with whom. Each satire deploys humour, irony and moral discomfort to expose the 'hooves under the petticoat, and horns beneath the periwig' — the latent vices masked by outward refinement.[784] In doing so, satirists attempted to regulate behaviour, drawing attention to the dangers of excess and the perceived instability of gendered conduct among the privileged. As these examples demonstrate, '[d]rinking, gambling, predatory sex, female impropriety and rutting, the fudging of gendered or social boundaries — these were among the most familiar types of misbehaviour that polite moralists protested at.'[785] It was these extremes, concentrated within London's pleasure gardens, chocolate houses and bedchambers, that contemporaries identified as the most threatening to social order.

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[784] Paddy Bullard, 'Describing Eighteenth-Century British Satire' in *The Oxford Handbook of Eighteenth-Century Satire* ed.by Bullard (Oxford: OUP, 2021), pp.1-19 (1). Bullard cites John Brown, *An Essay on Satire* (1744), pp.12–13 in which he wrote that satire '[d]isplays the cloven hoof, or lengthen'd ear;/ Bids vice and folly take unborrow'd shapes'.

[785] Gatrell*, City of Laughter,* p.18.

This satirical preoccupation with moral excess did not emerge *ex nihilo* but was built upon longstanding cultural anxieties, newly intensified by political upheaval, imperial expansion and commercial transformation. The proliferation of graphic and textual satire in the eighteenth century attests to genuine unease about shifting gender relations within elite society, even as it recycled older moral tropes. Certain persistent themes — effeminacy, the 'Frenchification' of English manners, and anxieties over women gaining excessive autonomy — had clear antecedents in the seventeenth century, the latter being visible in the backlash against women preachers during the post-Civil War period. As Healey observes, fears that the English were 'going soft' had troubled moralists for generations.[786] What distinguishes the eighteenth century is not the novelty of these concerns but the peculiar intensity with which they were felt — sharpened by the rise of print culture, the expansion of urban sociability and the unsettling democratisation of luxury consumption that made the boundaries of gentility increasingly difficult to police.

As Gatrell observes, 'No other city was [as] dynamic, free and uncensored [as London], and nowhere else were the comedies of snobbery and emulation played out or ridiculed so determinedly.'[787] To this might be added the comedies of pretension, hypocrisy and indulgence, vices that satirists found concentrated in the ritual consumption of imported luxuries such as chocolate. The satirists themselves aimed chiefly at continental influence: the French dancing master, the Italian castrato, the 'Frenchification' of English manners. Yet the chocolate they mocked, and the black servants who serve it in Hogarth's interior,

[786] Jonathan Healey, *The Blazing World: A New History of Revolutionary England* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023), p.49.
[787] Gatrell, *City of Laughter,* p.8.

were products of Atlantic empire. Read together, these images show imperial goods and imperial labour being absorbed into the everyday performance of English gentility, even where satire directed its anxiety elsewhere. Viewed through this lens, satirical representations reveal that 'appropriate' gender performance in eighteenth-century England depended heavily on context.[788] Behaviour acceptable for men in the homosocial sanctuary of White's or the Cocoa Tree became transgressive effeminacy when performed too ostentatiously; women's chocolate consumption signalled refined domesticity in the drawing room but moral laxity in the bedchamber.

Gender ideals in eighteenth-century England changed with social context and over the course of the century, but always within a patriarchal architecture that proved remarkably resistant to the very commercial forces that seemed, on the surface, to unsettle it. Tracing chocolate through these varied spaces — public and private, satirical and aspirational — exposes the terms of that negotiation: a society that celebrated refinement and sensibility while quietly ensuring that the freedoms unlocked by consumption remained, for women, carefully circumscribed.

[788] Retford, *The Conversation Piece* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017) p.285.

CHAPTER 6

Selling Luxury: Case Studies in the Retail Trade

Having examined the broader cultural meanings of chocolate, perfume and tobacco consumption, this chapter turns to the commercial realities of retail through a series of local case studies. Focused analysis of Bath's perfume trade and London's chocolate houses reveals how gender, nationality, social status and entrepreneurial expertise shaped (and constrained) participation in a competitive and structurally precarious luxury marketplace. Gender was one of the principal axes along which this world was organised: shaping access to credit and exposure to market disruption. Women in retail exercised real forms of agency that the historical record consistently renders marginal or invisible, while male authority, far from being secure, was contingent, fragile and required constant performance.

Local history derives its power from the precision of its lens: rather than working with patterns, averages or representative types, it engages with individuals, the single transaction and the telling detail. The documentary texture of local sources (this chapter uses billheads, pew lists and account books) preserves a social granularity that aggregate histories necessarily flatten, revealing not only discrete participants but also the shifting networks of competition, training, dependency and the rivalry that connected them. It is only at this micro-level that it becomes possible to trace how Mary Purdie worked for Richard Warren before establishing her own shop, steps away from Elizabeth Berwick's; how Alexander Jolly's marriage to Lewis De Coppa's widow united two rival perfumer families; or how kinship, proximity and succession functioned as business strategies rather

than as mere biographical detail. Local study also makes market adaptation easier to trace: the ten-year sequence by which Purdie moved from perfumery into concert tickets, patent blacking, dentifrice and elixirs is legible only through sustained attention to a single place and its newspaper.

Specifically, this chapter asks two questions. How did legal and cultural constructions of gender affect exposure to business risk? How far were the strategies available to luxury retailers in this market shaped by the trader's sex? A note on method is required here. The institutional asymmetries this chapter describes — coverture, the gendered apprenticeship and freeman systems, the differential operation of debt and insolvency law — are documentable at scale. The individual cases through which the chapter proceeds serve a different purpose: they show how those structures operated in particular lives, with all the specificity and contingency that entails. Where a male and a female trader experienced similar pressures with different outcomes, gender is one variable among several — capital, timing, product mix and sheer fortune also differed — and the comparisons below are offered as illustrations of how gendered structures could shape outcomes, not as controlled demonstrations that they alone did. Read in this way, Bath's perfume trade functions as a critical microcosm through which to examine how gender, empire, credit and commercial identity interacted in eighteenth-century England.

Bath

While London dominated Britain's luxury markets, Bath serves as a compelling case study precisely because it compressed metropolitan practices into a provincial setting. As a thriving regional centre that attracted both the metropolitan elites and aspiring middling consumers, Bath exemplifies how patterns of luxury consumption spread beyond the capital and how its traders adapted to an intense business environment. Located one hundred miles from London, it attracted growing numbers of well-heeled visitors from around 1700, while its resident population grew exponentially throughout the eighteenth century.[789] This demographic growth coincided with extensive Palladian-style building projects that materially reshaped the city's commercial geography.

Roy Porter's description of Bath as 'a locus of pleasurable consumption, where the affluent could flaunt themselves at the theatre, pump room, coffee-house, assembly and ball, and patronise elegant shops on the parade,' points to exactly this kind of environment. It was one in which consumption was not simply economic but performative, spatial and social.[790] Bath's culture of conspicuous consumption thus provides a particularly productive site for examining fashionable practices across gender lines, not because such practices were unique to Bath, but because the city intensified and made visible certain dynamics: specifically, the tension between genteel respectability and retail necessity, the presentation of taste as a form of social capital, and the ways women's consumption underwrote male commercial authority even as it created opportunities for female

[789] Over the course of the eighteenth century, Bath's residential population increased from under 3,000 to 38,000, with women consistently outnumbering men.
[790] Roy Porter, 'Material Pleasures in the Consumer Society', in Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey-Roberts (eds), *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), pp.15-47 (21).

enterprise**.** Both sexes participated in shopping as a social act, accruing cultural capital through visibility, taste and association.



Figure 6.1: Anonymous, *No 3, St James's Street, London* (1810), ink on paper. (Photograph: author's own, courtesy of Simon Berry, Berry Bros & Rudd).

The image of shoppers (Fig. 6.1) depicts St James's Street in London in 1810, later and more metropolitan than the Bath trade examined here; it is offered as evidence of a durable convention of retail display. The scene shows well-dressed men and women gathered before shop windows, engaged not purely in shopping but in a carefully choreographed performance of gentility. Some gesture towards displayed goods, others converse in small groups, while a few adopt studied poses of aesthetic discrimination. This ritualised form of public browsing transformed commercial streets into stages for demonstrating sophistication, establishing social connections, and confirming status through the act of consumption itself. Many of those who moved through Bath's shops, assemblies and promenades were the same elites who patronised London's West End, thereby carrying metropolitan habits directly into provincial settings. At this scale, women emerge not simply as emblematic consumers but as active economic agents firmly embedded in the circuits of imperial trade.

The specialist vendors of chocolate, perfume and snuff ranked somewhere above common shopkeepers but below wealthy merchants, deriving their status partly from specialised technical knowledge (whether in perfume chemistry, tobacco botany or cacao processing) that distinguished them from ordinary retailers. The commercial positioning of snuff exemplifies this: while it retained some medical associations, its primary links in the eighteenth century were with perfumery rather than groceries or apothecaries, making it more the preserve of luxury shops than everyday retail establishments.[791] These vendors further enhanced their social standing through credit relationships with their affluent, often aristocratic, clientele, sometimes through their acquaintance with foreign suppliers, and through their association with fashionable sociability. They functioned as intermediaries between empire and individuals, translating global commodities into local markers of taste and refinement.

Perfumers occupied perhaps the most socially ambiguous position among these luxury traders, a condition shaped not only by the nature of their wares but by the character of their customer relationships. Some, such as Richard Warren, operated multiple shops across Cheapside, Marylebone and Bath, cultivating elite client networks in which women's custom was an important part of their trade.[792] In doing so, they linked Bath directly into wider circuits of fashionable consumption, blurring distinctions between metropolitan and provincial retail cultures while positioning themselves as trusted intermediaries in the

[791] Trevor Fawcett, *Bath Commercialis'd: Shops, Trades and Market at the Eighteenth-Century Spa* (Bath: Ruton Publications, 2002), p.115.
[792] *Bath Chronicle*, 30 September 1762, issue 103; *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 6 October 1762, issue 817; *Bath Directory* (Bath, 1800), pp. 79–80.

negotiation of taste and politeness. Others operated on a far more modest footing, combining perfume sales with complementary trades such as wig-making and hairdressing. Dependent on intimate, service-based interactions, these practitioners occupied a more precarious position within the 'middling sorts': their livelihoods were bound up with the bodies and grooming rituals of their customers in ways that could unsettle, as much as confirm, their social standing.

Luxury shops in eighteenth-century London and Bath evolved into sophisticated social spaces characterised by polite commerce and sensory engagement. Shopping became an immersive pleasure: customers could relax by an open fire while enjoying tea, cake and wine; they engaged sensorially with the merchandise through smelling, touching and tasting it; and they discussed novel goods, as shopkeepers showcased the latest fashions to have arrived on English shores. This genteel retail culture invited satire (as seen in Chapter 5) with shop owners and assistants themselves often mocked as fashionable fops, over-indulging in perfume, chocolate and fine clothing. One contemporary account sneered that perfumers were 'the greatest fops in the kingdom; they have their toilets and their fine night gowns, their chocolate in the morning [...] and their perfumes, washes, and clean linen equip them for the Parade.'[793] Such caricatures reveal the ambivalence surrounding eighteenth-century consumerism: it was admired as a marker of elegance, refinement and imperial success, yet derided as a breeding ground for vanity, excess and pretension. Luxury commerce thus simultaneously promised social advancement while threatening moral and gendered disorder.

[793] Malcolm, *Anecdotes of the Manners and Customs of London,* p.237.

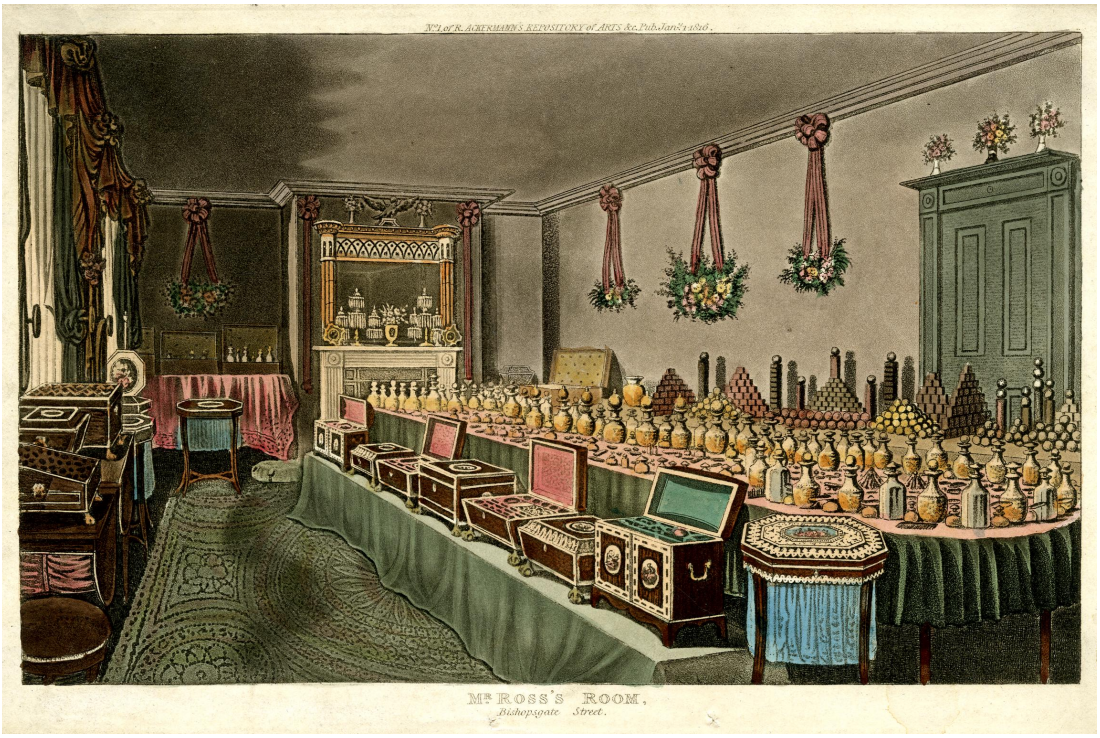

Figure 6.2*: Interior of the London perfume shop of Alex Ross,* from Ackermann's *'Repository of Arts',* part 1 of 85, series 2, vol 1 (1816), etching and aquatint with hand-colouring on paper, British Museum, Heal, Topography.390. (© The Trustees of the British Museum).

The most prestigious establishments invested in elaborate interiors with expensive fittings and furniture, transforming retail spaces into venues of exotic consumption and dazzling display. An 1816 etching of Alex Ross's perfumery on London's Bishopsgate Street (Fig. 6.2) postdates the Bath trade discussed here but what it shows is instructive: velvet-covered tables bearing hundreds of perfume bottles, scents and dressing cases, arranged to signal the proprietor's access to global trade networks and to invite discrimination among competing products. Read alongside Chapter 3, the print captures the moment before perfume became individualised. Perfume left such shops in plain 'throwaway' bottles and was decanted into decorative flasks, chatelaines and etuis; what the retailer massed anonymously, the purchaser made personal. Such displays reveal how luxury retailers not

only sold goods but also mediated the performance of social distinction among their clientele through sensory seduction.

Perfume

Bath's emergence as a centre for upmarket perfume consumption was no accident of geography but the product of converging social, cultural and economic conditions. Three interconnected factors are critical in explaining this development, each of which also shaped the gendered character of the trade that grew up around it. First, the concentrated wealth of Bath's visitors and residents provided the essential economic foundation for perfume retail development. The city's social composition — not only the aristocracy and gentry but increasingly the prosperous 'middling sorts' — broadened the potential consumer base beyond traditional luxury markets. Unlike London's more rigid social hierarchies, spa towns such as Bath and Harrogate facilitated less stratified socialising as different social groups mingled together in public. As Smith observes, men such as Beau Nash (the Master of Ceremonies) helped transform Bath into 'the most fashionable health resort in England, a place where families of aristocrats, professionals, and well-to-do business people jointly participated in rituals of relaxation and enjoyment.'[794]

By deliberately welcoming the 'middling sorts' alongside the traditional elites, Bath created a fertile ground for aspirational consumption, in which middling visitors adopted the habits and tastes of polite society at its most fashionable. James Walvin identifies the significant diffusion effect of this emulation: visitors 'returned home at the end of the season to

[794] Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability,* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.230.

London and the provinces, taking with them the most recent fad and social habit acquired in Bath. In this way, the exclusive habits of the better-off were disseminated throughout England.'[795] John Smail's analysis of Halifax demonstrates that these changing consumption patterns operated nationally, as areas beyond the capital increasingly adopted metropolitan fashions — initially selectively but with accelerating speed as the century progressed.[796] Bath thus functioned as a crucial link in expanding perfume consumption among professional families who, in embracing this material marker of prosperity, established collective standards about the goods deemed essential to their aspirational lifestyles.[797]

Secondly, Bath offered unique opportunities for women to display fashionable accessories and engage in less restrictive socialising than was possible in the capital.[798] Spa towns such as Bath, Epsom and Tunbridge Wells permitted more liberal hetero-social interaction, particularly around the thermal baths where women and men could display their *savoir faire* through the conspicuous consumption of sensory goods. The bathing rituals themselves created a distinctive retail environment: visitors could purchase scented waters, fragrant oils and floral perfumes, including lavender, rose and orange-blossom which, when sold in the vicinity of the thermal baths, were promoted as healing aids, reinforcing perfume's earlier association with medicine.

[795] James Walvin, *Fruits of Empire* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), pp.100–1.
[796] John Smail, *The Origins of Middle-Class Culture: Halifax, Yorkshire, 1660–1780* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.93.
[797] *Ibid.,* pp.100-101.
[798] Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure,* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), p. 210.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the baths became sites for flirtatious liaisons, particularly between fops, *beaux* or sparks and unchaperoned women, who could mingle discreetly in dimly-lit areas.[799] Despite modest bathing attire (women wore dark petticoats and jackets, men wore full body suits), an anonymous 1700 account of the baths wittily describes this intimate atmosphere: 'The Ladies with their floating Japann Bowles, freighted with confectionary, knick-knacks, essences and perfumes, wade about like Neptun's courtiers. […] The vigorous sparks, presenting them with several antick postures, as sailing on their Backs, then embracing the elements, sink in rapture.'[800] Perfume (and to a lesser degree chocolate and snuff) thus functioned as an essential component in Bath's sensuous and socially-charged environment, guaranteeing high demand.

The third factor driving perfume's popularity in Bath was pragmatic: the dense concentration of people in confined spaces made perfume essential for masking unpleasant odours at balls, in theatres and at assemblies. In the 1760s, Samuel Derrick (Beau Nash's successor) promoted the use of perfume to disguise disagreeable stenches, particularly sweaty feet.[801] Matthew Bramble, in Tobias Smollett's 1771 novel, *Humphry Clinker*, described the potent mix of individual smells in a Bath assembly room as 'a high exalted essence of mingled odours, arising from putrid gums, imposthumated lungs, sour flatulencies, rank armpits [which could be disguised ineffectively by] hungary-water, spirit of lavender, asafoetida drops, musk [and] hartshorn […].'[802] Though Smollett undoubtedly exaggerated the reek for comic effect, his description illuminates a practical reason for

[799] A 'spark' is defined in the OED as 'a confident, high-spirited and fashionable young man or (rarely) a woman.
[800] Ned Ward, *A Step to the Bath: With a Character of the Place,* (London: printed by J. How, 1700), p.13.
[801] 'Anecdotes of the Life of Samuel Derrick Esq', *The Town and Country Magazine,* vol I (1769), 178-9.
[802] Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (London: 1771), vol. 1, pp.126, 135-6.

perfume's high demand in Bath — beyond its use in seduction, social signalling and as a remedy for general ailments.

Naturally, this heightened demand spawned a growth in perfume outlets, including both specialised shops and warehouses. Bath's appeal to perfumers stemmed not only from its concentration of affluent consumers but also from its advantageous location, ideally positioned to receive supplies both from Bristol's docks (where European, African, West Indian and American goods regularly arrived) and from London's extensive warehouses. These efficient routes gave Bath perfumers ready access to the colonial commodities underpinning their particular trade. The perfume industry, like those of chocolate and tobacco, was built upon the resources and labour of enslaved and colonised peoples, a reality that complicates the genteel and polished façade of Bath's fashionable trade.

While some English perfumers establishing themselves in Bath were local traders, there was also a significant influx of London perfumers, often following their already-established clientele, who capitalised on this lucrative market. Notable examples include Richard Warren, who established a Bath branch of his London firm (Richard Warren & Company) in 1762[803] and Alexander Jolly, who also recognised Bath's retail potential (see Ch. 3; his marriage is discussed below).

[803] *Bath Chronicle,* 30 September 1762, issue 103, 1c; *Lloyd's Evening Post* 4-6 October 1762, issue 817, p.329, column c.

Women in Bath's perfume trade (and beyond)

Trevor Fawcett notes that trade directories such as the *Bath Directory* present shopkeeping as 'by and large a masculine affair', a perception reinforced by property law and employment customs that ensured 'the name over the shop door [and on trade cards] was usually a man's.'[804] Closer examination indicates women's substantial business involvement in Bath's luxury retail sector. Female involvement in such businesses — as wives, widows, sisters and daughters of male owners, and sometimes as proprietors in their own right — was commonplace throughout Bath and London, even though *named* female proprietors remained a small minority (as Table 2.2 in Chapter 2 records for chocolate, and as the perfumery figures below confirm). The distinction matters: proprietorship was rare; participation was not. A notable example in London is Widow Bourne who established an upmarket Italian grocery business named The Coffee Mill, in St James's Street in 1698 selling tea, coffee, chocolate, snuff and spices. Upon her death, her daughter and son-in-law inherited her enterprise which continues to operate today (over 325 years later) as Berry Bros. & Rudd (Fig. 6.1) — a remarkable testament to female entrepreneurial resilience and continuity within England's luxury trades.[805] This plate demonstrates in miniature the argument of this section. The print can be read for what it shows about genteel browsing; what no viewer could recover from it is that the business behind the glass was a woman's foundation. The image records the street, and the shop's later name but not the founder.

[804] Fawcett, *Bath Commercialis'd,* p.97.
[805] Tom Johnson and Nicholas Faith, *Berry Bros. & Rudd, Wine & Spirit Merchants* (London: self-published, 1998), p.11.

Similarly illuminating is the case of Mrs Martha Treyer, who served as assistant to her husband, the tobacconist George Treyer of Fribourg & Treyer, in London's Haymarket from 1780 to 1803. As George Evans documents, '[s]he took an active part in the working of the business and an old receipt, […] dated 1787 bears her signature,' (Fig. 6.3).[806] Upon her death in 1815, she bequeathed her interest in the premises to male family members (her nephews), demonstrating how women's commercial engagement could extend beyond mere assistance to include substantial financial stakes and inheritance decisions. As was the case with Grace Tosier, examined later in this chapter, women who proved themselves to be capable businesswomen generally saw their enterprises return to male ownership upon their deaths. The document type matters as much as its contents. Chapter 2 established that trade cards — the public face of a business — almost invariably carried a male name, and that no card was found in which a male shopkeeper traded on a female relative's reputation. The billhead records the opposite: a transaction completed and signed by a woman whose name the shop's advertising never displayed. The two document types together describe the mechanism by which female commercial labour disappeared from the record. It was not that women were absent from business, but that the documents designed to be seen were not the documents they generally signed.

[806] George Evans, *The Old Snuff House of Fribourg & Treyer,* 1720-1920 (London: Donald Macbeth, 1920), p.21.

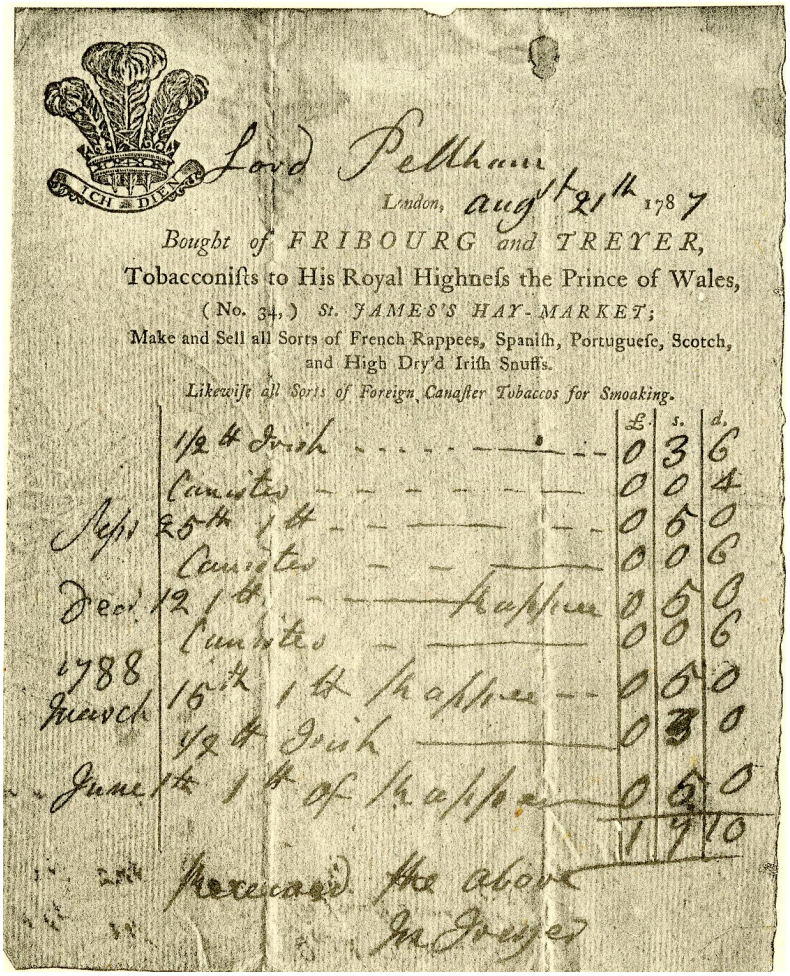

Figure 6.3: Billhead of Fribourg and Treyer, tobacco and snuff sellers, to Lord Pelham (21 August 1787), with the signature of Martha Treyer, paper.
From George Evans, *The Old Snuff House* p.21, British Museum, 117.64.
(Photograph: author's own; object © The Trustees of the British Museum).

The gendered dynamics of the perfume trade exposed a fundamental paradox at the heart of luxury commerce: business success intensified anxieties about masculinity while simultaneously expanding opportunities for women's economic participation. Male perfumers faced increasing suspicion of being 'softened' by their trade 'to a degree of effeminacy.'[807] This finds literary expression in George Crabbe's poem, *The Newspaper* (1785), which satirises the 'simple barber' transformed into a 'gay perfumer

[807] Anonymous, 'Men's Characters Formed by Their Occupations', *The Monthly Miscellany*, 2 (October 1774), p.209.

[…] on whose soft cheek his own cosmetic blooms.'[808] Such critiques reflected broader concerns that foreigners were introducing effeminising practices into England, providing novel avenues for temptation through which Englishmen were in danger of becoming morally and physically emasculated.

Male perfumers responded to these anxieties by constructing assertively masculine commercial identities. This form of commercial masculinity was distinctive because it had to be performed through the very goods that threatened it — perfumes and other sensory luxuries. Unlike the masculinity of military service, agricultural labour, or even mercantile trade in 'hard' goods such as timber or iron, commercial masculinity in the perfume trade required men to demonstrate vigour, authority and expertise precisely through their mastery of feminine adornment. It was a masculinity defined by discernment rather than physical strength, by international networks, and by the ability to mediate female beauty without being feminised by proximity to it. Richard Warren exemplified this approach, positioning himself as a worldly *connoisseur* with unrivalled international connections rather than as a feminised purveyor of perfume, and his strategies are explored further below. Perfumers who diversified into more 'masculine' products, such as tobacco, strategically distanced themselves from associations with feminine vanity.

Although cultural anxieties and literary commentary of the period often cast perfumery as a feminised and feminising pursuit, the surviving evidence shows a markedly different

[808] George Crabbe, 'The Newspaper' (1785) in *Poems by the Rev. George Crabbe* (London: J. Hatchard, 1808), lines 167–90.

reality: in both London and Bath, the named proprietors recorded in trade directories, and newspaper advertisements were predominantly men. Such records, however, measure visibility rather than presence. Women's participation as unnamed partners, assistants and inheritors was substantially greater than they suggest, and the archive itself is a gendered instrument, that reproduces the legal and cultural erasure of female commercial labour rather than reflecting business reality. Though men dominated the profession numerically, they faced questions about their masculinity precisely because they operated in spaces associated with feminine concerns of beauty and adornment. Conversely, women, though statistically less common as named proprietors, made significant, if often less detectable, contributions to perfume businesses. Their involvement demonstrates how luxury trades provided distinct opportunities for female commercial agency, particularly within family enterprises.

Despite women lacking equal prominence at times, some commercial manuals from the late seventeenth century nevertheless actively encouraged their participation in trade. One 1678 publication directly addressed 'the Women and Maidens of London,' urging them to view book-keeping as 'far more necessary and profitable' than conventional domestic pastimes such as needlework or lace-making.[809] This text presented accounting knowledge as indispensable for anyone engaged in commerce, regardless of gender or status, suggesting that alongside 'a stock of Mony, Wares and Credit,' the ability to keep accounts was among 'the most necessary' skills for success in trade. Such publications challenged assumptions about women's intellectual and commercial capabilities by presenting them

[809] One of that sex, *Advice to the Women and Maidens of London …* (London: 1678), p.1. <https://www.proquest.com/books/advice-women-maidens-london-shewing-that-instead/docview/2240970987/se-2> [accessed 8 May 2023].

as capable participants in economic life. Nicola Phillips has shown, through insurance records, court cases and newspaper advertisements, that women were indeed active in trade across the period, whether or not they encountered such advice.[810] Women appear as principals in the advertised perfumery trade including Mrs E. Philips who was selling 'drapery, haberdashery and perfumery' goods from her own warehouse at 4 St James's Street in 1792.[811]

One of Bath's most enterprising female perfumers was Mary Purdie, who had trained under Richard Warren before establishing her own shop in the 1760s in North Parade.[812] This area, constructed between 1740 and 1748 as part of a royal forum and summer promenade scheme, ensured a steady stream of visitors to Purdie's shop — though high rents would have put pressure on sales. She was astute enough to make repeated use of the *Bath Chronicle* to promote her business, advertising her 'English and foreign perfumery goods' in August 1770.[813] By December 1770, she had diversified into selling concert tickets.[814] By 1771, she had become an accredited manufacturer's agent, expanding into household products including 'cakes of shining liquid blacking by King's patent for shoes & boots sold in London, & by Miss Purdie, perfumer in Bath. Price 6d per cake which makes up 1 pint liquid blacking.'[815] Her bold marketing strategies included promoting 'Eastern Wash-Balls' purportedly used 'by the beautiful Fatima'.[816] By 1780 she had also developed side-lines in dental products, selling 'Hemet's 'Essence of Pearl'' and 'Pearl Dentifrice',

[810] Phillips, *Women in Business* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), pp.17-18, 203-6.
[811] *Bath Chronicle*, 19 April 1792, 3e.
[812] Later Mrs Phynn.
[813] *Bath Chronicle,* 3 August 1770, 278, 3b.
[814] *Bath Chronicle,* 4 December 1770, 407, 3a.
[815] *Bath Chronicle,* 1085/Thu, 10 October 1771, 1c.
[816] Wash-balls were also known as soap-balls.

costing '2s 6d/each, by appointment'[817] and the same year she was also retailing health remedies and elixirs, including 'Liquer de Sante'.[818]

Purdie traded under her own name throughout the period examined here, and the 1771 blacking notice is precise about her status as well as her stock. As a feme sole she could sign contracts, own property outright, hold a lease and answer for her own debts without a husband's consent, and the advertisements show her exercising every one of those capacities: contracting as a manufacturer's agent, taking premises on North Parade, and putting her name to public claims about the goods she sold.[819] Coverture would have transferred each of these to a husband.[820] Whether her competence was exceptional among women cannot be known, since that is precisely what a record structured around male names conceals. What was demonstrably exceptional was her freedom to exercise it in her own name, and to advertise that she was doing so.

Nor was Purdie alone among her sex in demonstrating entrepreneurial skill. Elizabeth Berwick operated Berwick's 'perfumery & snuff warehouse' just steps away from Purdie's, and she similarly branched into traditionally masculine markets. She advertised in the *Bath Chronicle* in 1787 that she had been selling 'the very best articles for 25 years [and] has now genuine Drogheda usquebaugh [whiskey] whose excellent virtue is removing the gout from the stomach.'[821] Elizabeth Mackinnon also actively diversified, having taken over her

[817] *Bath Chronicle,* 97/Thu, 6 January 1780, 4d.
[818] *Bath Chronicle,* 681/Thu, 13 April 1780, 1d.
[819] Barker, *The Business of Women,* p.171.
[820] Coverture was an English common law doctrine that stated upon marriage, a wife's legal existence was merged with that of her husband.
[821] *Bath Chronicle*, 1962/Thu, 20 December 1787, 3a.

late husband's perfume business in 1780. From this time, she traded as Mrs Mackinnon, perfumer, Milsom St, Bath.[822] Seven years later, she was still proclaiming in the *Bath Chronicle* that she had 'new fillets for the hair; also a variety of braids. All sorts of English & foreign perfumery.'[823] When relocating in 1795, she naturally informed the public, announcing her 'removal' from Milsom Street to 2 George Street 'for the sale of perfumery, toys[824] & fancy articles.'[825]

These women sited their shops in Bath's newest and most fashionable retail developments rather than in its older commercial streets. Purdie and Berwick both traded on North Parade, laid out in the 1740s beside the Abbey, while Mackinnon took premises on Milsom Street, developed from the 1760s to the north of the old centre. The two locations lay at opposite ends of the city, but each was a purpose-built promenade for genteel company rather than a street of ordinary shops, and the choice reflects both a commercial calculation about where fashionable visitors walked and these women's aspirations toward respectability. Peter Borsay notes that, by the 1790s, the area around Milsom Street had evolved into a fashionable shopping district,[826] quoting an anonymous contemporary poet who described how, after breakfast, fashionable women in Bath would 'stroll for an hour up and down Milsom-street/ Where misses so smart,/ at ev'ry fine shop/ (like rabbits in burrows) just in and out pop.'[827] As Patrick Wallis argues in relation to apothecaries in the seventeenth century, but equally applicable to perfumeries in this period, the shop

[822] *Bath Chronicle,* 36, 1758/ Thu, 15 November 1787, 1c.
[823] *Bath Chronicle,* 3273/Thu, 25 December 1794, 1d.
[824] Toys were small, decorative trinkets, including snuff boxes, fans and buckles.
[825] *Bath Chronicle,* 2233 Thu 26 November 1795, 3d.
[826] Peter Borsay, *The Image of Bath 1700-2000* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p.30.
[827] *Ibid.*

and its location functioned as 'part and parcel of the construction of identity through consumption.'[828]

Challenges faced by Bath perfumers

Product diversification was not simply a sign of commercial ambition but a necessary response to the precarities of the market: for Bath's perfumers, branching into unrelated goods was less a strategy than a survival reflex. Records suggest that most Bath perfumers needed to diversify away from their staples (such as 'Naples Dew', 'Bloom of Circassia', rosemary-based 'Hungary Water' and 'Donna Maria's Lotion' for women) to remain financially viable in an environment of relentless competition. Besides selling scented waters, essences, soaps, cosmetics, lotions, cordials and pastils — and chicken-skin gloves — many also sold items totally unrelated to perfumery.[829] These ranged from stationery and 'toys' to haberdashery, hairdressing services, 'royal opiate for gums', (and in Alexander Jolly's case) preserves, sauces and pickles.[830] The *Bath Directory* of 1800 reveals this adaptation in stark numbers: of the eleven listed perfumers, seven had expanded into toys and four into hairdressing; none survived on perfumery alone.[831] Yet too much diversification could be debilitating, as profit margins narrowed within this crowded and volatile market. By 1781, market saturation threatened Bath's specialised perfumers, as 'common perfumery was being vended in every little shop.'[832]

[828] Patrick Wallis, 'Consumption, Retailing, and Medicine in Early-Modern London,' *The Economic History Review*, 61. 1 (2008), 26–53 (48).
[829] Chicken gloves were not made from chicken skin but rather, more grotesquely, from the skin of unborn calves.
[830] Royal opiate for gums was a preparation for gum pain that contained opium dissolved in laudanum, often mixed with honey.
[831] Robbins's *Bath Directory* (Bath, 1800), p. 80.
[832] Fawcett, *Bath Commercialis'd*, p.80.

The emergence of large-scale warehouses in the 1780s, such as the 'Perfume, Snuff and Umbrella Warehouse' in North Parade, transformed Bath's retail environment. These establishments created a revolutionary shopping experience in which customers could compare products at leisure in unprecedented volume and variety. For smaller perfumers, this represented a seismic threat, forcing them to compete not just on product quality but increasingly on price, presentation and range. This became a battle many could not sustain.

Elizabeth Mackinnon lost that battle from a fashionable address. Milsom Street, from where she traded for most of her fifteen independent years, offered a location that could not, by itself, sustain a business. Despite her strategic approach — relocating repeatedly within Bath's main commercial centre, conducting intensive and prolonged marketing campaigns, and implementing product diversification — her enterprise ultimately faltered. In 1795, months after removing to George Street, Mackinnon was forced to exit the perfumery business 'due to lack of sales,' liquidating her 'stock of fancy articles & toys [...] at reduced prices.'[833] Britain had been at war with France since February 1793, some two and a half years before the closure, by which point Mackinnon had been trading independently for nearly thirteen years. The chronology suggests that war was the final pressure rather than the whole explanation: her repeated relocations and her expansion into hair fillets, braids, toys and fancy articles read as responses to the market saturation discussed above, which predated the conflict. What the war did was remove her capacity to absorb it. British perfumers had long sourced essential oils, fragrant compounds and

[833] *Bath Chronicle* 1645/Thu, 18 June 1795, 3e.

manufacturing techniques from France, the acknowledged centre of perfume expertise throughout the century. War and revolutionary upheaval interrupted that supply, turning long-standing commercial relationships into liabilities and cutting off materials that could not easily be replaced.

Exiting from trade was complicated, and more so for a woman. Bankruptcy proceedings — with their discharge certificates, dividends and public advertisement of recovery — applied only to substantial 'traders', a category from which coverture effectively excluded married women. As Alexander Wakelam notes, '[a]lmost no women went bankrupt in the eighteenth century [because] suing a married woman for non-payment of debt would be blocked by the court.'[834] Yet exclusion from bankruptcy did not mean insulation from debt. Margot Finn has shown that coverture's formal doctrine was routinely circumvented in the small-claims courts, where married women were liable for what they owed, and that women numbered among imprisoned debtors.[835] Women were thus exposed to debt's punishments while remaining largely shut out of its machinery of rehabilitation — an asymmetry designed into the law.

If women were disadvantaged because of their gender, foreign perfumers faced a marginalisation rooted instead in nationality — a form of exclusion that operated through entirely different mechanisms. The French perfumer George Duperré and the Italian perfumers Lewis De Coppa and James Grandi all established Bath shops mid-century,

[834] Alexander Wakelam, 'Coverture and the Debtors' Prison in the Long Eighteenth Century', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 44 (2021) 343-60 (344-5).
[835] Margot Finn, *The Character of Credit,'* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), p.14.

precisely when anti-French feeling ran high during the conflicts of the 1740s and 1750s, and precisely when the Corporation made its final attempt to police who might trade within the city. Trading rights (including retail, apprenticeship and the keeping of shops) were formally restricted to freemen, and the apprenticeship records maintained between 1697 and 1774 could 'prove title to the Freedom of the city, since such a title was a condition for practising any of those trades in it.'[836] Bath families naturally endeavoured to secure work for their own young men 'in trades servicing the demands of visitors to the place.'[837] Enforcement of the freeman monopoly had long been half-hearted, but in 1752 the city's trade companies were briefly revived in a deliberate attempt to exclude interlopers. The revival did not last: enforcement lapsed again from the late 1750s, and regulation gave way to a virtual free-for-all.[838]

No successful prosecution of the three perfumers is recorded: the obstacles they faced were institutional and commercial rather than judicial. Shut out of the freeman networks through which established Bath tradesmen protected their sons' livelihoods, and practising a craft whose expertise derived from Continental traditions rather than the English guild system, the newcomers traded on sufferance during the very years in which the revived companies were policing outsiders.[839] Their strategies for negotiating this climate are visible in the record: all three coupled their foreign surnames with English first names (George, Lewis and James), a partial anglicisation, and all three sited their shops in the visitor-facing heart of the spa, close to the Pump Room, where Continental *cachet* counted

[836] R.S. Neale, *Bath: A Social History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp.50-51.
[837] *Ibid.*
[838] Trevor Fawcett, 'Eighteenth-Century Shops and the Luxury Trade', *Bath History*, 3 (1990), 49–75 (57).
[839] 'Freeman' status refers to legal standing within a city or guild to denote a person had full rights to conduct business, vote and sometimes own land.

for more with the company than it told against them with the Corporation.[840] Their experiences illuminate how trade protectionism, wartime xenophobia and cosmopolitan consumer culture together shaped the character of the provincial luxury market.

The apprenticeship system itself was deeply gendered, with most formal apprenticeships going to young men. Some girls were apprenticed in Bath, as elsewhere, but women more typically entered the perfume trade through family connections rather than institutional training, acquiring skills informally as daughters, wives or widows of established perfumers. This gendered access to training meant that women's expertise, however substantial, often went unrecognised in official records. The apprenticeship system's gatekeeping function depended on formal documentation that comparatively few women possessed, and that married women's position under coverture made harder still to use in their own names. This makes women's commercial invisibility largely a product of institutional design rather than individual prejudice.

The Corporation's position was, in any case, weak: as Fawcett notes, the city's trade monopoly was hard to prove, and one attempt at enforcement was complicated by a libel against the Corporation, published, he suggests, by friends of Duperré.[841] By the mid-1760s the companies' monopoly was effectively defunct, and protectionism had in any case proved unsustainable, since customers readily patronised foreign traders regardless of official sanctions. In reality, Bath's fashionable clientele often preferred Continental perfumers precisely because of their foreign origins, viewing French and Italian expertise

[840] P.S. Brown and Dorothy N. Brown, 'Perfumers in 18th Century Bath', *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries*, 30 (1979), 444–7.
[841] Fawcett, *Bath Commercialis'd,* p.79.

as superior to English craftsmanship — a consumer preference that ultimately undermined protectionist efforts. Over time, numerous specialist foreign perfumers did establish prosperous businesses in Bath's shopping parades, successfully integrating themselves into the city's commercial landscape despite earlier resistance: De Coppa's shop, for example, was located at the sign of the Jessamine Tree, close to the Pump Room, at the very heart of fashionable Bath society around the Abbey.

The experiences of British female perfumers (such as Mackinnon) and foreign male perfumers (such as Duperré and De Coppa) reveal how different forms of marginalisation operated simultaneously within the same commercial space. While British women navigated gendered expectations and limitations, they benefitted from their national identity during periods of international tension. Conversely, foreign male perfumers possessed valuable technical expertise and European connections, but faced institutional opposition based on xenophobic sentiment and economic protectionism. Foreign women would have faced compounded disadvantages in Bath's perfume trade and the absence of foreign female perfumers from the archival record suggests the intensity of the double barriers they faced.

In Bath and beyond, the most damaging constraints facing perfumers stemmed from economic factors that rendered even successful craftspeople vulnerable. Beyond market volatility, perfumers confronted an increasingly complex regulatory landscape. The credit system's inherent instability, compounded by the twin burdens of rising taxation and licensing requirements, created a web of financial obligations that even prudent merchants struggled to navigate. These three pressures —credit, taxation and regulation —operated

as a unified system of vulnerability. Credit extension required maintaining genteel appearances and trusting aristocratic honour, but taxation drained the capital needed to absorb non-payment, while licensing requirements added fixed costs that could not be deferred during cash-flow crises. As McKendrick argues, '[a] substantial proportion of assets of nearly all eighteenth-century business enterprises, especially those of merchants, middlemen and retailers, was in the form of short-term credit which had been extended to customers and clients.'[842] This created a web of local, national and international credit that expanded as the economy grew increasingly sophisticated.[843]

Despite creating perilous conditions for shopkeepers balancing debts against credits, this system did offer certain advantages. Credit relationships fostered reputations for honesty, trust and commercial integrity 'when so many sale items were non-standardised and could be judged only through experience. It helped [the shopkeeper] obtain generous repayment terms from manufacturers and middlemen, often of six months and more.'[844] While Bath and London merchants dealing in luxury goods typically trusted their affluent, established customers to honour their debts, McKendrick draws attention to the fact that tradesmen's dependence on aristocratic patronage placed them in vulnerable, subordinate positions relative to their clientele.[845]

The Petworth accounts of the third earl of Egremont (1751-1837) illustrate the credit system's impact. Like many wealthy customers, he received generous and substantial

[842] Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society* (London: Europa, 1982), p.209.
[843] Smail, *The Origins of Middle-Class Culture*, p.86.
[844] Trevor Fawcett and Stephen Bird, *Bath History and Guide* (Stroud: Sutton, 1994), p.56.
[845] McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society,* p.198.

credit from his London-based perfumers. Though Egremont eventually settled his accounts, some patricians 'simply passed on their own indebtedness to the trader by taking credit and failing to pay their bills promptly, or, sometimes not at all.'[846] The Petworth accounts reveal perfumers typically granted a generous six-month grace period before even presenting their bills. Even then, Egremont's steward took months to settle payments. Egremont's substantial bill of nearly £160 from Raibaud et Louis Parfums, submitted late in 1776 remained unpaid until July 1777. Despite this customer-favouring credit system, shopkeepers' bills often faced meticulous scrutiny. This imbalance is evident in a 1788 note from Mr Klanert, Petworth's steward, to the perfumer Bourgeois, complaining of a 17 shilling, 3 pence overcharge, despite delaying payment for months.[847] Another complaint surfaces in 1793, with Klanert claiming Bourgeois had overcharged by £13:13:3.[848] Not only were these perfumers unable to add interest to their long-outstanding bills but their customers inspected these bills closely for any minor errors, often as a deliberate delaying tactic.[849] Not every patron delayed: Sir John Nelthorpe, 6th Baronet, of Lincolnshire (see Chapter 4), settled his bills immediately.[850]

Benjamin Montagu provides a further example of the complexity of trading in luxuries in Bath. From his well-situated shop opposite the Pump Room, Montagu expanded substantially beyond his core perfumery business into an ultimately unsustainable range of goods, including patent medicines, Salisbury knives and scissors, elastic, cushions and

[846] *Ibid.,* p.198.
[847] WSRO, PHA/9/7545, Petworth Tradesmen's Bills.
[848] WSRO, PHA/9/13485, Petworth Tradesmen's Bills.
[849] Elaborate accounting systems were common in the very wealthiest households, involving a steward's ledger, chef's ledger and the meticulous keeping of receipts and payments. This ensured that any irregularities were easy to spot.
[850] Lincolnshire Archives, Sir John Nelthorpe, NEL IX/8/19.

toupées, razors, penknives, chocolate and haberdashery. This diversification represented not just product expansion but entry into multiple distinct trade sectors, each possessing unique supply chains, expertise requirements and market dynamics.

Montagu's 1780 acquisition of Mr Lloyd's tobacco stock, enabling him to offer fifty varieties of snuff, exemplifies the temptation of prestige over prudent business strategy. Some of Montagu's financial difficulties appear to have arisen directly from this expansion into tobacco because, as Fawcett argues, tobacco businesses faced profitability constraints from both heavy duties and the far-reaching black market in impure products.[851] Snuff was routinely adulterated with hair, treacle, brick dust and leaves, creating a market where legitimate traders such as Montagu competed with cheaper, compromised products while still bearing the full burden of taxation and quality sourcing costs.

In November 1784, Montagu advertised his property for sale: 'leases of 2 houses opp [sic] Pump Room for disposal at midsummer, most eligible situation for any trade. Stock of perfumery, toys, Birmingham & Sheffield goods etc. Enq Mr Montague whose ill health obliges him to quit.'[852] The attribution of business failure to physical infirmity rather than commercial miscalculation allowed Montagu to preserve his social standing — framing collapse as misfortune rather than incompetence and thus protecting his masculine honour.

[851] Fawcett, *Bath Commercialis'd* p.115.
[852] *Bath Chronicle*, Thu, 11 November 1784, 1d.

Government taxation rose sharply after 1775 under the financial demands of the American and French wars, expanding from traditional duties on established luxuries to encompass virtually all non-essential goods, and transforming the tax system from a predictable operating cost into an existential threat. William Pitt's parliamentary motion of March 1786 added another layer of bureaucratic and financial burden by requiring shops selling tea, tobacco, wines, spirits, perfumes and patent medicines to purchase annual licenses and display official notices identifying their trade. That same year, perfume became subject to a stamp duty (later repealed in 1800).[853] The taxation system proved especially unpopular among Bath's residents and visitors, foisted upon all 'except bread and meal shops, [which] enraged people beyond measure, for with its multitude of retail shops, Bath felt unduly victimised.'[854] Shopkeepers felt unfairly targeted, especially since fierce competition prevented them from offsetting these costs through price increases. These new burdens compounded an already oppressive tax infrastructure that included house taxes, window taxes, commodity taxes and rising city and parish rates.[855] Enforcement was rigorous, as the *Bath Chronicle* makes clear. Chamberlain H.E. Howse routinely warned 'all persons licensed to sell perfumery, gloves and medicines […]' to renew their licences or face 'severe penalties.'[856] His 1788 reminder specifically targeted 'dealers in perfumery & gloves whose licenses [had] expired to take out new licenses immediately' demonstrating the particular scrutiny applied to this trade sector.[857]

[853] Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695–1855*, pp.65-67.
[854] Fawcett, *Bath Commercialis'd*, p.101.
[855] *Ibid.*
[856] *Bath Chronicle*, 1126/Thu, 12 July 1787, 2b.
[857] *Bath Chronicle*, 1202/Thu, 14 August 1788, 3c .

Survival strategies employed by Bath perfumers

Despite — and sometimes because of — these pressures, Bath's perfumers developed a repertoire of commercial strategies that reveal how luxury traders converted structural vulnerability into tactical ingenuity. What is striking about these strategies is not only their diversity but also their gendered character: the same pressures produced different responses from men and women, and the tactics available to each were themselves shaped by the legal and cultural constraints that governed their participation in trade. These tactics included transitioning from the traditional credit system to cash-only transactions;[858] crafting reputational narratives through newspaper advertisements; forging advantageous marriages within the perfume industry; and establishing partnerships with metropolitan enterprises to transcend local commercial constraints.

Switching to ready money made particular sense in resorts such as Bath, where customers were predominantly short-term visitors whose creditworthiness and traceability were uncertain, making credit extension highly risky. However, this created a competitive challenge: shopkeepers who sold for ready money needed to offer lower prices to remain attractive against rivals who maintained the traditional credit system. As Fawcett explains, this was ‘the formula behind the 'warehouse' system,’ which John Evill described in 1761 when explaining why he could charge 10 per cent less than competitors — attributing it to

[858] Such as James Love who sold and manufactured perfume from his warehouse at 12 Haymarket. He advertised that ‘Love deals for Ready Money ONLY’. NEL IX/14/29.

'large Consumption – Dealing for Ready Money – and a quick Return.'[859] This business model reduced profit margins on individual items but increased overall turnover through higher sales volume due to lower pricing. Bath perfumer William Moore epitomised this delicate commercial balancing act at Moore's Universal Toy Shop in the 1780s, advertising 'For Ready Money' while simultaneously emphasising both exceptional quality ('Perfumery of this year's growth, from abroad') and competitive pricing ('rose pomatum at 1s. per pot').[860] The Norwich bookseller and stationer William Chase, whose stock ran from musical instruments to beauty products, also printed the *Norwich Mercury*. In his own paper he advertised prices for a small group of imported luxuries — snuff, chocolate, tea, coffee and Indian ink — and for nothing else.[861] The cash system also democratised luxury consumption by eliminating the social judgements inherent in credit decisions — a shopkeeper could no longer refuse to sell based on doubts about a customer's character or connections, provided they had money in their pocket. This shift eroded traditional hierarchies while also diminishing the personal authority that male retailers had previously exercised over their clientele.

Competition for market share intensified throughout the period. Some merchants introduced special offers, others placed advertisements filled with superlatives about their own products, and some simply criticised rivals through alarmist warnings. They took whatever steps were necessary to remain solvent, including creating elaborate displays of goods in their bow windows from the 1750s. Richard Warren advertised energetically,

[859] Fawcett, *Bath Commercialis'd,* p.99.
[860] *Bath Chronicle,* 29 April 1784, issue 1227, 3c.
[861] *Norwich Mercury*, 26 March 1737, p.4a.

placing nearly forty advertisements in the *Bath Chronicle* over two years (1762 and 1763)[862] and four times in four months in 1784.[863] However, many Bath perfumers appear to have never advertised at all, while others did so only occasionally. This patchy use of newspaper advertisements suggests they were not central to promoting most of Bath perfumery businesses. Instead, as McKendrick argues, a shopkeeper's local reputation, credit worthiness (while still in operation) and reliability constituted 'the vital if intangible bulwark against financial disaster.'[864]

Product authenticity emerged as a critical concern in a market flooded with counterfeit and adulterated goods. In 1768, Warren explicitly promoted the superiority of his perfumes, advertising his goods, 'many of which [were] not to be found in any other Shop in GREAT-BRITAIN. The true Essence of Roses from Persia (a scarce Article); and Essences of Tea Blossoms, from India.'[865] Such claims positioned him not just as a merchant but as a connoisseur with privileged access to scarce ingredients. In 1800, Warren & Rosser of George Street, Bath, reminded readers that 'perfumers of London have supplied their shop with a valuable assortment of perfumery of their own esteemed manufacture, including the much admired 'Milk of Roses'.'[866] The explicit mention of London manufacture served dual purposes: it signalled metropolitan sophistication and, crucially, it guaranteed authenticity by asserting direct control over production rather than reliance upon potentially unreliable intermediaries.

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[862] Counted across every surviving issue of the *Bath Chronicle* for 1762 and 1763 in Gale Primary Sources, using the search term 'Warren' and excluding notices in which the name appears incidentally: thirty-eight insertions, of which the majority are repetitions of three or four standing advertisements.
[863] *Bath Chronicle*: 15 Jan 1784 issue 1212, 1b; 29 Jan 1784, issue 1214, 1b; 8 April 1784, Issue 1224, 2b; 6 May 1784, Issue 1228, 2c.
[864] McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, pp.212-213.
[865] *Bath Chronicle,* 3 November 1768, issue 420, 4b.
[866] *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 9 January 1800, issue 1986, 1c.

A favoured tactic employed by merchants was the criticism of rival establishments and products, whether implied or explicit. In 1788, Mr Reynolds promoted Venus's Vegetable Bloom as 'the only safe, innocent heightener and preserver of that beauty by which women reign and men obey.'[867] This marketing cleverly positioned his product within prevailing notions of femininity that simultaneously empowered and constrained women, suggesting that female beauty constituted a form of influence while reinforcing women's dependence on cosmetic enhancement to secure it. The product's very name, invoking the Roman goddess of beauty, love and eroticism, reinforced the idea that purchasing such commodities was essential to creating a desirable feminine identity. The classical reference is seemingly an attempt to legitimise it by dressing a speculative commercial product in the language of ancient authority, thereby deflecting scrutiny of its marketplace origins.

Moore's advertisement in the *Bath Chronicle* in 1787 for his 'Royal Chemical Wash Ball' promised a product for 'whitening & softening the skin leaving not the least grain of paint or anything pernicious on the face. So safe it may be eaten. 1s 1d each. inc duty, from W. Moore, perfumer & toyman in the Grove, Bath.'[868] Moore's claim that his product was safe enough to eat addressed widespread fears about lead-based cosmetics that had caused facial paralysis, blindness and even death — anxieties that created marketing opportunities for those who could convincingly promise safety alongside beauty. Read alongside Jolly's advertisements, discussed in Chapter 3, the Reynolds and Moore advertisements reveal a consistent commercial reasoning: care, authenticity and innovation were not merely

[867] *Bath Chronicle,* 6 November 1788, issue 1457, 1b.
[868] *Bath Chronicle*, 9 August 1787, issue 1243, 1c.

product claims but rhetorical strategies through which male vendors positioned themselves as protectors of female wellbeing, even as they profited from the insecurities that they helped to cultivate.

Warren, on the other hand, was more direct in 1783 when he advertised Milk of Roses 'for cleansing & refreshing the skin […]. Beware a base mendicant composition sold under the same name.'[869] In an increasingly litigious age, as Kropf states, 'it was simply a matter of prudence to know what one could safely say or write without finding oneself in court.'[870] Merchants walked a fine line between self-promotion and potentially destroying another person's business reputation through libel or slander. This balance between boldness and restraint reflected the challenging expectations of commercial decorum.

Strategic marriages to fellow perfumers could create powerful alliances that simultaneously expanded customer bases and reduced competition. In 1767, Jolly married De Coppa's widow, uniting two prominent Bath perfumer families and allowing a widow's business to be absorbed into her new husband's enterprise. Coverture's effects were not automatic, however: a pre-marital settlement could reserve property to a wife's separate use, as Grace Tosier's did in 1734 (discussed below).[871] Where no settlement was made, marriage nonetheless functioned asymmetrically as a commercial strategy: for widows it could mean protection from commercial vulnerability or the loss of hard-won autonomy; for men like Jolly it could represent consolidation of market share. The *Bath Chronicle* of

[869] *Bath Chronicle*, 27 March 1783, 479, 1b.
[870] C. R. Kropf, 'Libel and Satire in the Eighteenth Century', *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 8.2 (1974-75), 153—168 (153).
[871] Grace Vancourt, TNA PROB 11/807/27

June 1794 reported the death of Mr Rosoman, perfumer, and the subsequent marriage of Mr F B Wright to Mrs Rosoman, also described as a 'perfumer'.[872] Her remarriage within a year may have reflected affection, but it also indicates the pressures facing widows in trade who, without a male partner could find credit, supply relationships and competitive standing harder to sustain.

Luxury retailers in Bath thus operated under distinctive structural pressures that shaped their commercial practices and identities. Their dependence on imported raw materials exposed them to geopolitical risk that could disrupt supply and raise costs beyond local control. At the same time, fixed pricing transformed traditional expressions of masculine authority in the marketplace. By curbing a shopkeeper's discretion to negotiate, fixed prices shifted authority away from personal dominance and toward ideals of transparency, reliability and genteel respectability, reflecting the expectations of an elite and middling consumer base. Women shaped luxury commerce not only as consumers but as active participants. Bath's perfumery trade thus rested upon a fundamental contradiction: it depended upon female consumption for its commercial survival while deploying male authority to regulate it.

While Bath's perfumers faced challenges specific to their provincial location and resort-dependent clientele, the systemic vulnerabilities they experienced pervaded upmarket commerce nationally. John Elliott, a perfumer in Lewes, died with substantial debts in 1803, including owing £11:9:11 to his wholesale perfumer in London, Nathaniel Jones.[873] The

[872] *Bath Chronicle,* 26 June 1794, 3c.
[873] Documents relating to the estate of John Elliott of Lewes: East Sussex Record Office, LAN 30.

subsequent correspondence reveals Jones's increasingly urgent attempts to collect this debt, first sending his traveller Mr Allen to collect payment, and later writing to Elliott's executor — a chain of male intermediaries striving to preserve commercial honour while securing restitution.

Jones wrote on 16 February 1803:

> Sir, My traveller Mr Allen will wait on you in a few days. I shall be much obliged to you to pay him the first sum of this amount – which was due in December – but my ill health has detained Mr Allen from getting over the ground so soon as could be wished.
> I remain with thanks your Obedient Servant, Nathaniel Jones.

The deferential language employed by Jones, despite his position as creditor, suggests the delicate balance between asserting financial claims and maintaining decorum. When Allen failed to collect the debt, Jones wrote another letter dated August 1803 to Mr Langridge, Elliott's executor, renewing his request for payment. Jones added a courteous postscript: 'I have paid the postage – not wishing to put you to any expense,' further emphasising the financial pressures facing luxury merchants and their suppliers, and the importance of sustaining civility even in adversity.[874]

Another London creditor wrote in July 1803 to Elliott's executors, capturing the tension between personal sympathy and commercial necessity that characterised business relationships:

> Sir, I hear today that Mr Elliott is dead. I confess I am not surprised at it for poor Man, I thought he was going the way to do it. I am sorry to say that he owes us £16.14.11 and I hope he may of [sic] left enough to pay everybody. As we are Creditors for the above Sum, we shall be very much obliged to you to inform us in a post or two, who we are to send our account to and how it is supposed his affairs will turn out, and who his executors

[874] *Ibid.*

> are. We are all pretty well at home and hope your family are the same. My partner will be round his half years Journey in 2 or 3 weeks when your favours will much oblige, your noble servant […] partner, J Wilmott.[875]

The letter's awkward blend of personal concern ('poor Man'), moral censure ('I hope he may of left enough to pay everybody') and financial urgency exposes the emotional complexity of credit relationships, where personal regard and business necessity existed in constant, uncomfortable tension. These letters expose an intricate web of credit through which a business's identity was sustained by collective reputation and reciprocal obligation.

London's chocolate houses

The final part of this chapter examines two prominent female chocolate house owners in London, revealing how entrepreneurial women could navigate social and gendered constraints.[876] Running a chocolate house, coffeehouse or similar food establishment indeed ranked among the most common occupations undertaken by women in mid-eighteenth-century London.[877] The shift from Bath's perfume trade to London's chocolate houses tests the chapter's argument. Were the asymmetries observed in Bath — the gap between commercial competence and legal recognition, the differing exposure of men and women to the law of debt — products of that city's particular social composition, or

[875] *Ibid.*
[876] Blackheath is now a borough of London but in the eighteenth century it was a town, roughly ten miles outside the built-up city limits.
[877] Peter Earle, *A City Full of People: Men and Women of London, 1650-1750* (London: Methuen, 1994), p.122.

structural features of eighteenth-century commerce? Their persistence in London, in modified form, is itself the finding.

Chocolate houses occupied a distinctive niche: functioning as semi-public spaces where prosperous men conducted business, gambled and socialised. They were more genteel than taverns yet more sociable than shops. Women's management of these establishments thus positioned them at the intersection of domestic hospitality and public commerce, transforming traditional female roles into profitable enterprises. The evolution of White's Chocolate House exemplifies this trajectory. Founded by Francesco Bianco (Bianchi) — anglicised as White — in 1693 (in Chesterfield Street before moving to St James's Street), the establishment passed to his widow Elizabeth after his death in 1711.[878] Under her stewardship, White's flourished as 'the centre of the fashionable life of the day.'[879] Elizabeth's entrepreneurial vision expanded the business by merging White's with 'The Old Club' and diversifying operations to include theatre and opera ticket sales for Haymarket performances and *ridottos*.[880] Local rate-books (annual tax records) chronicle her ascending social status, reflecting both her commercial shrewdness and her establishment's admired customers. Algernon Bourke notes that the changing way Elizabeth White was recorded after her husband's death — from 'Widow White', to 'Mrs White', and eventually to 'Madam White' — reflects a rising assessment of her social and economic standing. This linguistic progression from 'Widow' (defined by loss and dependence) through 'Mrs' (denoting decorum through marriage) to 'Madam' (suggesting

[878] Algernon Bourke, *The History of White's* (London: Waterlow & Sons, 1892), pp.14—15
[879] *Ibid.,* p.14.
[880] Ridottos were fashionable public entertainments that combined music, dancing and socialising in a semi-formal setting.

authority and autonomy) traces Elizabeth's gradual emancipation from her husband's shadow into a woman with an independent commercial identity.[881]

Elizabeth White's story shows how widowhood could open a path to commercial authority, whereas Grace Tosier's (1664–1753) experience demonstrates how a woman without the formal protection of marriage could construct a public identity powerful enough to rival that of any male proprietor. Her partner, Thomas Tosier, founded The Chocolate House in Blackheath in 1702, before becoming royal chocolate maker to George I in 1714, serving the king his daily chocolate at Hampton Court Palace. While Thomas managed his royal chocolate duties, for both George I and later George II, Grace managed the Blackheath establishment.

Though not legally married to Thomas until 1722, she had long styled herself 'Mrs Tosier' or 'Wife of the King's Chocolate Maker'.[882] The delay is unlikely to reflect a wish to preserve commercial independence, since there is no evidence that Grace held a stake in the business that marriage would have transferred; remaining unmarried exposed her to destitution should Thomas predecease her. A prior impediment is a likelier explanation. Grace's Will names a brother, Cornelius Anthony, which suggests she was born an Anthony,[883] and a Grace Anthony married John Woodhead at St Mary Rotherhithe in 1693.[884] If these were the same woman, as seems likely, she may still have been married when she began living with Thomas. Thomas's will, made in October 1729 and proved after

[881] Bourke, *The History of White's,* pp.15—16.
[882] Polly Putnam, *Chocolate Fit for a Queen,* (London: Ebury Press, 2015), p.78.
[883] Will of Grace Vancourt, dated 9 October 1753, proved 5 February 1754, PROB 11/807/27, TNA.
[884] The London Archives, St Mary, Rotherhithe, composite register of baptisms, marriages and burials, P71/MRY/008, 1693, marriage of John Woodhead and Grace Anthony.

his death in June 1733, names a grandson, implying children from an earlier union of his own, so he too may have had a living spouse.[885] Either impediment would explain why the couple did not marry until 1722. The honorific carried its own weight regardless: 'Mrs' did not necessarily denote marital status in the early eighteenth century, but could signal respectability, maturity or independent householding, particularly for women in business or possessing recognised social capital.

A 1718 pew list from St Alfege Church in Greenwich (Figs. 6.4a and 6.4b) supports this reading. Among the 903 pew renters, including 430 women seated separately in the all-women section, ‘Mrs Grace Tosier’ was uniquely recorded using both her first name and surname, suggesting recognition in her own right rather than as a husband’s appendage.[886] Alternatively, the distinction may reflect her proximity to royal service since, by this point, Thomas Tosier maintained separate sleeping quarters at Hampton Court — an unusual privilege that may have enhanced her perceived respectability within the parish. Whatever the precise reason, by 1718 she had secured recognition as a respectable parishioner, despite her technically unmarried status at that time.

[885] Will of Thomas Tosier, 2 October 1729, with codicil of 7 June 1731, proved June 1733, PROB 11/660/4, TNA.
[886] Old Royal Naval College, *The Greenwich Chocolate House* exhibition (London: Old Royal Naval College, viewed 4 April 2024).

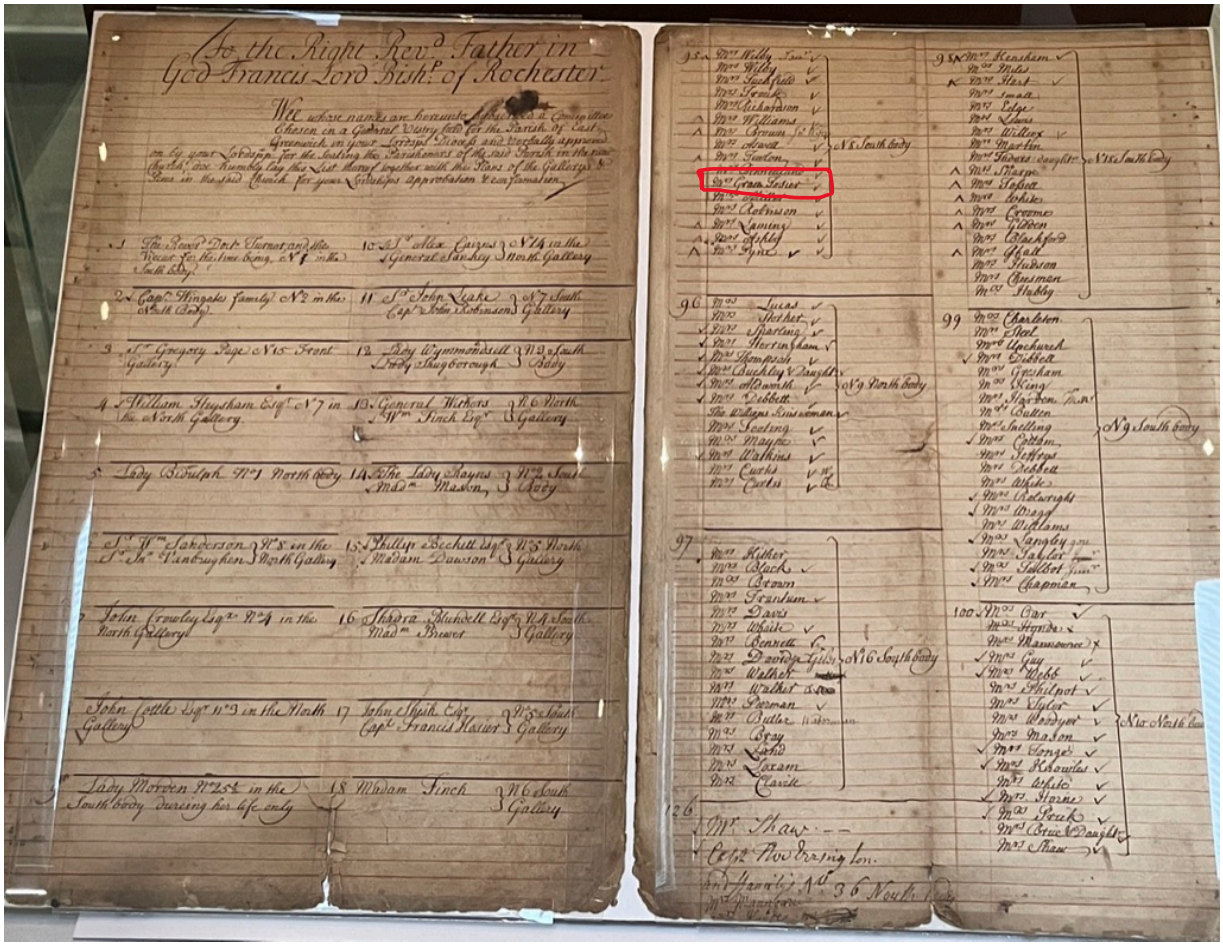

Figure 6.4a: *Pew list from St Alfege Church, Greenwich* (1718), ink on paper, displayed at the exhibition on *The Greenwich Chocolate House*, at the Royal Naval College from 29 March to 3 November 2024. Photograph: Author's own. (Image © St Alfege Church, Greenwich).

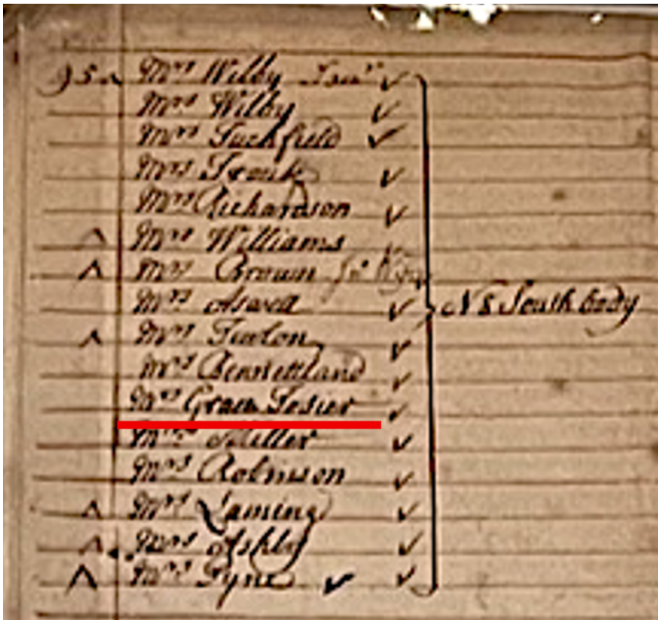

Figure 6.4b: Close up of the pew list above showing Mrs 'Grace' Tosier, unlike the other parishioners whose first names were not recorded, such as Mrs Richardson and Mrs Williams.

The *London Journal* reported in 1721 that '[t]here was handsome entertainment on Monday last by Mrs Grace Tosier, his majesty's chocolate maker, at her house on Blackheath, near Greenwich, in honour of the King's birthday, where there was a great Resort of Persons of Quality and there was Dancing in her new great room for the first time'.[887] It was Thomas, not Grace, who was the king's chocolate maker, and this misattribution suggests either that Grace had become so closely associated with the chocolate business that contemporaries viewed her as sharing the royal position, or that the journal deliberately elevated her status to emphasise the prestige of the event. Either way, Grace cultivated an impressive list of customers including Prince Frederick (son of George II), the Princess of Wales (who visited in 1742), and numerous aristocrats including the Cokes (later the earls of Leicester) who visited her chocolate house in the summer of 1722 and spent lavishly. On 4 June, they paid £37:4:9½ for 'entertainment at Mrs Tosier's in Blackheath' which included expenses for 'Renish' wine, 'other wins [sic] bought by Mr Griffiths', 'provisions bought at Greenwich by Cook', six musicians who played there and three barges 'to bring back the company from Greenwich' (Figs. 6.5 & 6.6). The sheer extravagance of this expenditure demonstrates how Grace's establishment functioned not just as a refreshment venue but as a stage for aristocratic display, where the elites could demonstrate their status through conspicuous consumption.

[887] *The London Journal*, issue 97, 3 June 1721, 3a.

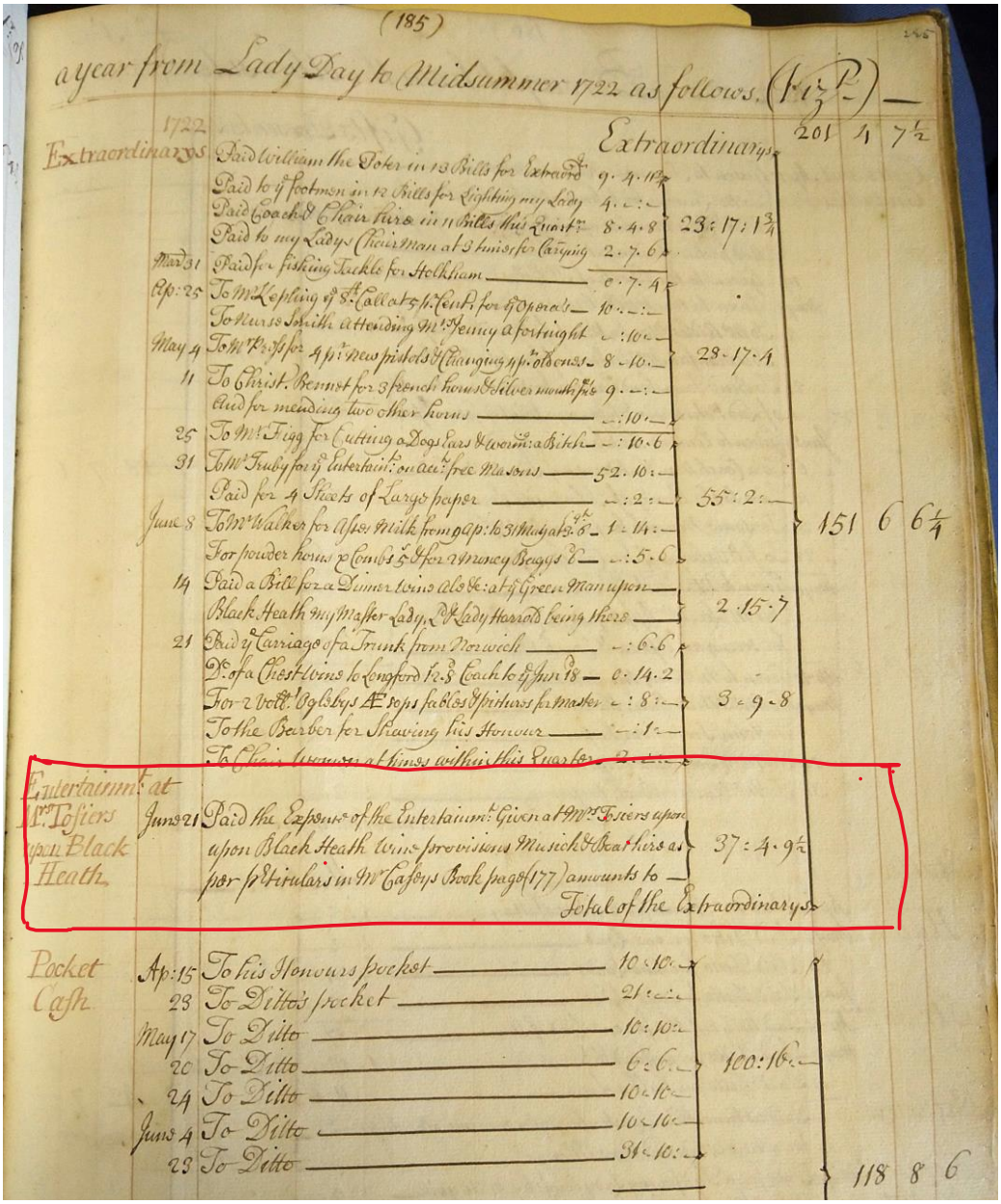

Figure 6.5: *Holkham Hall Account Book,* including entertainment at Mrs Tosier's at Blackheath with reference to Mr Casey's book (21 June 1722), Holkham Hall Archives, A/7, p185. Photograph: Author's own. (Image © Holkham Estate).

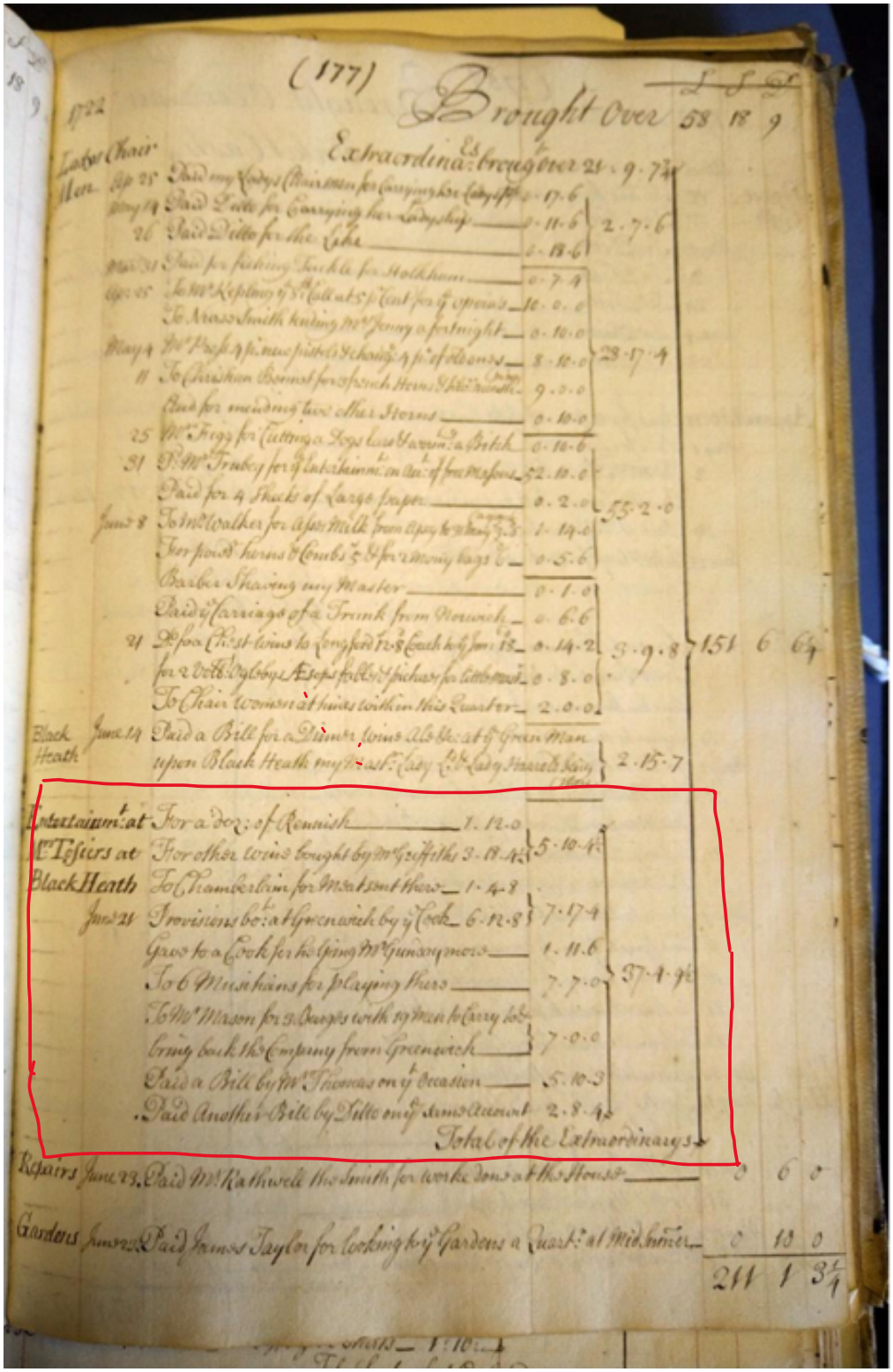

Figure 6.6: *Holkham Hall Account book* A/5, p 177.Details of visits to Mrs Tosier's at Blackheath in June 1722, Holkham Hall Archives. Photograph: Author's own. (Image © Holkham Estate).

Grace's prominence extended beyond her business and into the cultural sphere. Her 1728 portrait by society portraitist Bartholomew Dandridge (Fig. 6.7) became a collectible mezzotint print. Though dressed in stylised pastoral dress, she is depicted here as a flamboyant figure, sporting a wide-brimmed hat with flowers adorning her bosom. Her confident body language, as she gestures out across Greenwich Park toward the River Thames, suggests not simply familiarity with the area but the pose (albeit fairly standard for such portraits) implies mastery and ownership of her domain.[888] This image helped transform her into a recognisable public figure whose fame transcended her trade. Thomas Tosier may have founded the chocolate house, and his royal association may have added ballast to the establishment's standing, but it was Grace's business acumen, her entrepreneurialism and sheer force of personality that made it into a thriving institution.



Figure 6.7: Published by John Faber, after Bartholomew Dandridge (1691-c.1754) *Portrait of Grace Tosier* (1664-1753), (1728) mezzotint (348 × 250mm), National Portrait Gallery, London D39652. (Image © National Portrait Gallery).

[888] Discussed on the 'Comfortably Hungry' podcast, 'Meet the Tosiers', Series 2, Episode 5. Transmitted on 21 March 2024.

Commissioning and circulating a portrait was a strategy more readily available to men: Elihu Yale's commissions, examined in Chapter 3, show a merchant using armorials and profile portraiture to assert a standing his career had put in question; female traders rarely enjoyed such visibility. Grace's portrait thus performed multiple functions: it advertised her establishment, legitimised her social standing and asserted her right to public recognition — transforming a commercial woman into a cultural figure worthy of memorialisation.

Following Thomas's death in 1733, Grace remarried the brewer Samuel Vancourt (a choice suggesting that trade advantage was not the only consideration governing such matches) but retained the Tosier name in trade, preserving the commercial capital it carried.[889] The two family wills reveal how deliberately her position was constructed at either end of this second marriage. Thomas's will of 1729, reinforced by a codicil of 1731 and proved in 1733, named Grace as sole executrix and residuary legatee, while every bequest to a third party — including the dwelling house and the ground beneath the great room left to his servant John Smith — was made contingent on her prior death, ensuring that nothing passed out of her hands during her lifetime.[890] Grace, in turn, anticipated the legal consequences of remarriage. By a tripartite indenture of July 1734, executed while she was still 'Grace Tosier Widow', she vested the tenements, plate, jewels and household goods she held from her marriage to Tosier in three trustees — among them, very probably, the same John Smith

[889] The commercial use of the name ‘Tosier’ by Grace after 1733 includes advertisements in *The London Daily Post* on 28 July 1735, issue 229, 1a; and 31 July 1735, issue 232.
[890] Will of Thomas Tosier, 2 October 1729, with codicil of 7 June 1731, proved June 1733, PROB 11/660/4, TNA.

— in trust for her nieces, the daughters of her late brother Cornelius Anthony.[891] Crucially, the settlement contained a proviso empowering her to dispose of this property by will 'notwithstanding her Coverture', and her will of October 1753 exercised that power decisively: her niece Mary, who had married 'without my advice privity or Consent' and behaved 'very undutifully', was reduced to twenty pounds 'and no more', with the residue redirected to Mary's sister Grace Anthony.[892] Vancourt, though a party to the settlement, was neither trustee nor beneficiary of the Tosier property, receiving only the estate his wife had acquired since the marriage.[893] Far from demonstrating that the legal frameworks governing property circumscribed women's control beyond their own lives, the Tosier–Vancourt wills show coverture being anticipated, contractually neutralised, and ultimately instrumentalised: Grace determined the descent of her first husband's property twenty years into her second marriage, disciplining one niece and rewarding another from beyond the constraints the law nominally imposed. What the documents illuminate, however, are the conditions under which such control could be secured — through male testamentary design in 1729 and pre-marital settlement in 1734 — rather than its typicality.

Conclusion

What emerges from these cases is that gender in eighteenth-century luxury commerce operated as a structural condition rather than as one influence among many — but the

[891] Will of Grace Vancourt, dated 9 October 1753, proved 5 February 1754, PROB 11/807/27, TNA. The settlement of c.1 July 1734 is recited in the will; the trustees were James Jobson of London, merchant, John Smith of Blackheath, and George Rist of Eton, Berkshire, brewer.
[892] *Ibid.*
[893] *Ibid.*

nature of the evidence for this claim matters. The strongest demonstration is institutional rather than biographical. Coverture transferred a wife's contracts, leases and debts to her husband; bankruptcy, with its discharge and dividends, was reserved to substantial 'traders', a category that coverture closed to her while the small-claims courts still held her liable; freeman status, the condition of keeping a shop, was proved by indentures that women held far less often than men of the same standing. Some did: women could be apprenticed and, in London, could become free of the City by serving an apprenticeship or through a husband's freedom.[894] The trade card carried a male name where the billhead a woman signed never circulated. These asymmetries were gendered by design, and are documentable across the trade as a whole rather than merely in individual lives. The case studies assembled here cannot by themselves establish that gender determined commercial outcomes. The chapter's closest male–female comparison shows why. Elizabeth Mackinnon and Benjamin Montagu were both Bath perfumers who diversified heavily and eventually left the trade, but they did so eleven years apart, under different market conditions and with different stock: Montagu was weighed down by the duties on tobacco, Mackinnon by wartime disruption to French supply. Across this comparison and the other cases (the Treyers, the Whites, the Tosiers), capital, commodity, chronology and chance vary too much for any single variable to be isolated. What the cases do show, vividly, are the mechanisms through which these structural asymmetries operated: how a male trader could present failure as misfortune, as Montagu did in blaming his exit on ill health where Mackinnon's closing notice cited lack of sales, and how a trading name, once established, could serve as commercial capital independent of the marital statuses it

[894] Laura Gowing, *Ingenious Trade: Women and Work in Seventeenth-Century London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp.83–4, 210–42; for Bath, where apprentices were 'mostly boys', see Fawcett, *Bath Commercialis'd*, p. 98.

nominally described. The same forces — debt, bereavement, competition, cultural suspicion — were refracted through legal and cultural institutions that treated men and women differently, and it is at the level of those institutions, rather than of individual fortunes, that the case for gender's structuring role securely rests.

Within those structures, the women examined here were not marginal figures accommodating themselves to a male commercial world; they were active agents who introduced innovative marketing, expanded product lines and cultivated elite patronage networks. That this required exceptional ingenuity was itself a function of the constraints under which they operated. As Nicola Phillips has demonstrated, significant numbers of women could and did remain in business throughout the eighteenth century, with married women continuing to trade both in practice and in law. Yet such agency was always exercised in the shadow of legal frameworks that could curtail it — through marriage, inheritance dispute, or exclusion from the machinery of commercial rehabilitation — and escaping that shadow was possible but never free. Grace Tosier's pre-marital settlement demonstrates that coverture could be anticipated and contractually neutralised; it equally demonstrates that a woman who wished to retain control of her property had to purchase, through foresight, trusteeship and legal instrument, a security that her male competitors possessed by default.

This vulnerability was not uniform. Provincial traders such as those operating in Bath faced saturated markets, limited catchment areas and the particular hostility directed at foreign practitioners, while metropolitan proprietors enjoyed greater prestige but confronted sharper reputational pressures and more visible competition. What connected these

different contexts was the way gendered institutions structured the range of available responses. The formal machinery of commercial rehabilitation was available to men on terms it largely denied to women. Grace Tosier could achieve royal and aristocratic patronage, genuine cultural celebrity, and control over her property extending through her second marriage and beyond her own death. But that control had to be engineered within a legal order not of her making: what a male proprietor inherited as a condition of his sex, she secured only by contract.

Gender in the luxury trades was therefore not a settled fact but an unequal, continuing negotiation, conducted within institutions built by and for men. Both sexes drew on the same commercial repertoire (diversification, ready money, a fashionable address, claims of authenticity, marriage within the trade) but not from the same footing. Men traded on advertising bravado, recast collapse as misfortune rather than incompetence, and formed alliances that consolidated their standing. Women traded on respectability, navigated coverture or, where resources allowed, pre-empted it by contract, and relied on networks that the archive preserves only in fragments. The evidence lies in the sources this chapter has brought together. Billheads signed by Martha Treyer reveal financial stakes that legal records erase. Small-claims courts held married women liable for debts that bankruptcy would never let them discharge, a double standard that Finn and Wakelam’s work together show to be systematic. The 1718 pew list naming 'Mrs Grace Tosier' shows a name recognised in its own right before she was legally entitled to it, and one she continued to trade under after Thomas's death, when it had become commercial capital independent of her marital status. Read against one another (billheads against the law of debt, directories

and wills against coverture, portrait commissions against a pew list), these sources show commercial identities that were built through strategies that the formal record was structurally unable to capture. The luxury trades did not merely host the negotiation of gender; they exposed both its limits and the ingenuity it demanded

THESIS CONCLUSION

The gendered associations of chocolate, perfume and snuff shifted over the period by different routes and at different paces, and none of the three came to belong to one sex alone. Chocolate's associations changed through relocation. Its most visible public setting shifted from the all-male chocolate houses of St James's to mixed company at Blackheath and the pleasure gardens, and to the household, where women had prepared and drunk it from the outset. Snuff changed through differentiation of the product itself, and it changed comparatively quickly, becoming a habit of both sexes once it became fashionable from 1702, while blends and boxes were distinguished by gender. Perfume's associations changed as men slowly and unevenly withdrew from wearing it conspicuously, while continuing to buy it and to dominate its sale. In none of these cases did commercial address and consumer practice move in step, and this thesis has been concerned with the gap between them: between what retailers suggested their customers were and what those customers can be shown to have done. That gap also tests existing scholarship. The evidence supports Mendelson and Crawford on women's negotiated agency, and McShane on elite women's snuff-taking and the chronology of its acceptance. It sits less easily with Trumbach's account of effeminacy, Molineux's reading of tobacco imagery, Pointon's model of the gift and Davidoff and Hall's separate spheres. One interpretive point runs through all of this: evidence that looks like freedom from one angle can look like constraint from another.

Chocolate

The treatises of *c.*1650–*c.*1700 (Chapter 1) addressed both sexes but on separate grounds: fertility, complexion and libido for women, potency, military stamina and rational judgement for men.[895] At ten to fifteen shillings per pound, the commodity they promoted was available only to the wealthy, and in public it was consumed initially in all-male chocolate houses in St James's.[896] By 1721, Grace Tosier's Blackheath chocolate house was entertaining mixed elite company, and the Coke family spent over £37 there in a single visit the following summer. The St James's establishments moved the other way, remaining male institutions as they converted into subscription clubs from 1736, tightening their exclusivity rather than relaxing it.[897]

Chocolate was, in any case, already established in the household. Weatherill's London inventories show equipment for domestic hot drinks rising from virtual absence in 1685 to 57 per cent of households by 1725. Her category does not distinguish chocolate from tea and coffee, so the figure measures the spread of domestic hot drinks generally, not chocolate-drinking as such; but it shows that the domestic setting for chocolate was in place early in the century. The recipe books of Woolley (1670), Glasse (1747) and Raffald (1769), written by women for household use, show that chocolate was already made and served there (Chapter 4).[898] What changed over the century was less who drank chocolate than how its consumption was presented. Its most public male setting closed itself off,

[895] See Chapter 1 on the gendered division of therapeutic claims in Wadsworth, Stubbe, Barbe and Chamberlayne.
[896] See Introduction on comparative prices of chocolate, tea and coffee.
[897] See Chapter 5 on the conversion of White's to subscription membership.
[898] Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, discussed in Chapter 4, along with the recipe books of Woolley, Glasse and Raffald.

while advertisers increasingly addressed women and satirists made the lady's morning chocolate a byword for idleness (Chapters 2 and 5). Men did not stop drinking it, but its associations became more domestic and more feminine.

Snuff

Pipe tobacco had crossed ranks and sexes from the mid-seventeenth century but was, by the eighteenth, coded as masculine and increasingly plebeian, its mess and smell requiring the pipe to be set aside indoors in female company.[899] Snuff had been known in England since the early seventeenth century, and women had owned snuff paraphernalia since the Restoration, but the habit remained marginal until the Vigo Bay seizure of 1702 made it increasingly fashionable. Women's presence in snuff-taking company registered quickly in commercial address: by 1709 the *Daily Courant* was assuring readers that its 'Britannick' blend was not 'offensive to the Ladies' — an advertisement concerned with women around snuff-takers rather than women as purchasers.[900] Women's own use is visible soon afterwards, in Addison's lady of fashion passing 'good Brazile' along the pew in 1712, and in the young woman of 1714 who took snuff from a gentleman's box and demanded a song about it. That Addison could still mock the practice is consistent with McShane's account of an acceptability that consolidated by the 1720s, rather than one already secure.

[899] Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, p.169; see also Fig. 2.19, discussed in Chapter 2.
[900] *The Daily Courant*, 5 February 1709, issue 2272, discussed in Chapter 2; *The Spectator*, no. 344, 4 April 1712, pp. 1–2, discussed in Chapter 5; *The Ladies Tales* (London: 1714), p. 187, discussed in Chapter 3; McShane, 'Tobacco-Taking', 117 and 'Bad Habits', pp.35–6.

Sharing the habit did not make snuff ungendered. The product itself was differentiated: heavy Brazil, later characterised as masculine, against the delicately scented Violet Strasburg for women. Box decoration developed a similar vocabulary. Some subjects, chiefly family and dynastic imagery and hunting and military scenes, were addressed primarily to men, as Beaven and Martin argue. Domestic scenes and female portraits are more often associated with women. As Chapter 3 shows, however, portraits of women were frequently made for men, and women's part in commissioning or owning such boxes is rarely recoverable.[901] Nevertheless, only a minority of boxes carried subject matter of either kind: of the one hundred and seventy boxes in the V&A's eighteenth-century holdings, thirty-eight show subjects conventionally associated with men and fifteen show subjects conventionally associated with women. These categories describe the imagery, not the boxes' owners, whose sex is seldom recorded. Five depict couples and one hundred and twelve show subjects that resist categorisation altogether: chiefly pastoral, classical, floral and animal, but also biblical, patriotic and decorative.

Perfume

In 1700, both sexes wore perfume across the body, wig, gloves and handkerchief. After mid-century, heavy, conspicuous scent came to be associated with effeminacy in men: civet fell from favour, and such scent attached itself to the fop and macaroni.[902] Men did not stop buying it. The third earl of Egremont's perfume expenditure peaked at roughly £470 in 1784, precisely as that association consolidated, while Nelthorpe spent £12 in

[901] See Chapter 3 on snuff varieties and box decoration and also Table 3.1; Beaven and Martin, 'The Stuff of Snuff', 104–06.
[902] See Introduction on civet's decline, and Chapter 3 on perfume practice.

1786.[903] Buying is not wearing, and some of Egremont's spending went on gifts (Chapter 4). Even so, the accounts suggest that the change altered how openly men wore perfume faster than it altered who paid for it.

Nor did perfume's increasingly feminine image change the public face of the trade. Of the fifty-three perfume trade cards examined, thirty carry a male proprietor's name and only four a woman's, the remaining nineteen unattributable. Eleven bear female images against five depicting men (Table 2.2, Chapter 2).[904] The trade itself was more mixed. Bath alone yields Mary Purdie, Elizabeth Berwick and Elizabeth Mackinnon trading under their own names. Male dominance of the printed record reflects the conventions of trade advertising as much as the composition of the trade itself. Men established themselves as the visible sellers of a commodity they now wore more discreetly, if at all, and they told their female customers what beauty required: Jolly's Naples Dew against wrinkles in 1768, Moore's wash ball, safe enough to eat, in 1787, and Reynolds's Venus's Vegetable Bloom in 1788.[905] Perfume came to be presented chiefly as something women wore, while the authority to sell it remained a masculine claim — women in the trade could and did challenge that claim, though rarely in print.

Advertising did not consistently lead practice. With snuff the two moved closely together: sellers were taking account of women in snuff-taking company by 1709, and women's own use is recorded within a few years. With chocolate advertising plainly followed. Domestic

[903] Petworth House Archives, discussed in Chapter 4, Fig. 4.6 and Table A4.1; Nelthorpe accounts, Lincolnshire Archives, NEL/9, NEL/8, NEL/4 and NEL/19.
[904] Table 2.2, Chapter 2; data from the John Johnson, Heal and Banks collections.
[905] Advertised in the *Bath Chronicle*; Jolly discussed in Chapter3, Moore and Reynolds discussed in Chapter 6.

hot drinks were well established in London households by 1725, as Weatherill's inventories show, a generation before advertisers routinely named women among their customers, as Islington Spa and Sanders did in 1760 and 1761, and more than sixty years before Bourdillon addressed them as a distinct market in 1789.[906] Chocolate makers were not inventing a female consumer but pursuing one who already existed.

That difference decides the sense in which commerce helped to make gender norms. The clearest cases are snuff and perfume. The snuff trade created the distinctions of blend and box that it then sold, and perfumers, overwhelmingly men in print, set out what female beauty required. Chocolate worked differently. The decades in which chocolate advertisers courted elite and middling London women, satirists recycled almost verbatim from 1704 into the 1760s: the lady who wakes at ten, drinks her chocolate and falls asleep again. Hogarth's countess took hers amid the emblems of adultery (Chapter 5).[907] Advertisers solicited the consumer that moralists mocked, and the inventory and recipe evidence bears out the advertisers' account of her rather than the moralists'. Here commerce did not create the practice. It legitimised it, giving a respectable public face to a habit that satire treated as idleness or worse. In both cases the claim concerns identifiable sellers, Sanders, Brunsden, Purdie and Warren among them, not impersonal market forces.

The way sellers addressed their customers also changed, in three broad stages. Until about 1700 the treatise dominated, and its claims concerned what the substance did to the body. The trade card, at its height between roughly 1720 and 1770, spoke instead to what owning

[906] On Islington Spa (1760), Sanders (1761) and Bourdillon (1789), see Chapter 2.
[907] Discussed in Chapter 5; for Hogarth, see Fig. 5.8.

the article said about the purchaser. From mid-century, newspaper advertisements and printed wrappers insisted that the article was genuine. Examples include Sanders's 'unadulterated' chocolate in 1775, Stacye, Tompson and Flesher's 'neat unadulterated cocoa' in 1800, and Browne & Son's use of the royal coat of arms.[908] This last shift is itself a sign that access was widening. Authenticity sells only where adulteration is common, and adulteration pays only where the market is large enough to make cheating worthwhile.

The newspaper counts help to show what this transition did and did not involve. Insertions rose from 69 across two sampled titles in 1710 to 387 across eight in 1780, more than a fivefold increase.[909] Per title, however, the rise was modest, from about 35 insertions to about 48. Most of the growth therefore came from the number of titles rather than from each carrying more: chocolate advertising grew as the press grew, with makers following their customers into each new generation of titles, including the dailies of the 1770s that courted the middling readers discussed in Chapter 2.

Nor did these goods simply filter down the social ranks, as McKendrick's model of social emulation would suggest. Snuff was socially divided from the moment it became fashionable in 1702. Naval officers sold on the finer blends while the poorer stock went cheaply in the ports, so its layered class associations came with it rather than developing as it moved down the social scale. Chocolate did move down: from ten to fifteen shillings a pound, to a dish at three to six pence, and to Defoe's 'meanest tradesman'.[910] But it was the commodity that descended, not its meaning. A cheaper, adulterated block drunk from

[908] Discussed in Chapter 2; for Browne & Son, see Fig. 2.5.
[909] Table 2.1 and Fig. 2.A, Chapter 2.
[910] Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman*, vol. 2, p.31.

earthenware was not the same thing as chocolate poured from a silver pot into imported porcelain, and the Lumber Troop's pressed horn carried the rituals of conviviality without Zincke's gold. Distinction moved elsewhere, to blend, vessel, setting and manner, which took over the work that price alone had once done.

Mendelson and Crawford have shown that early modern women negotiated agency within patriarchal structures. McShane has demonstrated that snuff-taking was one of the few practices in which elite women could take part on terms close to those available to men. The evidence here supports both arguments, but it also suggests that such negotiation took different forms. Women's agency in using these goods is well documented. Their agency in commissioning them is far rarer, because most of the objects examined here were made by and for men, and women appear on their lids more often as images than as patrons. Mrs Lowther apparently did not commission the image of herself on her box, so her agency lay in agreeing to how she was shown. Grace Tosier's printed portrait presented her as a public figure of her trade, and she probably had some say in how she appeared, though the evidence does not confirm it. Anne Houblon commissioned her chocolate cups herself and so controlled the object outright. Each woman had a different degree of control over how she was presented, yet each was negotiating within patriarchal structures. Negotiation could therefore range from accepting a representation made by others, through probable influence over a published image, to outright commission.

Some existing scholarship fares less well against the evidence uncovered here. Trumbach's association of effeminacy with same-sex desire leaves no room for the heterosexual fop of the chocolate houses, whose failings contemporaries described in social rather than sexual

terms. Molineux claims that London tobacconists represented Native Americans and Africans interchangeably, but Rolls's card distinguishes the two by dress, posture and relation to labour.[911] Pointon reads women's gifts as a systematic exercise of power, a reading that fits neither the Houblon (Palmerston) cups nor the snuff box Elizabeth Carter received from Catherine Talbot.[912] Nor do these objects sit comfortably within Davidoff and Hall's separate spheres.[913] Snuff boxes travelled between the club and the assembly, the *toilette* admitted men to a woman's bedchamber, and Grace Tosier's management of the Blackheath house was public, documented and celebrated in a mezzotint. Taken together, these examples suggest that the relationship between consumption and gender was less neatly divided and fixed than some existing models imply.

Tosier's visibility was exceptional, though, and the reasons it was so rare have more to do with archives than with commerce. Women's presence in business survives mainly in documents made for use rather than display: records that served a practical purpose and were then filed away. Martha Treyer signed a billhead in 1787, although the firm's own trade cards name only her husband. A pew list of 1718 records Grace Tosier by both first name and surname, the only one of 903 parishioners so named, four years before her marriage made the name legally hers: a standing recognised in her own right. Her settlement of 1734 kept property she held from her first marriage out of her second husband's control.[914] Read alongside the trade directories and the law of debt, these

[911] Molineux, 'Pleasures of the Smoke', 347; Trade card for Rolls's Best Virginia Tobacco, British Museum, Heal 117.137, discussed in Chapter 2.
[912] Pointon, *Strategies for Showing*, p.38; discussed with the Palmerston cups (British Museum, 2005,0604.2) and the Carter–Talbot correspondence in Chapters 3 and 4.
[913] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p.33; After Bartholomew Dandridge, *Portrait of Grace Tosier*, mezzotint (1728), NPG, D39652.
[914] Evans, *The Old Snuff House*, p. 21; pew list, St Alfege Church, Greenwich, 1718; TNA, PROB 11/807/27.

fragments show that women's near-absence from the commercial record was a product of how records were kept, not of women's absence from trade.[915]

Bath makes the same point from the opposite direction, and in more detail (Chapter 6). Its records are unusually full, with a weekly newspaper, trade directories and apprenticeship registers, and they show women trading openly under their own names. Mary Purdie contracted as a manufacturer's agent and advertised blacking, wash-balls and dentifrice over ten years. Elizabeth Berwick sold Irish whiskey from a perfumery and snuff warehouse. Elizabeth Mackinnon ran her late husband's business for fifteen years until market saturation and, finally, war with France closed it. That these women are visible says more about the sources than about any unusual liberality in Bath: wherever a provincial newspaper preserved advertisements that a trade card would never have carried, women appear. The same city also shows what they were up against. A freeman monopoly reserved formal trading rights largely to men, an apprenticeship system trained mostly boys, though not exclusively,[916] and insolvency law offered male traders a route to rehabilitation while leaving women liable in the small-claims courts for debts they could not discharge.

The limits of the evidence

Survival favoured the valuable, so pressed horn is under-represented compared with gold and enamel. The same bias may partly explain the apparent late-century shift traced in

[915] On the differential operation of insolvency law, see Wakelam, 'Coverture and the Debtors' Prison', 343–60, and Finn, *The Character of Credit*, pp. 132–34, both discussed in Chapter 6.
[916] Fawcett, *Bath Commercialis'd*, p. 98; Gowing, *Ingenious Trade*, pp. 210–42.

Chapter 3, from objects bearing generic virtues to objects commemorating named individuals, since objects associated with known people were more likely to be kept.

The ambiguity noted at the outset is also a limit on what the evidence can show. Elite women took snuff on terms close to men's, yet were criticised for it in ways no man was. Tosier's settlement shows that coverture could be neutralised by contract, but only at a cost in legal instruments and foresight that her male competitors never had to pay. Nor was the ambiguity always accidental. A hinged lid divided a room into those who were shown the inside and those who were not, and an image that could be read two ways could please two different customers. When a source supports opposing readings, its capacity to do so may be the historical point. And when agency or vulnerability is inferred from display, the evidence can confirm that something was performed, but not what was felt.

These meanings were made in practice: in Grace Tosier's Great Room in 1721, in choosing a pinch of Brazil over Violet Strasburg, in buying a pot of rose pomatum for a shilling. Such gestures rarely attracted comment, but they were where gendered meanings took shape. Gender was not simply attached to these commodities and then reproduced through their use. It was made and remade by where these goods were consumed, how they were differentiated, who was encouraged to buy them and who could claim them in public. The process was gradual, uneven and often contradictory, but it was through these small acts of consumption, commercial address and material choice that the gendered meanings of these goods changed.

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