

# *Woman in bed* by Matthew William Peters (1742–1814) Titian, Reynolds and a painted revenge

Romana Sammern



Matthew William Peters (1742–1814) was regarded as a successful painter. He had substantial training and he was awarded a prize by the Society of Artists when he was just 19 years old.<sup>1</sup> He travelled through Europe several times and was familiar with French genre painting as well as Italian, Flemish and Dutch ‘classics’. Peters studied Rubens, Correggio and Barocci in Rome and Florence, Titian in Venice and Greuze in Paris. In 1765, he became a member of the Society of Artists and after the founding of the Royal Academy in 1768, he participated in the exhibitions of both associations and was a member of the Royal Academy until the 1780s.<sup>2</sup> He worked primarily as a portrait painter, receiving commissions through a wide net of influential patrons, some of whom arranged his admittance to the Freemasons in 1769.<sup>3</sup> After a second stay in Venice and Rome between 1776 and 1779 he rekindled his career in England by painting erotic pictures of women.

Immediately after Peters’s return from Italy in 1776, he painted a *Woman in Bed* for Edward Lloyd Richard Grosvenor, 1st Earl Grosvenor (1731–1802).<sup>4</sup> As early as December 1776, William Dickinson (1746–1812), one of the best engravers in London, published a mezzotint of the reclining half-figure in bed that indicated the patron Lord Grosvenor (Pl 1).<sup>5</sup> Today, the painting is known as *Lydia*, according to the title of the print. Peters showed the painting at the exhibition of the Royal Academy in 1777, where it was approved for its colouring and its Italian style – beside irritations caused by the risky subject in the exhibition space.<sup>6</sup> Peters’s publicity worked. After *Lydia* he went on to paint erotic fancy painting, such as *Belinda* and *Sylvia*, and promoted them successfully in print (Pl 2).<sup>7</sup>

Grosvenor was, at one and the same time, an aristocratic politician, a wealthy art collector and patron, and an adulterous womaniser who frequented prostitutes,<sup>8</sup> kept



1 *Lydia* by William Dickinson (1746–1812) after Matthew William Peters (1742–1814), 1776. Mezzotint, approx 30 x 33.6 cm. Private collection, London

2 *Sylvia* by John Raphael Smith (1752–1812) after Matthew William Peters, 1778. Mezzotint, 35.3 x 49.4 cm. British Museum

3 *Miss Roberts sitting naked in Ld. Grosvenors lap at the Hotel in Leicester Fields* by Charles Grignon (1717–1810) after Daniel Dodd (active c1752–1781), 1780. Etching, 17.9 x 11.9 cm. *Trials for Adultery*, vol VI (1780), p114. British Library

mistresses and even helped one of his favourites to set up her own brothel.<sup>9</sup> He had the reputation of a rake and his propensities became very public in the course of an adultery scandal at the end of the 1760s. His wife, Henrietta (née Vernon, c1745–1828), was caught *in flagrante* with the brother of King George III, Prince Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland and Strathearn (1745–1790). In the ensuing divorce proceedings, Henrietta tried to restore her honour, accusing her husband of repeated adultery. To support her case, she searched out prostitutes at the relevant addresses in London and prepared them to testify for her. Every detail of the trial was circulated and the court records were printed in several editions (Pl 3).<sup>10</sup>



*Miss Roberts sitting naked in Ld. Grosvenors lap at the Hotel in Leicester Fields.*  
Published as the Act stands by S. Bladon Printer to Her Majesty, Vol 6, p. 114.

This article examines Peters's *Woman in Bed* and its reproduction as a print, in relation to the context of the Grosvenor adultery trial and the visual culture of the 1760s and 1770s. It argues that it was commissioned by Lord Grosvenor as being both a modern counterpart of a Titian *Venus* in Grosvenor's own collection (what might be termed at the time an 'imitation') and a revenge in painted form upon his wife as a reaction to the mockery he had been subjected to in the adultery trial.

### Grosvenor's *Woman in bed*

Peters's *Woman in Bed* was clearly a successful composition. In addition to the fact that Dickinson's print exists in at least two states, there are six known painted variations of *Woman in Bed*.<sup>11</sup> The two almost identical versions in public collections, in the Tate Gallery in London (Pl 4) and in the Museum of Art Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, RI, are almost identical to Dickinson's print.<sup>12</sup> The identity of Lord Grosvenor's own painting among the surviving variations of the painting can, however, no longer be established. The painting was sold soon after Lord Grosvenor's death in 1802, with part of his collection at an auction in London at Christie's on October 13, 1802, but we lose track of it after 1844.<sup>13</sup> We do, however, have an idea of what Grosvenor's painting looked like. An auction catalogue entry from 1812 describes *Woman in Bed* as being 'painted for the late Earl Grosvenor'<sup>14</sup> and the inscription of Dickinson's mezzotint, referring to the 'original' painting in the collection of Lord Grosvenor, indicates that this commission was the prime original.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, an auction catalogue entry also indicates that Peters's *Lydia* might have been commissioned in response to a 'Titian' in Lord Grosvenor's collection.<sup>16</sup> The Christie's auction catalogue of 1802 listed two paintings referred to as 'The Couchant Venus', one of them was attributed to 'Titian', the other to Peters.<sup>17</sup> It is not documented whether or not Lord Grosvenor owned a 'genuine' Titian. And the painting is more likely to have been one of many copies circulating in England at the time.<sup>19</sup> In this context, the commission from Peters of another reclining female may be interpreted as the commission of a modern English counterpart to the 'Titian'.<sup>20</sup> Peters seemed predestined for this in 1776: during his last trip to Italy he had studied Titian's works in Rome and in Venice, and on his return he was celebrated as an 'English Titian'.<sup>21</sup>

### Painting Venus – Titian, Peters

Indeed, Peters copied Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (Pl 5). He had probably already seen the painting in Florence in 1763 – the prototype of an isolated female figure lying naked and looking directly at the beholder, independently of either plot or storyline.<sup>22</sup> It had belonged to the Medici collection since the 17th century. Together with the sculpture *Medici Venus*, it served as the showpiece of the Tribuna in the grand-ducal gallery. The painting was considered a 'must-see' for all visitors to Florence and was the most copied painting in the Florentine collections, the copies being most often made for English travellers on the Grand Tour.<sup>23</sup>

Peters's painting, however, focuses on the female body and the fabrics surrounding it in the left half of the painting.<sup>24</sup> By substituting for the full-figure naked body of the Venus a partially undressed – in fact tastefully draped – half-length figure, he concentrated his involvement with the original picture on the play of the fabrics, over, around and on the naked skin of the woman. The light falls from the top left of the scene, illuminating the reclining half-figure and the bed blankets in the foreground. Her shirt has slipped over the right shoulder and

bare her shoulder and breasts, while her thin face is shadowed by an artfully draped, oversized hood.<sup>25</sup> Her head is lying on her right shoulder and she looks up from her pillow straight out of the picture, directly at the beholder.

Opened sideways and angled towards the right side of the picture, a green curtain is visible in the background of *Lydia*. It closes the picture off on the right, in about the same place where in Titian's painting a green cloth behind Venus divides the composition into two parts. Daniel Arasse meticulously describes how Titian's curtain creates a room for Venus in the picture.<sup>26</sup> This construction of space enabled Titian to separate Venus from the maids in the background while, at the same time, this unifying space also positioned Venus and the maids in relation to each other and to the beholder.<sup>27</sup> In contrast, Peters's drapery hangs down flat behind Lydia and is gathered toward the right side. Peters adopted Titian's use of the curtain to change the layout of the room, but he turned it 180 degrees and positioned it in the foreground of the picture. Peters understood the function of the curtain for Titian, but created a new meaning by positioning the draperies in front of Lydia.<sup>28</sup> The curtain does not create or separate internal spaces in the image: rather it highlights a detail and creates tension. Approximately where the bed intersects on the right and marks the edge of the picture, the left hand of Titian's Venus lies between her legs on her sex; in contrast, Lydia's right arm disappears under the bed covers. It is unclear whether her hand is lying on her stomach, or if her hand rests between her legs as she masturbates hidden behind the curtain.<sup>29</sup> The curtain acts as the theatre curtain of a small erotic stage from which Lydia looks out on us.

Peters' contemporaries had different opinions regarding the direct gaze of Titian's *Venus of Urbino*. They unanimously described *Venus* as an 'admirable' and 'voluptuous' figure,<sup>30</sup> painted after the model of a mistress of either the artist or the Duke of Urbino, and they universally interpreted the position of her left hand as a sexual gesture.<sup>31</sup> While the Marquis de Sade raved about the most beautiful eyes in the world,<sup>32</sup> in 1764 the English historian Edward Gibbon noted in his travel book his surprise at the facial expressions of the Venus, 'which do not seem to feel, what the movement simulates'.<sup>33</sup>

This suspicion regarding the look of Venus, which may hide the skilfully feigned look of love of a courtesan, has been disarmed by Peters in Lydia's face: her eyes are shaded, so that her gaze appears far less clearly reflected than in the face of Titian's girl. The head is also tilted, so that it is not possible to distinguish between the dark skin of her cheek and the pale flesh tint of the shoulders, or whether face and shoulder touch each other, and her pose appears more relaxed than the controlled pose of Venus.

Peters's *Lydia* levels off this relationship between proximity and distance: the measurements of the 'Titian', owned by Grosvenor, are no longer known, but as Peters had painted only a counterpart of the left-hand half of his *Venus*, *Lydia* might have appeared in relation to the copy of the 'Titian'. Thus, the *Woman in Bed* could have been seen from close quarters. The format reduces the physical distance between the painting and the viewer. The flesh tint of her torso shines from beneath the fabrics, which like the face, is so delicately sculpted that it may be viewed at close range. The effect of this closeness is reinforced by the painter in that he follows Titian's construction of perspective: Lydia's head is posed as if one is standing directly in front of her and looking directly at her. Her nose, however, is seen from above, as is her mouth. The viewer perspective is at the height of the left eye here, too. *Lydia* also offers herself to be viewed from every



4 *Woman in Bed* by Matthew William Peters, 1776/1777. Oil on canvas, 64.2 x 77 cm. Tate Gallery, London

5 *Venus of Urbino* by Titian (c1488–1576), 1538. Oil on canvas, 119 x 165 cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

perspective<sup>34</sup> and, as she presents her body to be viewed, the viewer can also be sure of falling under her ubiquitous gaze. Peters reduced the number of possible viewers, whereby the viewing seems more intimate and her gaze more personal. Since *Lydia's* scale permits closeness and even contact, the viewer can reassure himself of the promise of her gaze, which is to pay attention to him.

In the 18th century the desire to touch the *Venus of Urbino*, too, was documented by visitors' requests to get close to the picture and by the museum's efforts to prevent this. For example, the picture had to be put in a cage of thin wire to protect it from access by copyists in 1771.<sup>35</sup> A year after that, the German painter Johan Zoffany actually received the rarely granted permission to take down the painting. In response to his commission from Queen Charlotte, he studied the masterpieces of the grand ducal collections for his gallery picture *The Tribuna of the Uffizi* (Pl 6).<sup>36</sup> The special privilege granted to him is documented in the centre of the painting where Titian's *Venus of Urbino* is shown unframed. A curator is holding the picture at the left edge and presents it to the viewers. To the right of the *Venus*, Zoffany assembles a group of English people in conversation around Horace Mann, who, as English



ambassador, received travellers in Florence and advised them on questions of art.<sup>37</sup> The English painter Thomas Patch holds the painting at the top right. Explaining it with a serious expression, he lifts the index finger of his right hand while turning towards the group. Between him and Titian's *Venus*, the English collector John Gordon steps very close to the picture.<sup>38</sup> Ignoring the others, he looks down on the picture in the direction of Venus' toes. Following his glance, his physical closeness to the painting is made clear to the viewer by the shadow of his left arm on the right edge of the *Venus of Urbino*. With slightly opened lips and physically close, John



In *Woman in Bed*, Peters directs the attention less to the naked body of the woman than to the contrast between the gleam of flesh and the fabric, which covers and touches more of the woman's body than it exhibits. Her left hand lies on the bedcover, under which her right hand disappears. The eye is invited to search under the folds of the shirt and the covers. Peters combines the materiality of the canvas with the haptic experience of seeing, as the curtain on the right edge of the picture not only limits and stages, but marks out the place at which the canvas and the colour pigments materialise in the picture as skin and fabric. The materiality of actual and painted elements intensifies the visual byplay of the covering and imaginary uncovering.

According to contemporary rumour, Lord Grosvenor preserved Peters's *Woman in Bed* behind a curtain, as is known to have been the case with recumbent nudes, including the Titian.<sup>40</sup> William Hogarth (1697–1764) shows a similar procedure in the background of the second scene of *Marriage A-la-Mode* (Pl 7), where the curtain that covers the first painting in the gallery reveals a naked foot.

If the curtain of *Woman in Bed* opened from left to right, according to the logic of the composition, the real curtain fabric and the pulling of the cord enhanced once again the viewer's bodily perception of the picture. When this curtain was opened slowly, the deliberate emphasis on one's own sense of being observed turned the question of what Lydia sees and what she allows herself to be seen doing again into visual byplay. First, her gaze meets the gaze of the viewer, then the image opens, allowing the viewer to glance at her shoulder and breasts. It pauses in the centre of the picture, where the pink skin of the



Gordon is completely absorbed in the picture. The fingertips disappear behind the shoulder of Grand Tour traveller, Felton Herve, sitting in front of the *Venus*, and so it remains unclear whether they are touching the canvas or not. His slightly curved fingers imitate the gesture of Venus's left hand. The subtle gesture of Zoffany's Gordon represents a haptic experience of sight. While looking at the left hand of Venus, his fingers imitate her gesture. His physical contact with the painting is limited to the picture edge. The illusion of the painted Venus remains untouched, but the physical closeness of Gordon to the picture intensifies the bodily sensation. Titian's *Venus* elicits the desire to touch as she touches herself, the one hand on her sex, the other hand holding rose petals.<sup>39</sup>

armpit stands out from her otherwise almost white flesh and where the creases of her shirt slip under the soft blanket. The searching gaze may roam over the pillow behind Lydia's head and breast, which forms itself into a profile view of a female buttock and thigh, thereby heightening the pictorial tradition of the curtain fold as metaphor for the female genitals. The viewer is hereby stimulated to search out the right hand between cover and curtain.

This game of search occurs under Lydia's observing eyes. Like Titian's *Venus*, she knows what the viewers are looking for. Unlike Titian's *Venus*, she also knows that her gesture under the fabric is not visible. Both Venus and Lydia are no mere exhibits, or premodern 'pin-ups' as the interpretations

of Martin Postle and Marcia Pointon imply:<sup>41</sup> Pointon interprets the image space created through the fabrics as an opening box where the *Woman in Bed* is literally 'staged' as an object. As an object, the design of *Lydia's* gaze gives not her but the viewer power.<sup>42</sup> However, the engagement with Titian led Peters to an ambivalent relationship between the gaze of the subject and the gaze of the viewer that goes beyond the concept of a dominating, patriarchal viewer's gaze. In short, *Lydia* is not controlled by our gaze: rather, she captures the beholder's gaze even when it wavers and tries to engage in erotic search. She is not simply an object which evokes desire because she is seen: she looks back. Formally, Peters developed this active element of the woman's gaze from Titian's *Venus of Urbino*.

### Presentation of a prostitute

Stressing Titian's offering to sensation, Peters's *Lydia* merged the association of the body of Titian's *Venus* and the face of a prostitute. The themes of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, particularly Zeus's affairs and the stories of Venus, had been linked with prostitution in England before.<sup>43</sup> Horace Walpole (1717–1797) in his *Anecdotes of painting in England*, for instance, described a satirical, now lost, *Danaë* by William Hogarth where Zeus's golden rain was shown as a shower of coins. Danaë was depicted as a Drury Lane prostitute ('nymph of Drury') and her chambermaid as a procuress testing one of the coins with her teeth to check if it was genuine.<sup>44</sup> Mark Hallett notes that such overlaps were associated with classical models such as Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* or Titian's *Danaë*.<sup>45</sup> The pictures of famous prostitutes by Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792) formed a significant part of his female portraits. Portraits such as *Kitty Fisher as Cleopatra* (Pl 9) or *Thais* (National Trust, Waddesdon Manor) referred to mythically vicious female characters.

In his portrayal of a prostitute, Peters took a different path from that of Hogarth and Reynolds. In her study on the reception of erotic literature in the 18th century, Karen Harvey points to the ambivalent meaning of the female blush. Like the female gaze, the 'blush of modesty' served as an indicator of beauty as well as of the sexual willingness of a woman. Nothing was considered more erotic than reddened cheeks that displayed sexual desire in a modest frame, because immoderate sexual appetite could destroy the blush. Thus, the blush served men as an important measure of the character of a woman between modesty and restrained sensual passion.<sup>46</sup> Precisely this red appears on Lydia's cheeks. However, a virtuous blush could also be feigned with rouge, it could be 'painted' in order to conceal the defects of nature.<sup>47</sup> In fact, Lydia's blush is literally painted. This becomes ambiguous in context of the topos of the prostitute, whose use of cosmetics imitates the modest appearance of decent women:<sup>48</sup> whether Lydia is imitating acceptable and attractive passion, responding to the gaze of the viewer, or whether she really feels desire as a consequence of her ambiguous gesture under the blanket, remains unclear.

*Lydia's* inviting gaze attracts powerfully, but it also confuses, because her eyes are disturbing.<sup>49</sup> Her mouth is small and her chin is so pointed that the eyes appear bigger and her squint accentuated. However, Peters did not construct a simple squint: the inclination of the axis of her eyes is angled and the eyes are asymmetrical in shape. The eyebrows curve out-



6 *Tribuna of the Uffizi* by Johan Zoffany (1733–1810), 1772–1777. Oil on canvas, 123.5 x 155 cm. Royal Collection Trust. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

7 *Marriage A-la-Mode*, II, by William Hogarth (1697–1764), 1745. Etching and engraving, 38.8 x 46.2 cm. The British Museum

8 *The Vauxhall Demi-Rep.*, from the *Macaronies, Characters, Caricature* series, vol 4, no. 9 (1772). Engraving, 12.4 x 7.5 cm. British Museum

9 *Kitty Fisher as Cleopatra* by Richard Houston (c1721–1775) after Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), 1759/1765. Mezzotint, 31.8 x 22.7 cm. British Museum

wards, the bags under her eyes are swollen with dark shadows. In comparison to the physiognomy of the other women in Peters' erotic painting, *Lydia* is an exception: *Sylvia*, for example, produced a year after *Lydia*, has symmetrical and balanced features (Pl 2).<sup>50</sup> Her clear, luminous eyes appear natural in comparison to *Lydia's* deep-set, shadowed eyes and, like her heart-shaped mouth, are evenly lit. Although an allusion to the state of health of the prostitute in the fine art of the time suggests itself, it is hard to believe that Peters would have painted a sick mistress for Lord Grosvenor. As is made apparent by the published testimonies of the trial, Grosvenor was afraid of contagious diseases. When he first approached the prostitute mentioned in the trial, twenty-one-year-old Elizabeth, on the street and took her to his room, he made enquiries about her health and offered her double the price for her honesty should she have a contagious disease. Only after she repeatedly reassured him that she was healthy, was he prepared to become involved with her.<sup>51</sup>

In *Nocturnal Revels*, a 1779 description of London's brothels, the best and most famous brothels had a surgeon, who watched over the women's health.<sup>52</sup> The concern regarding health risks and the fact that reassurance could be found in London's luxury brothels finds a parallel in the exclusion of illness in both erotic painting and in libertine literature since Pietro Aretino's *Ragionamenti*. In the erotic imagination, a good prostitute knew how to protect herself from disease and pregnancy, and guaranteed this protection to her clients. Not until the 19th century did erotic heroines suffer lingering illnesses, unnoticed by the male protagonists.

In the art of the 18th century, sickness became visible in tell-tale skin alterations, which became visible through excessive use of cosmetics, beauty- or liver-spots.<sup>53</sup> The girl in the satirical series *Macaronies, Characters, Caricatures* of 1772 (Pl 8) wears a hood similar to *Lydia*.<sup>54</sup> There are two conspicuous beauty spots on her face. The title of the etching, *The*



*Vauxhall Demi-Rep*, denotes her as 'semi-respectable' that is to say, a woman with no claims to respectability at all and it can be understood as describing either a high-class-prostitute or a morally discredited society lady, consorting in London's *Vauxhall* pleasure gardens. In this context, the beauty spots are to be interpreted as a visible warning of her medical condition. *Lydia's* skin, in contrast, is flawless, the flesh tones of her breast are too radiantly fair to make one think of sickness.

The Italian scholar Giovan Battista Della Porta (1535–1615) in his *Physiognomia* had described the squint as an ancient sign of Venus: The sight of the beloved gives the eyes a crooked shape ('*torti occhi*') and creates a skewed look ('*mira obliquamente*').<sup>55</sup> In this context, *Lydia* shows human emotion rather than animal features. By gazing at the picture, each viewer takes on the role of the lover. Hence, her enamoured gaze loses its credibility and becomes part of a pose that reveals her as a prostitute.

Victoria Manners mentions a study for *Lydia* in possession of the Vicars Brothers.<sup>56</sup> Presumably, this is the painting that appeared at a 2001 art auction in London (Pl 10).<sup>57</sup> In this study, *Lydia*, with in an oval painted frame, sits upright and presents her half exposed breasts. As in the executed painting, the girl gazes with asymmetrical eyes directly at the viewer. Again, her head is somewhat too small for her stature and her chin is so pointed that her mouth seems too small.<sup>58</sup> The eye socket is shadowed, but the brow is less prominent and she has no bags under her eyes. In the study, her face appears more in proportion and her flesh tones are paler. In both the study and the painting, the strange shape of her eyes and her squint are noticeable and it is this gaze is common to both study and finished picture.

Strikingly, six years before the commission of *Lydia*, a mezzotint portrait of Lady Grosvenor with a similar cross-eyed gaze was published anonymously during the Grosvenor's divorce proceedings in 1770 (Pl 11).<sup>59</sup> Squinting, the half-length figure looks to the right with a displaced eye axis. In the letter in front of her on the table, the



words 'My dearest little Angel – then I prayed for you my dearest Love kissed your dearest little hair' can be deciphered. These ironically exaggerated lines were aimed at the awkward love letters from the Duke of Cumberland to Lady Grosvenor, which were used as evidence in the divorce proceedings and were also published in 1770.<sup>60</sup> In the light of the generally derided, superficial letters of the Duke of Cumberland, Lady Grosvenor's exaggerated squint stresses the ludicrousness of the sentiments to which their marriages and honour fell victim.<sup>61</sup>

In her study of women in English prints, Cindy McCreery notes that Joshua Reynolds's portrait of Kitty Fisher from 1759 also shows a woman sitting in front of a letter, which begins with 'My dearest Kit' and was reproduced by Edward Fisher (Pl 12).<sup>62</sup> This mezzotint was still available on the print market long after the sitter's death in 1766.<sup>63</sup> Reynolds's half-length figure, with crossed arms and a costly dress with lace-trimmed sleeves, became a favoured portrait pose for fashion-conscious aristocratic young women.<sup>64</sup> The pose and the dress themselves had nothing suggestive about them. Only the love-letter in her hand, with the legible name, identifies the sitter as a courtesan.<sup>65</sup> The point is that the legible letters in Henrietta Grosvenor's portrait place, for the first time, an aristocratic, but adulterous, wife on the same level as a courtesan.<sup>66</sup> Only the woman's gaze differentiates Lady Grosvenor from Kitty Fisher: while Henrietta Grosvenor gazes to the right towards one person only, Kitty Fisher looks out at all viewers.

The graphic print market followed the mutual accusations of adultery between Richard and Henrietta Grosvenor with relish during the trial. The numerous published satires and comics were aimed at Lady Henrietta's affair and her discredited behaviour as a wife.<sup>67</sup> The gossip column *tête-à-tête* of the *Town and Country Magazine* adopted a clear position on



the infidelities of the Grosvenors in 1770: no woman would let herself be seduced without real feelings, while the affairs of a man had no bearing on his relationship to his wife.<sup>68</sup> Henrietta Grosvenor was obviously the adulteress. Richard Grosvenor won the trial.<sup>69</sup>

Richard Grosvenor's description as a libertine went unheeded by the press, although the witness statements, describing visits to prostitutes, would have provided plenty of material. There was talk of sexual acts and an illegitimate child, of shady locations and procuresses. Instead, Lord Grosvenor was allocated the role of a cuckolded husband and the *Town and Country* called him 'Cornuto', the cuckold.<sup>70</sup> The anonymous etching entitled *The Method of High-finish-ing Family Pictures* 1770 (Pl 13) shows the Duke of Cumberland kneeling over Lady Grosvenor's legs on a sofa while at the same time chalking horns on to a portrait of Richard Grosvenor hanging on the rear wall.<sup>71</sup>

The commission of *Lydia* responds visually to this dishonour. As a reminder of the mezzotint portrait of 1770 showing the adulterous Lady Grosvenor, Peters established a similar eye shape that can already be seen in his study for *Woman in Bed*.<sup>72</sup> His eye shape was understood as a foolish expression of the momentary feeling of being in love. The woman lying half-naked in bed in *Woman in Bed* gazes not longer to the right, as if towards the author of the love letters, but directly to the beholder – which would include the man who commissioned the painting: there is a parallel being drawn between Lady Grosvenor and Lydia, whose gaze betrays that she is available to anybody.

Lord Grosvenor did not content himself with this gibe. For his revenge, he could even have had a famous courtesan portrayed. At the end of the 1770s, many courtesans had appropriated Kitty Fisher's legacy (cf Pl 9) and used her portraits strategically to increase their market value and make



**10** *Lydia* by Matthew William Peters, 1776/1777. Oil on canvas, 73.7 x 63 cm. Location unknown

**11** *Henrietta Grosvenor*, 1770. Mezzotint, 35.3 x 25.1 cm. British Museum

**12** *Miss Kitty Fischer* by Edward Fisher (1722–1782) after Joshua Reynolds, 1759. Mezzotint, 30.4 x 22 cm. British Museum

**13** *The Method of High-finish-ing Family Pictures*, c.1770. Mezzotint, 35.3 x 24.8 cm. British Museum

themselves better known.<sup>73</sup> Conversely, their clients used the popularity of these women as a status symbol.<sup>74</sup> The value of a courtesan's portrait to the client was, however, limited to the period of his relationship with the woman or to the peak of her popularity, as Martin Postle notes of Reynolds's courtesan portraits.<sup>75</sup> These paintings often remained in Reynolds's studio or returned there when the affair ended, or the fame of the courtesan faded. Even regarding their material presence, these pictures were connected more strongly to the painter and the model than to the person who commissioned them. For Grosvenor, however, it was all about reasserting his masculine identity and so he commissioned Peters to paint an anonymous prostitute – his prostitute, who could be owned completely by him as an object.

Reynolds's *Kitty Fisher as Cleopatra* shows the famous courtesan in an ancient – timeless – costume with the head turned in profile, so that her features appear smoothed over. Holding a pearl between thumb and forefinger, ready to dissolve it in her goblet, Reynolds displays the erotic appeal of the woman more subtly than Peters. Kitty Fisher's gesture points her very own 'jewel', her genitalia.<sup>76</sup> The scene refers to a banquet with Mark Antony at which the Egyptian queen, famed for her extravagance, dissolved and drank a pearl.



### The prostitute in print

In addition to identifying the owner of the original painting, the lettering on Dickinson's print also specifically links the subject to adultery. Underneath the title it quotes a passage from Dryden's comedy *Amphitryon*.<sup>77</sup> The play combines elements of Plautus's *Amphitryon* and Molière's French adaptation of the Greek myth, and tells the story of the conception of Hercules. After Jupiter seduces the virtuous Alcmena by taking on the appearance of her husband Amphitryon, she speaks to her real husband about the night of passion on his return and he accuses her of infidelity. The words on the print are from the 4th Act when Alcmena is furious about her husband's accusations. Jupiter, in the shape of Amphitryon, apologises and tries to persuade her again. After an argument, Jupiter manages to calm Alcmena and she leaves him with the words

But come not you,  
Left I should spoil you with Excess of Fondness,  
And let you love again.

Jupiter replies 'Forbidding me to follow, she invites me', and speaks to himself the lines printed on the mezzotint:

This is the Mould of which I made the Sex;  
I gave them but one Tongue, to say as nay,  
And two kind Eyes to grant.<sup>78</sup>

Lydia's face above the inscription expresses precisely this feigned rejection but implied acceptance. Dickinson even softened the shadows around *Lydia's* eyes, so that she has a clearer look and her lips are slightly parted. In a way, the lettering on the print replaces the function of the blush in the painting.

To contemporaries, the quote from *Amphitryon*, in addition to its reference to Jupiter, the most famous of all adulterers,<sup>79</sup> was easily linked with the adultery scandal of the Grosvenors. In the context of reference to Dryden's comedy, *Lydia's* allusion to the foolish gaze in *Lady Grosvenor's* satirical print might be joined by, as it were, the desiring gaze of Alcmena when she was confused by the costumes of Jupiter – and subsequently punished through public exposure.

The mezzotint, with its specific reference to Lord Grosvenor, allowed the audience to catch a glimpse into the world of this aristocratic couple.<sup>80</sup> Alongside this state of *Lydia*, Dickinson in fact published a second impression of the mezzotint, without a title and omitting the texts referring to Lord Grosvenor. In this state only the artist's name and the place of printing were inscribed (Pl 14).<sup>81</sup> Without reference to the painting's owner, this print shows Peters' *idea* of an anonymous prostitute who displays her appeal as a result of Peters's mastery and Dickinson's interpretation, independ-

14 *Lydia* by William Dickinson after Matthew William Peters, 1776. Mezzotint, 30.3 x 33.3 cm. British Museum

15 *A modern cherub. Vide, Peters* by James Gillray (1756/57–1815), 1791. Etching and aquatint, 14 x 8.6 cm. British Museum, London

ently of the 'original'. In both cases, however, the sensation of viewing pleasure is not limited to the purchase of the mezzotint. Indeed, an erotic viewing effect requires an active observation of the print followed by sensual appropriation. In this way, the gaze of *Lydia* in particular forces the viewer-client into an art-induced simulation of a genuine prostitute-client encounter. Possession remains relative and momentary but may, however, be repeated indefinitely.

Peters replaced the divine nature of the Venus of the 16th century with an artistically packaged, passionate and very evidently contemporary female. One is no longer being observed by a mythical courtesan, a *Venus profana*, but rather by an 18th-century variation of the 'prostitute' in male fantasy, inviting to and offering sexual passion without commitment. Grosvenor, however, we are explicitly told, owns the original. And so he re-asserted his 'honour' as a male libertine while, as we have suggested, also taking revenge on his wife through visual references to an unflattering portrayal of her in a popular print.

### Conclusion

Peters went on to paint other female fancy pictures of this type, which he also had copied as mezzotints and sold successfully. Despite this successful venture into genre painting, however, Peters soon distanced himself from his erotic oeuvre and took holy orders in 1781, becoming known as the 'reverend painter of Venuses'. In 1782 he pointedly exhibited *An Angel carrying the Spirit of a Child to Paradise* at the Royal Academy and devoted the remaining 30 years of his life to religious subjects and portraits of the royal family or highly respectable members of the Academy.<sup>82</sup> In 1791, the caricaturist James Gillray dedicated the satirical portrait *A Modern Cherub* to him (Pl 15):<sup>83</sup> Peters, shown at half-length as an open-mouthed freckled cherub with sweeping curls and wings, gazes enraptured towards the upper right, from where he is bathed in divine light. This allusion to saint-like mythical ecstasy was a reference to Peters' ordination while, on the other hand, the appellation 'Modern Cherub' was aimed at his more profane subjects – the prostitutes – and alluded ironically to religious visions in the sense of Hogarth's modern morals subjects.<sup>84</sup>

In the memoirs of his contemporaries, Lord Grosvenor was considered to have had an important influence on Peters's erotic subjects. Peters's change of motif from prostitutes to saints was still a subject of fascination well into the 20th century.<sup>85</sup> Peters's chroniclers argued that the hopeful painter might have changed his career path because of Grosvenor's licentious commission.<sup>86</sup> In fact, it was most probably Peters's experiences in Italy that opened the way to libertine commissions from the aristocracy. Lord Grosvenor's past, from a Victorian perspective, predestined him for the role of hedonistic scapegoat.<sup>87</sup> At the same time, Peters did not become a mere tool for a vicious patron. Rather, in his imagery, Peters found an ambitious solution to the virulent questions of painting at a time of relativising classic art theory regarding position, interpretation and function. He engaged with both classical role models (Titian) as well as contemporary solutions (Reynolds). Peters did not



limit his output to a traditional artist-patron relationship. At the same time, Peters began to market his erotic paintings with titles such as *Sylvia*, *Belinda* and *Lydia* and, as mentioned by Manners, adapted them to the requirements of print and the demands of the emerging market.<sup>88</sup>

From the second half of the 18th century onwards, a different concept regarding the reception and depiction of sensational viewing started to evolve in the arts and had taken over by the end of the century: a model that preferred genre painting to historical painting and that – to stay on topic – depicted women engaged in domestic tasks, coupling 'femininity' with specific accomplishments, at one and the same time allocating them role-specific virtues and staging them erotically.<sup>89</sup>

This paper represents a chapter of my 2011 doctoral dissertation, Rosanna Sammern née Filzmoser, *Hurenbilder: Ein Motiv in der Druckgraphik des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts (Images of barlots. A theme in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century prints)*, Cologne: Böhlau, 2014. Nora Adwan translated the text, Renate Prochno-Schinkel, Alexandra Provo, Lisa Raxendorfer, Philipp Sammern and Robin Simon commented on the translation. I would like to thank them for their critical support.

1 Victoria Manners, *Matthew William Peters, R.A. His life and work; with a catalogue of his paintings and engravings after his works*, London, 1913 (=Manners), p3. Focussing on Peters's journeys to France, the first art-historical recognition of Peters was provided by R.-R.-M. Sée de Saint-Hilaire, 'M.-W. Peters (1742–1814)', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, vol 53, no. 2 (1911) (=Sée), pp394–404. According to him, Peters's contemporary painterly acclaim was in excess of his anecdotal potential. The first exhibition of both paintings and illustrations was curated by Manners. Ellis K Waterhouse, *Painting in Britain: 1530 to 1790*, London 1953, confirms Manners' evaluation and describes Peters as a pioneer of British genre painting and a counterpart to European continental painters such as Greuze. More recently, in her study of the representation of women in

- English culture of the eighteenth century, Marcia Pointon compares Peters's erotic portraits of women with his religious images and draws medial parallels. Marcia Pointon, *Strategies for showing. Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture 1665-1800*, Oxford 1997 (=Pointon 1997). Further contextualization in English culture and English genre painting is undertaken by Martin Postle, *Angels & Urcbins. The Fancy Picture in eighteenth-century British art*, exh cat. (Nottingham & London), 1998 (=Postle 1998).
- 2 Ibid, pp5-6. In order to devote himself entirely to his pastoral [religious?] duties, Peters laid off the membership to the *Royal Academy* in 1788. Ibid, p25.
  - 3 Ibid, p5. To the clients, *ibid*, pp9-10.
  - 4 Besides Manners, p54, *passim*, the two public collections in possession of a version of *Lydia*, in London and Rhode Island, dedicate detailed catalogue entries to their paintings: Tate Gallery, *Illustrated catalogue of acquisitions 1986/88*, London, 1996 (=Tate Gallery), pp55-57; Christopher P. Monkhouse, 'Reverend Matthew William Peters. Lydia', *European painting and sculpture, ca. 1770-1937*, Daniel Rosenfeld, ed, exh cat., Providence, RI, 1991 (=Monkhouse 1991), pp34-35. Postle 1998, pp86-87, no. 74, considers *Lydia* in relation to Peters' erotic genre. Pointon 1997, pp252-268, discussed it in comparison with his sacred pictures. Ellen D'Oench, 'Copper into Gold'. *Prints by John Rapbael Smith 1751-1812*, New Haven, 1999 (=D'Oench), records that Smiths reproduced prints of Peters' paintings in her catalogue.
  - 5 Marcia Pointon notes their sexual connotations of titles such as 'Lydia', 'Belinda' and 'Sylvia' that were familiar names of heroines in erotic literature or dissolute characters in narratives. E.g. Pierre Antoine de La Place, *Lydia ou Mémoires de Milord d'. Imités de l'anglois*, 1772; Mary Robinson, *Celadon and Lydia*, 1777; also, Elizabeth's superficial sister in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, 1813, is called Lydia. Pointon 1997, pp261-262.
  - 6 '... a Woman in Bed, is painted by Mr. Peters, with all the Richness and Warmth of Colouring of the Florentine and Venetian Schools; - this must be allowed to be a good Piece, and has the Effects of a good Piece on the By standers.' *Public Advertiser* (26 April 1777). Cf. 'We cannot, however, help thinking that the inviting leer of the lady, and her still more inviting bosom, ought to be consigned to the bed chamber of a bagnio, where each would doubtless provoke a proper effect; in the present situation they serve to prevent the pictures around them from being so much seen and admired as their merits demand.' *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 26 April 1777.
  - 7 Manners, pp47.
  - 8 Sliding between the fields of infamy and commerce, the 18th-century meanings of 'prostitute', 'strumpet', and 'courtesan' interchangeably referred to both, sex workers and (passionately, sexually) desiring women. See, in nuce, Laura J Rosenthal, *Infamous Commerce. Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture*, Ithaca 2006, pp2-7; James G Turner, *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London. Sexuality, Politics and Literary Culture, 1630-1685*, Cambridge 2006, pp4-10; for the distinction between prostitution and court mistresses, see Sigrid Ruby, *Mit Macht verbunden. Bilder der Favoritin im Frankreich der Renaissance*, Freiburg 2010, pp3-7. Following the usage of Samuel Johnson (*A dictionary of the English language*, 2 vols, 4rd edition, Dublin, 1775, I, np) who defined a 'Courtesan' as 'A woman of the town; a prostitute; a strumpet', this paper uses the terms 'prostitute' and 'courtesan' interchangeably.
  - 9 Richard Grosvenor was mentioned, eg, by Horace Walpole as one of the wealthy, young art collectors at an auction, 'boys with twenty and thirty thousand a-year', in a letter to Horace Mann, dated 10 February 1758. Horace Walpole, *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, vol 9, ed Peter Cunningham, London, 1857-1859, III, p127, no. 541. Casanova mentioned him as a womaniser in the episode with the courtesan Charpillon. Giacomo Casanova, *Geschichte meines Lebens*, 12 vols, trans Heinz von Sauter, Berlin 1985, IX, p382, p396. As client and patron of Ann Sheldon he appeared in the *Authentic and interesting memoirs of Miss Ann Sheldon*, 4 vols, London, 1787, IV, pp69-71, pp103-107, pp202-213. The *Town and Country Magazine*, vol 2 (August 1770), p402, described him as 'Cornuto' (cuckolded).
  - 10 Cf for example the edition of several hundred pages *Copies of the Depositions of the Witnesses examined in the Cause of Divorce...*, London 1771. See Peter Wagner, *Eros revived. Erotica of the Enlightenment in England and America*, London 1988 (=Wagner), p127. In the 1770s, the separated Grosvenors appeared in obscene literature as extras in hedonistic exploits. *Nocturnal revels: or, the history of King's-Place, and other modern numneries*, 2 vols, London 1779 (=Nocturnal revels), II, p210, pp212-214.
  - 11 Monkhouse, p35, considers it lost.
  - 12 *Lydia* by Matthew William Peters (1742-1814), 1776/1777. Oil on canvas, 64,2x77 cm. Tate Gallery, London. *Lydia* by Matthew William Peters (1742-1814), 1776/1777. Oil on canvas, 63,5x76,2 cm. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence. The dating of the painting in the Tate Gallery, p55, to 1777 is justified by using the deviations from Dickinson's mezzotinto.
  - 13 *A Catalogue of Part of the Capital Collection of Italian, French, Flemish and Dutch Pictures, Drawings, Miniatures, etc. The Property of the late Gt. Hon. Earl Grosvenor, Dec Which will be sold by Auction, by Mr. Christie, on the premises, on Wednesday, October 13, 1802*, London, 1802, p6 (lot 59) (= Christie). After the auction of 1802, Grosvenor's painting was probably sold in the auction of July 2, 1812 (lot 10) at Cox's in London as 'The Girl in Bed. Painted for the late Earl Grosvenor' and appeared in 1813, 1815 and, finally, on 15 March 1844 on the London art market at Foster's (lot 44) as 'Portrait of a Handsome Young Girl in Bed; engraved', where it was bought by an art dealer. Tate Gallery, pp56-57. Manners, p54, knew of four possible variations of the painting. Since then, two further copies and an oil sketch have been discovered.
  - 14 See n 11.
  - 15 'From an Original Picture in the Collection of the Right Hon[or]able Lord Grosvenor'.
  - 16 The reference to Titian's *Venus* was noticed first by Monkhouse, p34, and refers to Johan Zoffany's *Tribuna*. Cf below, p9 10, pl 4.
  - 17 'Titian - [Lot] 58 The Couchant Venus / Peters - [Lot] 59 Ditto'. Christie, p6 (lots 58-59).
  - 18 Tate Gallery, p57.
  - 19 Grazia Agostini and Ettore Allegri, *Tiziano nelle gallerie fiorentine*, exh cat., Florence 1978 (=Agostini and Allegri), pp128-129. To the practice of completing a collection with copies and prints of unaffordable or inaccessible paintings, see Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting. The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680-1768*, New Haven, 1988, p170.
  - 20 Tate Gallery, p57. On Titian on the English art market in the 1780s, see Iris Wien, *Josbua Reynolds. Mythos und Metapher*, Munich, 2009 (=Wien), pp366-368.
  - 21 For example, in the anecdote-loving English church history of John Doran: '... in his purely artistic capacity, he painted Venuses and gained thereby the name of the *English Titian*. His recumbent Lydia was covered with gauze, which the "wits" called Episcopal lawn.' John Doran, *Saints and Sinners: or in church and about it*, London 1868 (=Doran), p110. Quote from Manners, p6.
  - 22 Daniel Arasse, 'The Venus of Urbino, or the archetype of a glance', *Titian's 'Venus of Urbino'*, Rona Goffen, ed, Cambridge, 1997 (=Arasse 1997), pp91-107.
  - 23 An overview of the reception of the *Venus of Urbino* is provided by Agostini and Allegri, pp125-135, here pp128-129, no. 30.
  - 24 Titian's ambiguous motives, like the flowers, the dog and the servants in the background, did not interest Peters (and the client). They provide the basis for highly differentiated modern attempts at interpretations of the *Venus of Urbino*, which are divided into two main fields, ie wedding allegory and courtesan image. See Daniela Bohde's discussion in *Haut, Fleisch und Farbe: Körperlichkeit und Materialität in den Gemälden Tizians*, Emsdetten 2002 (=Bohde), pp127-131.
  - 25 These hoods were common in fashion plates and portraits as fashionable accessories of that time.
  - 26 Daniel Arasse, *Tiziano. Venere d'Urbino, Firenze, Uffizi*, Venice, 1986 (=Arasse 1986), pp16 24, and regarding questions of reception, Arasse 1997, pp91 107.
  - 27 Arasse 1986, p23.
  - 28 Arasse's formal analysis is also verified through historical reception.
  - 29 About an iconography of masturbating women in the eighteenth century, see Mary D Sheriff, *Fragonard. Art and eroticism*, Chicago 1990, p108.
  - 30 'Mais peut-on oublier la Venus de Titen, morceau admirable et voluptueux' from Edward Gibbons's travel diary. George A Bonnard, ed, *Gibbons's Journey from Geneva to Rome. His journal from 20 April to 2 October 1764*, London 1961 (=Bonnard), p186.
  - 31 Giuseppe Bianchi described her in the *Guida della Galleria degli Uffizi*, written before 1769, as 'confidente del Duca d'Urbino'. Quoted by Agostini and Allegri, p125. The Marquis de Sade mentioned her as Titian's mistress. Donatien AF de Sade, *Voyage d'Italie*, Paris 1967 (=Sade 1967), p151.
  - 32 Ibid.
  - 33 'Je suis seulement surpris qu'avec une attitude où tout dispose à la volupté la Venus ne paroit pas ressentir davantage les mouvemens qu'elle inspire.' Bonnard, pp186-187.
  - 34 Pointon 1997, p264, first noted that *Lydia* is presented to be seen from any point of view.
  - 35 '... una sottile gabbia di filo di ferro', Agostini and Allegri, p128.
  - 36 Martin Postle, *Joban Zoffany RA. Society observed*, exh cat., New Haven and London 2011, pp231-232, no. 53. Zoffany's *Tribuna* was expected in England in 1778 and was exhibited at the *Royal Academy* in 1780. Oliver Millar, *Zoffany and bis Tribuna*, London 1966 (=Millar), p34.
  - 37 The identification is provided in Millar.
  - 38 Mary Webster, *Joban Zoffany 1733-1810*, New Haven and London 2011, p293.
  - 39 Cf Bohde, p146. Nicola Suthor, *Augenlust bei Tizian. Zur Konzeption sensueller Malerei in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Munich 2004, pp40-50.
  - 40 Manners, p9. Also, the body of the *Venus von Urbino* was covered with a painted curtain ('telo', literally, a sheet of some kind) since the time of Cosimo III de' Medici (1642-1723). The curtain, or painted covering, showed *Amor sacro* trying to prevent *Amor profano* from opening the curtain and unveiling Venus. It was only removed in 1784. Agostini and Allegri, p. 131.
  - 41 Postle 1998, p86.
  - 42 Pointon 1997, p264.
  - 43 For the connection of mythological subjects with prostitution since the

- Italian Renaissance, see Lynne Lawner's overview in *Lives of the courtesans. Portraits of the Renaissance*, New York 1987, pp 131–183. For connotations of the Danaë story referring to prostitution, see Cathy Santore, 'Danaë: The Renaissance Courtesan's Alter Ego', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, vol 54, no. 3 (1991), pp412–427.
- 44 'In his Danaë the old nurse tries a coin of the golden shower with her teeth, to see if it is true gold... It is a much more capital fault that Danaë herself is a mere nymph of Drury.' Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of painting in England*, 4 vols, 2nd edn, Strawberry Hill 1765–1771, IV, 1771, pp76–77.
- 45 Mark Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference. Graphic Satire in the Age of Hogarth*, New Haven 1999, p106.
- 46 Karen Harvey, *Reading sex in the eighteenth century. Bodies and gender in English Erotic Culture*, Cambridge 2004 (=Harvey), pp218–221; Angela H Rosenthal, "'Visceral' culture: blushing and the legibility of whiteness in eighteenth-century British portraiture", in *Art history*, vol 27 (2004), pp563–592, Herbert Uerlings (et al.), ed, *Das Subjekt und die Anderen. Interkulturalität und Geschlechterdifferenz vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, Berlin 2001, pp95–117.
- 47 Cooper, p72.
- 48 Harvey, p218.
- 49 Referring to the physiognomical writings of Giovan Battista Della Porta (1535–1615), Charles Le Brun and Johann Caspar Lavater (1741–1801), Marcia Pointon was the first to notice *Lydia's* strange physiognomy. Pointon 1997, p266. See also Jennifer Montagu, *The expression of the passions. The origin and influence of Charles Le Brun's Conférence sur l'expression generale et particuliere*, New Haven 1994 (=Montagu), pp19–30.
- 50 For the painting, c1778 see Nicola F Figgis and Brendan Rooney, *Irish paintings in the National Gallery of Ireland*, Dublin 2001, pp384–385. D'Oench, no. 126.
- 51 'Richard Lord Grosvenor against Henrietta Lady Grosvenor', *Trials for adultery; or, the history of divorces*, 5 vols, London 1780, IV, part 2 (=Trials for adultery), pp109–121.
- 52 Like the brothel of Mrs. Goadby in Nocturnal revels, I, p29.
- 53 See Fred Lowe, Hogarth, beauty spots, and sexually transmitted diseases, *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol 15, no. 1 (Spring 1992), pp71–78. In Hogarth's *Marriage-A-La-Mode* the young lord's syphilis is marked from the beginning by a large mole on his throat. In this scenario the path of the infection can be clearly traced from the mole to the child prostitute, to the couple's offspring.
- 54 *The Vauxhall Demi-Rep*, 1772. Etching, 17.5 x 12.4 cm. From the series *Macaronies, Characters, Caricature*, vol 4, no. 9. British Museum, London. Mary D George, *Catalogue of political and personal satires preserved in the department of prints and drawings in the British Museum*, 11 vols, London 1935–1954 (=George), V, 1935, no. 5027.
- 55 Giovan Battista Della Porta, *Della Fisionomia dell'Uomo. Libri Sei*, Venice 1644, p208.
- 56 Manners p54.
- 57 Ibid, records the standard size of 30 x 25 inches, which more or less correlates with the specification of 29 x 24.8 inches in the auction catalogue, Bonhams & Brooks, Knightsbridge, London, Old Master Paintings, July 11, 2001 (Lot 49).
- 58 Pointon 1997, p254, p266, notes that Peters became acquainted with physiological exaggerations in Italy in the work of Correggio and Parmigianino.
- 59 John Chaloner Smith, *British Mezzotint Portraits*, 4 vols, London 1883 (=Chaloner Smith), no. 77 (Engraver not ascertained III). Cindy McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze. Prints of Women in Late Eighteenth-Century England*, Oxford 2004 (=McCreery), p156–160, discusses the portrait in context of the satires, following the Grosvenors' divorce proceedings.
- 60 For example, *The genuine copies of letters which passed between His Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland and Lady Grosvenor*, London, 1770, or: *Full and complete history of His R-I-H-the D-of-G—d and Lady G—r. A full and complete history of His R—I-H—ss the D-of-C-d, and Lady G—r; the fair adulteress*, 2 vols, Dublin 1770. A German translation was published in the same year: *Briefe des Herzogs von C. und der Lady Grosvenor*, Frankfurt 1770.
- 61 In this context, McCreery, pp156–157, refers to *John Wilkes, after his arrest*, by Hogarth, 1763, Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth's graphic works*, London 1989, no. 214. As the journalist, politician and libertine Wilkes sacrificed his career for the freedom of the press, McCreery interprets the expression of the eyes in Hogarth's satirical print as implying folly: Lady Grosvenor's gaze alludes to the folly of love.
- 62 McCreery, p87. The painting is Mannings, I, no. 611.
- 63 Nicholas Penny, ed, *Reynolds*, exh cat., London 1986 (=Penny), p193.
- 64 For example *Lady Susan O'Brien* by Allan Ramsay (1713–1784), 1761: Alastair Smart and John Ingamells, *Allan Ramsay. A complete catalogue of his paintings*, New Haven 1999, no. 412. See McCreery, pp 87–89, p158.
- 65 Postle 2003, p24.
- 66 McCreery, p158.
- 67 McCreery, p158. Erotic prints, inspired by the Grosvenor-Cumberland affair, see Wagner, p127.
- 68 'Histories of the Tête-à-tête annexed; or, Memoirs of the Cheshire Cornuto, and Miss W—ts. (No. 22, 23)'. *The Town and Country Magazine*, August 1770 (=Histories 1770), pp401–402. With references to reports on the divorce proceedings, *The Town and Country Magazine*, December 1769, p658; *ibid*, July 1770), p363. Quoted in McCreery, p158.
- 69 The marriage was ended and the Duke of Cumberland had to compensate Lord Grosvenor as well as pay for the legal proceedings. Wagner, p127.
- 70 Histories 1770, pp401ff.
- 71 Charles E Russell, *English Mezzotint Portraits and their states. Catalogue of Corrections of and Additions to Chalonier Smith's 'British Mezzotint Portraits'*, 2 vols, London, 1926, II, no. 47b (engraver not ascertained III).
- 72 A similar transposition by Reynolds in the opposite direction is known. He was commissioned by Frederick, Lord Bolingbroke, to depict the eyes of the courtesan, Nelly O'Brien, within the portrait of his wife: Postle 2003, pp26–27.
- 73 McCreery, pp86–91. Marcia Pointon, 'The Lives of Kitty Fisher', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol 27 (2004), pp78–97.
- 74 McCreery, p100, and, for the undermining of meaning as well as the commercialisation of art on the market, see Wien, p40.
- 75 Postle 2003, p28.
- 76 Robin Simon, 'Reynolds and the double-entendre: The Society of Dilettanti Portraits', *The British Art Journal*, vol 3, no. 1 (Autumn 2001), pp69–77, here p74.
- 77 Inscribed 'From an Original Picture in the Collection of the Right Honble Lord Grosvenor', 'This is the Mould of which I made the Sex; / I gave them but one Tongue, to say as nay, / And two kind Eyes to grant. Dryden' below, and, in the framework above, 'LYDIA'. Chaloner Smith, no. 95, recorded the print as first state of three.
- 78 John Dryden, *Amphitryon: Or the two Sosias. A Comedy*, London 1721, p56.
- 79 Dryden's play was still acted on London stages in 1776, eg, on 6 May 1776 at the Royal Theatre, Covent Garden: *Public Advertiser*, London 1752–1793, Monday 6 May 1776.
- 80 Peters's print served to stage Lord Grosvenor well into the 19th century. Long after his death, *Lydia* appeared in London 1824 in a heavily reworked condition: Chaloner Smith, no. 95. In front of the renewed bonnet and hairdo an additional curtain hangs low over the left top half of the image. In his moral history of the English church, Doran, p111, told about the conversion of the Venus painter Peters to a spiritual and kingly preacher. As an example of Peters's pre-conversion period, he reports, *Lydia* was so 'audacious', that the painting 'had to be covered with a transparent material which is generally appropriated to the sleeves of episcopal dignitaries'. In his narration, Victorian England relegated the prostitute's aura to the group of lecherous, libertine owners of bygone times. The literary historian Maurice Quinlan, in the introduction of his study of the change in mentality from that of the 18th-century libertines to that of the men of Victorian England, tells the story of an old lady who, in 1824, asked her grandson for books which she read in her youth (Aphra Behn texts from the 17th century). After rereading them, aghast at her past immorality, she had the books burned: the language and visual culture of the 17th century appeared as strange and odd to her as the latest reports from explorers. Maurice J Quinlan, *Victorian Prelude. A History of English Manners 1700–1830*, London 1965, pp1–2.
- 81 Not recognised by Chaloner Smith, no. 95.
- 82 Regarding the religious oeuvre, see Manners, pp43–48.
- 83 George, VI, no. 7965.
- 84 Cf Manners, p19, who quotes the derisive poem (Ode XII) by the satirist John Wolcot, alias Peter Pindar, in which Peters is compared to St Luke, with Peters using prostitutes from Drury Lane as models for the faces of his angels. Peter Pindar [John Wolcot], *The works of Peter Pindar*, 4 vols, London 1794–1796, IV, 1794, pp44–45.
- 85 Manners, pp14–15. Pointon 1997, pp229–306, analyses the reception of Peters's erotic and religious images and indicates comparable mechanisms of appropriation.
- 86 For example, Doran.
- 87 Significantly, according to Sée, p401, who owned a version of *Lydia*, the change in profession was irrelevant. He interpreted the erotic fancies as 'pure Boilly', assumed a French model and read 'l'esprit français' in *Lydia's* expression. Although Sée is mistaken in the dating of *Lydia*, Peters re-visited Paris 1783–1784, seven years after finishing *Lydia*, which relativises the friendship and engagement with Louis-Léopold Boilly, cf Manners, p11. None the less, his change of heart and his disassociation from the erotic fancies, as emphasised by his English chroniclers, Doran, p14–17, indicates Peters's fear of the uncertain subsistence of a painter as a more likely incentive for his career change than puritanical religiosity.
- 88 Manners, pp47.
- 89 See, among others, Ann Bermingham, 'The Aesthetics of Ignorance: The Accomplished Woman in the Culture of Connoisseurship', *The Oxford art journal*, vol 16, no. 2 (1993), pp3–20; Robert W Jones, *Gender and the formation of taste in eighteenth-century Britain. The analysis of beauty*, Cambridge 1998.