

Encouraging Rowlandson: The Women Who Mattered

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Introduction

In the first decade of his career as a printmaker, the names of five separate women appear on Rowlandson's prints as publishers: Elizabeth Jackson (active 1783–1788); Elizabeth d'Achery (active 1780–1784); Elizabeth Bull (active 1769–1794), Eleanor Lay (active 1788–1794); and Hannah Humphrey (1750–1818). Yet there are none thereafter, apart from a much later handful from Humphrey, and one issued by Rowlandson's sister Elizabeth (1760–183?) who married his friend and fellow artist Samuel Howitt (1756/57–1822) and became a print dealer in the 1800s. Although few records survive of any of them except Humphrey, some insights can be gleaned from the prints themselves, including several new discoveries, not least being that Elizabeth Howitt herself also made some caricature prints. This chapter surveys their respective contributions and in particular asserts the importance of Jackson.

That Rowlandson became a professional artist at all owes much to a woman: his aunt Jane, née Chevalier (1728–1789). Of French Huguenot extraction, she sponsored his education and art studies at the Royal Academy in London, and likely provided impetus for his additional training in Paris in the mid-1770s. Chevalier, married to James Rowlandson, a Spitalfields silk merchant, was childless, but took James's young nephew, Thomas, to live with her when his bankrupt father retreated to Yorkshire.¹ On her death in 1789 she left Thomas a substantial legacy of £7,000 (over £1,100,000 in 2023 values).²

A network of trade and social connections gave many paths for Rowlandson to encounter his women publishers. His earliest credited

¹ M. Payne and J. Payne, *Regarding Thomas Rowlandson, 1757–1827: His Life, Art and Acquaintance* (London: Hogarth Arts, 2012), 10.

² *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago, IL, 1911), vol. 23, 787. However, Matthew Payne and James Payne, in *Regarding Thomas Rowlandson* (p. 119) give a lower estimate of £2,000.

plates were made for the Soho engraver and publisher John Jones (active 1771–1781), from whom he probably learnt professional etching. Several of Jones's plates were reissued in 1781 by Henry Brookes (d. 1795), who ran a 'Stationer's, Port-folio and Picture Frame Makers' in nearby 28 Coventry Street. Brookes also had dealings with Thomas Cornell (active 1780–1792, also spelt 'Corneille'; yet another Huguenot name), a printseller who had a shop in Bruton Street and who in turn collaborated both with Elizabeth Jackson and with Eleanor Lay in Brighton. Brookes was originally a carver and gilder (a craft which included frame making). In 1770, he took a 'Sam Howitt' as an apprentice, likely the young artist Samuel Howitt, then a suitable sixteen years old.³ In the same period, Rowlandson's close friend, the young Henry Wigstead (1759–1800), was training to work in his own family business, upscale house decorating, for which carving and gilding was a key trade. Wigstead also drew and made prints with assistance from Rowlandson, and in 1787 obtained a prestigious commission to work on the Prince Regent's Marine Pavilion in Brighton, whose ornate interior can be seen in a Rowlandson print from 1790.⁴

Elizabeth Jackson

Elizabeth Jackson published nearly sixty prints by Rowlandson (and two after him), many more than any other publisher in the same period: William Humphrey (31), John Raphael Smith (19), John Harris (25), Samuel Fores (26), George Kearsley (11), and Hannah Humphrey (6). In the same time span, Rowlandson himself published twenty-one prints with his own address and there are another seventy with no publisher indicated. Jackson's numbers may in fact be significantly underestimated if she was also involved in the publication of any of Rowlandson's *Imitations of Modern Drawings* (roughly fifty-five prints, making up the majority of those seventy 'no publisher' prints). Jackson also published Rowlandson's three earliest series, beginning in 1784 with the *Rhedarium*, ten prints depicting different sorts of carriage.⁵ The second, in 1786, was the *Picturesque Beauties of Boswell*, twenty plates after drawings by Samuel Collings, burlesquing passages from James Boswell's *Tour to the Hebrides*. The latter are remarkable for their bold graphic style and unconventional

³ Payne and Payne, *Regarding Thomas Rowlandson*, 10.

⁴ Saloon at the Marine Pavilion, Brighton. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, MET 59.533.366.

⁵ Princeton University Library has a full set in original wrapper, GAX Rowlandson 1784.2q.

use of deeply etched, dense hatching, transforming Collings' drawings with Rowlandson's energetic line and dramatic contrasts of shade and light. Moreover, the production introduced him to Kearsley, launching his important career as a book illustrator.

Jackson also published a third series – of five coastal views, recognised here for the first time. Only two of the five have Jackson imprints (dated 1 January 1787) but all share a similar style, format, colouring, and paper and must be a series, especially since four of them surfaced together at a sale in 2017 – including the only known impression of *A View near Shoreham with Smuglers* [sic] *Landing a Cargo*.⁶ The Fraser Album in the National Gallery, Washington, DC, has two of the views, bound together in sequence. The others are almost as rare, with only two or three known impressions: *A View at Blackwall*; *A View Near Folkstone with Fishermen Selling a Cargo*; *View at Brixthelmstone*; and the untitled [*A Landing Place with Small Boats*].⁷ The views are as much watercolours as etchings; the main features are outlined with bold etched lines and large areas of the rest of the plate are left for the colourist to elaborate.

How important was Rowlandson to Jackson? One should be wary of a 'Collectors' bias', such that only the prints of celebrated artists are favoured by posterity, but of the thirty-one prints in the British Museum with her imprint, all but seven are by or after Rowlandson. Examining other collections, at least thirty more Jackson prints can be found (three so rare that only a single impression is known); again, all but a couple are by Rowlandson.⁸ In all, this is twice the number that Rowlandson's biographer, Joseph Grego (1843–1908), gives for her. It would seem that he was not just her star, but her primary artist.

In addition to her independent output, Jackson also participated in cooperative ventures with other printsellers, attesting to a sophisticated commercial engagement in the print market. Her dealings in the mid 1780s nicely demonstrate the various modes of collaborating available, including *joint publication*, lettered with both publishers' names on the same plate; *co-publication*, with each printseller producing their own issues

⁶ Author's collection. 'Jan 1 1787 by E. Jackson No 14 Mary le Bone Street, Golden Square. Drawn & etched by T. Rowlandson'. John Nicholson Fine Art Auctioneers, 2018.06-Lot 51.

⁷ E.g., respectively: Royal Collection, RCIN-810983 (illustrated in Kate Heard, *High Spirits* Royal Collection 2013, Windsor, 258); Metropolitan Museum, MET 59.533.210; British Library BLL01004809269; National Gallery, Washington, DC, NGA-945.5.602.

⁸ Based on an extensive but not exhaustive review of major public holdings of British caricature. The non-Rowlandson prints by Jackson are Gillray: *Andrew Robinson Bowes and Anticipation*; Edward Williams: *Lindamira*, George Graham: *Morning Reflection*; Anon: *Argument Against Feeling*, *Dicky Causeway*, and *Maria Costive at her Studies*.

of the same plate at or around the same time; and simple *distribution* of another publisher's prints, retaining the supplier's imprint. *The Picturesque Beauties of Boswell* was a joint publication, with both publisher's names appearing on the wrapper (though just Jackson's on the prints). The double plate *Married* and *Unmarried* was co-published, appearing with the same date under both a Jackson imprint and that of an obscure printseller, John Denham (active 1774–1782).⁹ Simple distribution deals, with the issuer's imprint unchanged, though probably by far the most common in practice, are harder to detect from the prints alone – but the 'Jackson Twelve' discussed in the next section give an example of her selling Cornell's prints within her own wrapper.

An active market in second hand copperplates, which appear regularly in contemporary sales (especially of the stock of deceased or retiring dealers), further muddies the waters.¹⁰ For example, Jackson acquired the copperplate for *Liberty and Fame Introducing Female Patriotism to Britania* [sic], a political satire from the 1784 Westminster election previously published in 1786 by Hannah Humphrey's brother, the engraver and printseller William Humphrey (c. 1740–c. 1810), as the frontispiece of the second edition of *History of the Westminster Election*. Jackson also bought several plates from Cornell including *Capt. Epilogue*.

Jackson's Twelve Etchings

A unique surviving set of prints in the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, on ten sheets still stitched in their original printed wrapper, provided a showcase for Jackson's stock of Rowlandson and is an especially interesting example of a Jackson collaborative venture.¹¹ The wrapper states:

No 1. Containing Twelve Etchings / by T. Rowlandson. / Ten Shillings and Six Pence. / 1. Frontispiece; 2. The Students; 3. A View on the Coast of Sussex; 4. Bacchantes, from a Sketch by Jeffrys; 5. Aerostation out at Elbows, or the Itinerant Aeronaut; 6. The Parachute, or a Sage Lady's Second Experiment; 7. Luxury; 8. Misery; 9. An Essay on the Sublime and the

⁹ Andrew Edmunds collection: 'Dec 28 1785 Pubd as the Act directs by E. Jackson No 14 Mary le born [sic] Street Golden Square.' A different impression in the author's collection has 'Dec 28 1785 Jo. Denham No 103 Wardour Street Soho'. For Fores's reissue, see MET 59.533.441.

¹⁰ N. JS Knowles 'The Afterlife of British Caricature Copperplates from the Long Eighteenth Century', in E. Savage and F. Speelberg, eds., *Blocks, Plates, and Other Printing Surfaces 1400–1900*. Proceedings of the British Academy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024).

¹¹ OG 137407 – OG 137418, State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg. My thanks to the late Larissa Duskakaya and to Vassily Uspensky, Curator of Italian prints.

Beautiful; 10. Maiden Speech; 11. Billingsgate; 12. The Polish Dwarf performing before the Grand Seigneur. / Published in April, 1786, by E. JACKSON, No. 14 MARY-LE-BONE-STREET, GOLDEN SQUARE.

Four of the prints actually have a Cornell imprint, even though elsewhere there also exist states with Jackson's own address. The rest have Jackson imprints. Remarkably, the frontispiece is a reissue by Jackson of the very same *Fame Introducing Female Patriotism* mentioned above. In Jackson's impression, the title has been modified to give it some protofeminist attitude, becoming: *Liberty and Fame Introducing a Female Artist to Britannia* (with *Britannia* now spelt correctly; emphasis added).

Bacchants and the *Imitations of Modern Drawings*

The *Imitations of Modern Drawings* was a series of prints produced by Rowlandson between 1784 and 1788, mostly after contemporary artists but also including a number of Rowlandson's own landscapes, and a small number of his own caricatures. Overall, the series may be considered as a sustained exercise by Rowlandson to develop his own technique as a printmaker and perhaps to advertise his skill as a copyist. No two surviving copies of the *Imitations* are the same, varying between thirty-four and thirty-nine prints but differing in their selection.

Previously it has been assumed that the *Imitations* were published by Rowlandson himself, then living at 50 Poland Street in Soho, whose address appears on just two prints (the rest have no publisher). However, the best surviving copy, still stitched in original wrappers, is to be found in the Gainsborough House Museum, Sudbury (1994.083), and has a printed label stuck on the front – 'Henry Brookes, Stationer, Bookbinder and Portfolio Maker' – suggesting others may have been involved.

Bacchants, the rare fourth print in Jackson's *Twelve Etchings*; after a drawing by the engraver and painter James Jefferys (1751–1784), surely also counts as an *Imitation*. Significantly, the Hermitage impression gives 'Pub Feb 4th 1786 by E. Jackson No 14 Mary le bone St Golden Sqr' (the only other impression known is unlettered).¹² The third plate in the *Twelve Etchings*, *View on the Coast of Sussex*, a Cornell plate from 1785 that Jackson later reissued 7 March 1787, also fits the bill. We may reasonably ask whether she and Brookes also published other *Imitations* by Rowlandson?

¹² Metropolitan Museum, MET 9.533.13. I thank Constance C. McPhee, Curator of British Drawings and Prints for all her help.

The 'No. 1' on the wrapper in the Hermitage implies a series, but no other surviving numbers are known. We also learn Jackson's prices: 10s 6d for twelve prints, plain. This is competitive; a little later John Raphael Smith (1751–1812) is charging 10s 6d for a series of eight prints by Rowlandson. The *Picturesque Beauties* was 10s 6d for ten sheets. The prices for other Jackson prints, bought by the Prince of Wales through Holland in 1790, are recorded in the Royal Collection.¹³

Jackson's Fashionable Subjects

Jackson's shop was in Golden Square, just north of Piccadilly. Her stock shows a marked predilection for topical literary, theatrical, or artistic subjects suitable for a fashionable West End clientele. Her surviving publications are predominantly social satire alongside a handful of political caricatures, including James Gillray's *Anticipation, or, The Approaching Fate of the French Commercial Treaty* and Rowlandson's brilliant *The Parachute*, which reworks the first British balloon ascent by a woman, the actress Letitia Sage (c. 1750–1817), to lampoon the electioneering of Charles James Fox (1749–1806).¹⁴ Fox grins down from a balloon as the rotund Albinia Hobart (1737/38–1816), an ardent canvasser for his opponent Sir Cecil Wray, floats down on billowing skirts onto the phallic obelisk of St George's circus, Southwark (where the ascent took place).

Literary topicality is typified by two Collings/Rowlandson squibs: *The Sorrows of Werter – The Last Interview* (1786) and *More of Werter – The Separation*, both lampooning Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Sturm and Drang novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, which caused a sensation across Europe (a new English translation came out in 1786). The cult of overblown sentimentalism was mocked further in *The Triumph of Sentiment* (1787),¹⁵ depicting a butcher overcome by compassion and *The Triumph of Hipocrisy* [sic] depicting the butcher's wife succumbing to a simpering poet seducer, a list of subscribers tucked in his pocket.

Jackson's satires on the fine arts include Rowlandson's *The Chamber of Genius* and *The Chamber of Taste*, after Samuel Collings.¹⁶ Among

¹³ *First & Second Floor Lodgers*, 3s 6d (The National Archives (hereafter TNA) HO73/20/1, fol.12), *The Pretty Barr Maid*, 1s (TNA HO73/20/1, f.25) *The Triumph of Sentiment*, 1790, 4s (TNA HO73/20/1, f.13), *Selling a Horse*, 2s (TNA HO73/20/1, fol.13).

¹⁴ Metropolitan Museum, MET 59.533.97.

¹⁵ Royal Collection, RCIN 810240. There is also a pirate copy by J. Wright, Dublin (author's collection).

¹⁶ Royal Collection, RCIN 810883 and RCIN 810884.

Jackson's few surviving prints not by Rowlandson are caricatures of the art 'power couple', Richard Cosway (1742–1821) and his wife Maria Hadfield (1760–1838), *Dicky Causeway* and *Maria Costive at Her Studies*.¹⁷ Rowlandson himself is thought to be author of a print (publisher unknown) depicting the Cosways in Van Dyke costume, seated in the garden of their residence, Schomberg House and being served grapes by their black servant, the early *Sons of Africa* abolitionist Ottobah Cugoano (c. 1757–c. 1791).¹⁸ The inscription, 'Cosway 1784', in the plate in Rowlandson's freehand suggests it is yet another 'Modern Imitation' after a drawing by Richard Cosway – and perhaps, too, that there was an artistic friendship between the Cosways and Rowlandson.

A particularly interesting Jackson theatrical print – promoting female genius – is a rare stipple of the playwright, Elizabeth Inchbald (1753–1821): *I'll Tell You What! That Such Things Are We Must Allow, But Such Things Never Were Till Now*.¹⁹ The title comes from one of her plays (and was later borrowed by Rowlandson for an obscene print).²⁰ Credited to 'Wigstead', Rowlandson probably designed it. As a stipple, it was likely etched by someone else, possibly George Graham, who also etched *Narcissus* another stipple, after a Rowlandson drawing.²¹

Like many of her masculine competitors, Jackson's stock included a bevy of pictures of pretty young women, typified by works from Rowlandson such as *Narcissus*, *Unmarried/Married*, *Syrens*, and *Contrasting French and English Beauties* – beauty, then as now, sold well. Most, but not quite all, were by Rowlandson – *Lindamira* and *Morning Reflection*, were after George Morland (1763–1804). But Jackson could produce indelicate images too. Quite apart from the indecency of *The Parachute*, her subjects included prostitution – the superbly gruesome *Bawd on Her Last Legs* and the cheerful pieces of *First and Second Floor Lodgers* – as well as sexual infidelity: masculine infidelity in *Don't He Deserve It/She Don't Deserve It*, and feminine infidelity in *The Doctor Called Up or the False Alarm*.

Exactly when Jackson ceased trading is uncertain. Her latest dated plates etched by Rowlandson are from early 1787, but *Narcissus* is dated 4 August 1787. The bulk of her plates were acquired by Samuel Fores, who removed or partially effaced her original address in favour of his own.

¹⁷ *BM Satires* 7019, *BM Satires* 7020. ¹⁸ British Museum (hereafter BM) 1876,1014.331.

¹⁹ The impression in the New York Public Library has Jackson's imprint; NYPL 16513354.

²⁰ *Such Things Are or A Peep into Kensington Gardens*, British Museum, BM 1977,U.554.

²¹ The only known impression is in the Government Art Collection, GAC 15752, in the British Embassy, Berlin. Etched by George Graham, it depicts a fashionable young beauty above a moralising verse from John Gay's mock epic, *The Fan*.

Five others went to William Holland, printseller to the Prince of Wales.²² The earliest reissue relettered from Fores is *A Four in Hand*, 1 November 1791. Fores's impressions of the modified plates greatly outnumber Jackson's original output – roughly four times as many survive – unfortunately obscuring her significance as the biggest sponsor of the young Rowlandson.²³

Elizabeth d'Achery

Elizabeth d'Achery's publication of Rowlandson's work stands in marked contrast to Jackson's. Her output is predominantly political rather than social satire and she is more significant as an early publisher of Gillray.²⁴ Only five among the sixty plus prints with her imprint preserved in the British Museum are by Rowlandson – all relating to the 1784 Westminster election. She is notable as the original publisher of two of Rowlandson's most celebrated prints of the whole election. A unique impression of the *Covent Garden Nightmare*, recently found in the Guards Collection in London,²⁵ gives her as publisher, rather than William Humphrey (who bought up many of the 1784 plates). Her version, 'Pub^d June 23rd by M. Darcheray S^t James's Street', is dated, unlike Humphrey's. A few impressions also survive of her issue of *The Devonshire, or Most Approved Method of Securing Votes*, though hers is much rarer than Humphrey's, which keeps the same date, but replaces her address. We can be confident that his issue is subsequent, since the actual copperplate survives, with Humphrey's address as printed.²⁶ She also originated *Secret Influence Directing the New P-l-t*,²⁷ 'Pub^d April 18th 1784 by E. Darchery St James Street'. Her two other prints were *Sir Cecil's budget for paying the National Debt*, and *The Drum Major of Sedition*.

A possible Huguenot ancestor for her or her husband, Jean D'Archeuille, a seventeenth-century immigrant from Amiens,²⁸ would

²² *Dead Alive!* No. 1, MET 59.533.502; *Dead Alive!* No. 2, British Museum, BM 1947.1215.2, *She Don't Deserve It*, Beinecke Library, Yale, BNK-11791573; *Don't He Deserve It*, Royal Collection, RCIN 10348; *Billingsgate* [sic], National Gallery, Washington, NGA-1945.5.185.

²³ E.g., *Bawd on Her Last Legs*, Royal Collection, RCIN 810131, reissued as BM 1868.0808.1239; *First and Second Floor Lodgers*, RCIN 810222, reissued as RCIN 810438.

²⁴ See Chapter 11 by Amy Torbert in this volume.

²⁵ I am extremely grateful to Tim Clayton for bringing this to my attention.

²⁶ 'The Afterlife of British Caricature Copperplates', copperplate illustrated as Figure 6.

²⁷ *BM Satires* 6587.

²⁸ James Payne, private communication. My thanks to him for this information and for helpful comments on Elizabeth Howitt.

help explain the several variants of her name D'Acheray, Darchery, Dasheray, seen on her prints – and yet again counts as networking within the Huguenot diaspora.

Elizabeth Bull

Elizabeth Bull, the widow of printseller Fenwick Bull (active 1753–1760), had a shop at 18 Ludgate Hill, London, on the main thoroughfare from Westminster to the City. By 1785, she was in partnership with printseller John Jefferys (active 1793–1804) with whom she published stipple fancy prints and mezzotints such as the well-known portrait of the actress Elizabeth Farren (1759–1829). Her one print by Rowlandson, after garden designer Humphry Repton (1752–1818), *1784, or The Fashions of the Day* published on 4 July 1784, was probably a one-off commission.²⁹

Eleanor Lay

Mrs. Lay had a fashionable book and print shop on The Steine (a street in Brighton), frequented by the Prince of Wales and the *ton* when in Brighton. In 1788, she sold the Prince two important drawings, *The English Review* and *The French Review*, which had been on show in the 1786 Royal Academy Exhibition.³⁰ She would have mainly stocked prints from London printsellers, but she also published some prints in her own right, notably four of her own 1788 views of Brighton, for which the watercolour designs are in the Brighton Museum.³¹ Her royal patronage may have been through Mrs. Fitzherbert (1756–1837), the mistress of the Prince of Wales to whom her four views were published on May 1st 1788 dedicated 'by her most obedient & devoted humble Servant, Eleor. Lay'.

Mrs. Lay's earliest Rowlandson publications were a pair of caricatures, *A Brace of Blackguards* and *A Sufferer for Decency*³² both dated 'June 20 1789 by Mrs Lay on the Steine, Brighthelmstone'. According to Grego,³³ a *Brace of Blackguards* jokingly depicts Morland and Rowlandson as

²⁹ *BM Satires* 6720.

³⁰ Royal Collection, RCIN 913720 and RCIN 913721: 'Order'd by His Royal Highness from Mrs Lay at Brighton'. Sir John Soane's Museum, London, viii.c.

³¹ J. Ford and J. Ford, *Images of Brighton* (Richmond on Thames: Saint Helena Press, 1981), nos. 337, 338, 339, 340. Eleanor Lay also produced another small engraving of Holland's Pavilion. On the reverse of one copy is inscribed – 'Miss Lay, 99 Dean Street, Soho'.

³² *Blackguards*, Royal Collection, RCIN 810346 was probably purchased by George IV when Prince of Wales; the Royal Collection also has a drawing RCIN-913710.

³³ J. Grego, *Rowlandson the Caricaturist*, vol. I (London: Chatto and Windus, 1880), 239.

pugilists – but curiously, Grego does not credit Lay as the publisher of any prints. The plate for *A Sufferer* was later reissued in 1812 with Lay's name removed.

With Brighton's leading print shop, Lay would have been well positioned to trade with the London printsellers, both as a distributor and occasionally as a joint publisher. She can be seen doing this in an advertisement in July 1790:

OUTLINES of Figures, Cattle, Carriages, Vessels, &c. containing seventy-three familiar, humorous and rural subjects: respectfully dedicated to those Ladies and Gentlemen who draw Landscape for their amusement, and will be found highly useful to Drawing-masters; and improving to their Pupils. Designed and Etched by T. ROWLANDSON. And published, as the Act directs, by M Lay, Brighthelmstone; and Henry Brookes, Coventry-street.³⁴

Fores was also part of the consortium; but as a separate co-publisher; he had placed another advertisement giving his name instead.³⁵ Two different states are known of the four prints from the first part – the more common has just a Fores address for 8 March 1790, but there are also impressions with 'Pub Jun 1 1790 by M Lay, Brighthelmstone & H. Brooks [sic] Coventry Street, London'.³⁶ Three further parts came out between 1790 and 1792 but only with Fores's name, priced '5s plain or 7s 6d tinted'.

Lay's specific interest in a drawing book would support the idea that her print shop, like that of Brookes in London, also supplied art materials, drawing manuals, and stationery, a formula later perfected by the publisher Rudolf Ackermann (1764–1834) in his famous 'Repository of the Arts' at 101 Strand.

Lay also traded in London. The memoirs of Henry Angelo (1756–1835) tell of 'Calling on Rowlandson, at the time he lived at Mrs. Lay's, three doors from Carlton House, who kept a print-shop', and that Rowlandson's friend George Morland 'lodged in the next room'.³⁷ By then she seems to have been as much an art dealer and gallery owner as a printseller. An advertisement in the spring of 1794 for an 'Exhibition of original Drawings by Morland, Rowlandson, Howitt, and other celebrated Modern Artists, is open every, day from ten till six o'clock, at Mrs. E. Lay's, No. 121, Pall Mall, near Carlton House . . . nothing of this kind

³⁴ *The World*, issue 1103, 16 July 1790, London. ³⁵ *The Times*, 12 July 1790.

³⁶ Victoria & Albert Museum, e.g., E.23325-1957.

³⁷ H. Angelo, *Angelo's Picnic or, Table Talk* (London: 1838), 193.

have ever appeared before the Public'³⁸ is especially telling, showing her actively promoting a new wave of artists of sporting and genre subjects. The exhibition was likely a collaboration with printseller John Harris (c. 1740–1811) from whom she bought copperplates for two large hunting prints by Rowlandson, as evidenced by unique impressions of *Going Out in the Morning* and *The Death of the Fox*, inscribed 'May 1, 1793 by E. Lay No 121 Pall Mall', coinciding exactly with the exhibition (the plates had previously been published by Harris in 1786).³⁹

Matthew and James Payne conjecture that there were actually two distinct Mrs. Lays, whom previous authors have conflated – or should one say, 'mislead'! They identify the London Eleanor as the daughter of carver and gilder Richard Lawrence, to whom Henry Lay (active 1772–d. 1780) was apprenticed. Henry married his master's daughter in 1772. After Henry's death, Eleanor carried on the business successfully from premises in Dean Street, Soho. The Paynes consider it 'difficult to reconcile a Mrs Lay running a bookshop on the Steine with Mrs Lay gilding furniture and artwork in London, unless the Brighton Mrs Lay was the mother-in-law of Eleanor'.⁴⁰ But inventing a second Mrs Lay seems unnecessary. Surviving prints and advertisements clearly name Eleanor in both places and a Brighton-based friendship with Mrs. Fitzherbert is more plausible if the two women were of similar age (as Eleanor Lawrence was). Furthermore, there was also plenty of carving and gilding business in the new Pavilion, travel between London and Brighton was straightforward, and she probably had staff to run her shops. Lay's cultivation of her patroness continued with a flattering portrait of Mrs. Fitzherbert in Van Dyke costume, etched by John Condé after Richard Cosway. The lettering gives 'No. 38 Dean Street, Soho', suggesting perhaps that she only opened the shop at 121 Pall Mall after that date.⁴¹ Rowlandson was less obsequious in the five or so prints (mostly for William Holland) in which he depicts Fitzherbert – most naughtily as a flying 'cowgirl' in *Going to Ride St George*.⁴²

Hannah Humphrey

The young Hannah Humphrey, later Gillray's mainstay, was also one of the earliest publishers of Rowlandson. Originally trading from her brother

³⁸ *The World*, issue 2292, 2 May 1794, London.

³⁹ State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, OG 81671, no. 6 in L. A. Dukelskaya. *Thomas Rowlandson*, exhibition catalogue, 19 July–13 November 1979.

⁴⁰ Payne and Payne, *Regarding Thomas Rowlandson*, 122. ⁴¹ BM 1868.0822.1395.

⁴² *BM Satires* 7366. 'Riding St George' was eighteenth-century slang for sexual congress with the woman on top.

William's shop, she set up her own shop in New Bond Street in June 1778.⁴³ Her two prints from November 1781, *Brothers of the Whip* and *Charity Covereth a Multitude of Sins*, have the pen-like reinforced double line of Rowlandson's very early caricatures. A satire on body snatching followed in February 1782: *The Resurrection or an Internal View of the Museum in W-D-M-LL Street on the Last Day*.⁴⁴ Her name is on four Rowlandson prints for the 1784 election – her brother William published many more. Then, apart from a theatre satire from 1785, *Col. Topham Endeavouring with His Squirt to Extinguish the Genius of Holman*, there is a twenty-six-year hiatus before she publishes Rowlandson again in 1811. By then she would have been seeking to fill the gap left by Gillray's lapse into insanity. But even so she published only six more satires, *English Manner and French Prudence*, *Wet under Foot*, and four caricature portraits of English noblemen in 1812.

The scale and duration of Hannah's operations eclipse all other Georgian women printsellers (and most of the men too) – her fashionable shop was rivalled only by Fores for caricature, with Gillray as her undoubted star. The British Museum has 854 distinct plates published by her between 1778 and 1813, of which 635 are by Gillray, 52 by George Cruikshank, 35 by James Sayers, and only 16 by Rowlandson. Given her large stock and pre-eminence in the caricature market, that she should have published so few by Rowlandson is a point of remark – perhaps Rowlandson did not wish to tread on his friend Gillray's toes?

Her earliest apparent publication of Rowlandson presents an unresolved puzzle. Two prints, *The Village Doctor* and *The Rotation Office*, are both lettered in Rowlandson's freehand 'Pub^d June 8th 1774 by H. Humphry Bond Street'.⁴⁵ Dorothy George, like Grego, lists them as 1774 prints without comment but does not remark on the several discrepancies that such a date produces. Firstly, Rowlandson would have been only just 17 and still studying. Secondly, all Hannah's other early publications were from her brother's address in St Martin's Lane; she only appears to have moved to 18 Bond Street around 1778. Thirdly, they would be remarkable as being quite the earliest caricatures to use aquatint, which only arrived in England via Peter Perez Burdett around 1773.⁴⁶ In an introduction, the usually infallible George writes 'aquatint first appears in this Catalogue on

⁴³ On Hannah Humphrey, see Chapter 13 by Tim Clayton in this volume.

⁴⁴ *BM Satires* 5929, *BM Satires* 5930, *BM Satires* 6127. ⁴⁵ *BM Satires* 5274, *BM Satires* 5273.

⁴⁶ A. V. Gunn, 'Sandby, Greville and Burdett, and the "Secret" of Aquatint', *Print Quarterly*, 29(2) (2003): 178–180.

1776 (No 5381)', referencing Matthew Darly's *The Cork Rump*.⁴⁷ Actually, the earliest state of Philip de Louthembourg's caricature of gallery visitors, *The Exhibition* predates this by nearly a year.⁴⁸ Although de Louthembourg was one of Rowlandson's teachers at the Royal Academy, Rowlandson himself does not seem to have used aquatint until after 1780.

None of these discrepancies is insurmountable. Charles Bretherton (active 1760–1783) etched five prints at the age of twelve and the precocious Rowlandson could also have found opportunity.⁴⁹ The aquatint could have been added later. More problematic though are stylistic incongruities: both feature Rowlandson's distinctive 'line and dot' hatching, a mannerism not seen in his very earliest prints such as the *Rear-cart*, or the two stage scenes from around 1779 in the Royal Collection.⁵⁰ Were the dates just an error? – or even deliberately so, Hannah Humphrey shrewdly postdating the prints to satisfy collectors wanting 'the earliest known Rowlandson prints'?

Elizabeth Howitt

As a girl and young woman, Rowlandson's sister Elizabeth, nearly three years his junior, often figures as an attractive subject for his pen. The best-known portrait of Elizabeth is in the Cleveland Art Museum, but there are others with a fair resemblance.⁵¹ In 1779, she married Samuel Howitt, a close friend of her brother; the young men hunted together from Howitt's Essex estate and both created sporting art that borrowed from each other. With brother and husband both professional artists and printmakers, Elizabeth would have been familiar with both the processes of printmaking and the commercial side of the trade and likely assisted in ancillary roles, such as hand-colouring prints or dealing with customers (Howitt had a

⁴⁷ B. F. Stevens and M. D. George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum (1870–1954)*, *BM Satires*, vol. V, xxxvi. *BM Satires* 5381 has 'Pubd Novr 19, 1776, by J. Walker No.13 Parliament St'.

⁴⁸ E.g., BM 1853,0112.65 has 'January 29, 1776, by V. M. Picot No.16 in the Strand'. George's entry for *The Exhibition*, *BM Satires* 8589, describes rather a 1794 reissue by Laurie and Whittle.

⁴⁹ *BM Satires*, vol. V, xxxiv.

⁵⁰ National Gallery, Washington, DC, NGA-1945.5.308 impression (mistitled *The Pea Cart*, a completely different Rowlandson print, see Metropolitan Museum, MET 59.533.257) has 'The Rear Cart' as a pencil inscription in an old hand. A rear cart opens at the back and can be tipped up to empty it – the print depicts such a cart being loaded in a sandpit. Early Theater prints: Royal Collection, RCIN-810995, RCIN-810993.

⁵¹ Cleveland Art Museum 1940.734. E.g., Early album of drawings Huntington Museum. 74.11.11. verso. Courtauld Institute of Art, London, CI-D.1952.RW.3608. National Gallery, Washington, DC, 1945.5.214.

print shop in Pantou Street). Intriguingly, two late-eighteenth-century prints in the style of George Morland, *Fisherman's Departure*, and *Returning Home*, lettered as 'Engraved by H. Heppet, coloured by E. Rowlandson', were sold at auction at Dukes, Dorchester, 25 June 2020, Lot 527. If she had any artistic bent at all, she could also try her hand at drawing and even etching.⁵²

Around 1802, Elizabeth's marriage to Samuel Howitt foundered due to his infidelity. After her estrangement, Elizabeth drew on her experience and connections and established herself as an independent printseller at 73 Wardour Street. Rowlandson's *Quarterly Dunns, or Clamorous Tax Gatherers* from 3 February 1805 bears her name and address as publisher,⁵³ but it is exceptional to find her given as publisher of a print. Instead, she likely distributed prints originated by others or dealt in old prints. An entry in a marked-up copy of an 1801 sale catalogue for the stock of the London printmaker Thomas Major (1720–1799) includes 'Rowlandson' as purchaser against three lots.⁵⁴ Each lot also contains a number of copperplates. Possibly her brother was acquiring the plates to reuse them (the price of copper had rocketed because of the war with France). More likely, he was helping Elizabeth buy stock, including plates, to set up her business. Thomas could also have supplied impressions from such plates; he had his own press and the sale of his studio contents in 1828 listed at least twelve plates from other artists such as J. R. Smith and William Ward.⁵⁵

By extension, it seems plausible that Elizabeth would also have acted as a sales outlet for prints (and drawings) by her famous brother, who in the same period was regularly publishing caricatures giving his James Street address, as well as other unaddressed prints such as nude studies.

Elizabeth's success may be surmised from Samuel Howitt's will of 1823, which left her nothing but notes that she 'had for many years lived in a state of separation from me and has industriously earned for herself a

⁵² B. Falk, *Rowlandson His Life and Art*, suggests that Elizabeth worked as a colourist (New York: Beechurst Press, 1952).

⁵³ Payne and Payne, *Regarding Thomas Rowlandson*, 232.

⁵⁴ *A catalogue of a large and valuable collection of prints, drawings, . . . property of the late Mr. Thomas Major*. Mr. King, King Street, Covent Garden, 26 November 1801, 25:

No. 70 Twelve plates, Landscapes, Berghem & Vivares, 26 Books of Impressions 4l.4s.od.

No. 72 Six Plates [Berghem's Landscapes] 69 Books, 309 loose impressions 9l.9s.od.

No. 76 Eight Plates, Etchings by Gravelot, &c 51 impressions. 0l.15s.od.

I am extremely grateful to Kate Heard, Senior Curator of Prints and drawings, Royal Collection Trust for bringing this to my attention.

⁵⁵ *A Catalogue of the valuable collection of prints, drawing and pictures of the late distinguished artist Thomas Rowlandson Esq.* Mr Sotheby, 23 June 1828. Lots 457–459.

separate property'.⁵⁶ In business for over twenty years, she is identified as a buyer at the sale of Matthew Mitchell's collection in June 1818 – taking 310 prints – and appears to have been still trading in 1826; the records of the collector Francis Douce (1757–1834) list 'Howitt' as the supplier of some prints.⁵⁷

Drown'd

Her interest in the arts seems to have extended beyond just dealing. In the Triennial Directory for 1817–1819, Elizabeth Howitt is described as an 'Artist'.⁵⁸ And there is in fact definite evidence that, like Mary Darly, Elizabeth also tried her hand at printmaking. The key starting point is *Drown'd*, a unique impression of which (Figure 14.1) is in the second of the six-volumes of prints assembled by Sir William Augustus Fraser, 4th Baronet (1826–1898) and now in the National Gallery, Washington, DC. One of the largest and best nineteenth-century collections of Rowlandson, the collection is notably strong on Rowlandson's early prints, including the only complete run of his eight hunting scenes after Samuel Howitt from the *Imitations* and the largest concentration (three) of prints putatively by Elizabeth.

Drown'd is inscribed unambiguously 'Etched by E. Howitt' in an elaborate freehand. Crucially, it reveals Elizabeth's distinctive, rather naïve style, which employs simple outlines and scratchy hatching – and also her script. It is after a drawing by her brother that he himself etched for a series of forty prints, published in 1816 by Rudolph Ackerman as *The World in Miniature* (Figure 14.2). Rowlandson also used the scene as an illustration in an extremely rare children's book, *A Pretty Picture Book for Good Children*.⁵⁹ The motif was a poignant choice; it could be read as the Rowlandson siblings mourning their younger brother James (1764–1783) who died at sea in 1783 while sailing with the *Europa*, an East Indiaman.

At least three versions of drawings for *Drown'd* are known, all stylistically post-1800.⁶⁰ The version in the Achenbach Collection in San Francisco (Figure 14.3) is the closest to the *World in Miniature*. *Drown'd*

⁵⁶ Payne and Payne, *Regarding Thomas Rowlandson*, 232. Howitt left his money to his illegitimate daughter.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 322, 339. ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁵⁹ Bodleian Library, University of Oxford Vet. A6 f.1379, Plate 3.

⁶⁰ (i) Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, San Francisco, FAMSF-1963.24.531. Thanks to Natalie Pelollio, Assistant Curator, (ii) Boston Public Library, BPL-18_03_000607, (iii) Princeton University Library, GA 2014.00744.



Figure 14.1 Elizabeth Howitt, *Drown'd*, 1803–1806? Hand-coloured etching, 15.3 × 19.6 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



Figure 14.2 Thomas Rowlandson, *The World in Miniature*, Plate 12, 1816. Hand-coloured etching, 7 × 14 cm. Author's collection.



Figure 14.3 Thomas Rowlandson, [*Finding the Shipwrecked Sailor*], 1800–1805.
Watercolour with pen, 13.2 × 21.4 cm.

Achenbach Foundation. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco CA.

uses the same colours as the Achenbach drawing, suggesting it was made directly from Elizabeth's brother's drawing and not his print.

Love and Poverty

By careful comparison with *Drown'd*, at least six additional prints can be attributed to Elizabeth, all hiding unrecognised amidst major collections of her brother's work. All are unlettered except for a title, so the attribution to Elizabeth can only be made on stylistic grounds: the etch line, the unorthodox hatching, and the rather erratic freehand titles. An example is *Love and Poverty*, for which a coloured impression is online in the Royal Collection. Like *Drown'd*, it uses an unusual irregular hatching.⁶¹ The beggar woman and swaddled baby on the left come originally, of course, from Hogarth's *Enraged Musician* but via a drawing by her brother; *Wet Nurse Interrupted* is almost identical.⁶² Although slight works compared to her brother's endlessly inventive and proficient productions, there is

⁶¹ Royal Collection, RCIN-810976.

⁶² Chris Beetles Gallery, *The Illustrators* (London, 2002), 12, no. 2.

nonetheless a certain naïve charm to Elizabeth's designs and a recognizable style that may lead to yet further discoveries.

Why Them, Why Then?

Over the course of his career, Rowlandson's prints were published by well over 100 publishers – yet his women publishers are almost entirely concentrated in the first few years of his career. Why? Does this reflect a niche market for women publishers only as small-scale trendsetters? Wider changes in the caricature market favouring the emergence of large specialists able to monopolise the leading talent, such as Fores, and Tegg (and Hannah Humphrey)? Or, a change in the circumstances or outlook of Rowlandson himself?

As to niches – first we should ask: How usual was it for Georgian women to be in business at all? An indication can be obtained from David Barnett's quantitative study of fire insurance policy holders in London trading in two sample periods, 1769–1777 and 1819–1825. Covering over 31,000 businesses and 1,300 different trades (an estimated 60% of London businesses), the study shows 7.8% businesses of any sort had female sole proprietors in the 1770s and just over 7.1% in the 1820s. However, the average value of capital insured by women proprietors was much lower: in the 1770s, £261 compared with £672 for men; in the 1820s, £291 compared with £1,512.⁶³

Looking specifically at printsellers, the insurance records show sole female owners for two out of nine insured premises in 1772 and three out of nineteen in 1820.⁶⁴ Again, the average capitalisation of the women was significantly lower: £157 for women against of £365 for men. Fores, one of the largest male printsellers, had an insured value of £1,500 in 1810.⁶⁵

The numbers are too small to lend them statistical weight, but don't contradict the idea that printselling was relatively attractive as a business to women, perhaps not least because it did not require a large capital (Georgian career guides indicate £50–100 was sufficient to start),⁶⁶ or a

⁶³ D. Barnett, *The Structure of Industry in London: 1775–1825*, PhD thesis, University of Nottingham (1996), 55.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 380.

⁶⁵ J. Baker *The Business of Satirical Prints in Late-Georgian England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 82.

⁶⁶ Barnett, *Structure of Industry*, 80.

trade apprenticeship. But we should also note that printsellers weren't necessarily publishers: women printsellers can be found as policy holders for whom there are no published prints in the British Museum, such as Ann Roberts of Clare St, Drury Lane, who insured stock for £250 in 1775.

In any case, we should probably regard Lay and Jackson more as smart gallery owners who sold both drawings and prints, rather than conventional printsellers. In being quick to spot the potential appeal of Rowlandson's sophisticated rococo line and brilliant expression of body language, the women certainly demonstrated a skill fostering new talent and playing to fashionable taste. In this respect they were arguably working to received feminine strengths – within a 'Sophisticated West End' niche. But there does not seem to be any marked difference in the stock of the women printsellers compared to their similarly placed male competitors. Elizabeth d'Achery and Hannah Humphrey were as political as the next man; both Elizabeth Jackson and Hannah Humphrey included risqué content; and 'feminine' subjects, such as sentimental pictures of pretty women illustrating literary romances, are just as common in the stock of male publishers such as John Raphael Smith. However, Rowlandson's social satire, with its constellation of female archetypes – coy maidens, strumpets, shepherdesses, duchesses, aging belles, harridans, bluestockings, bawds, and fishwives – arguably shows him as being much more interested in women in all their human variety than, say, Gillray, and this may have interested women in return. A Jackson print such as *A Visit to the Aunt*,⁶⁷ with its gentle send-up of the niceties of the formal social calls expected of women (and the latest fashion exactly observed), is an appealing example. And in his own self-portraits in the 1780s, Rowlandson depicts himself as a dapper, flirtatious figure.⁶⁸ It is easy to imagine that a promising young artist, personable, Paris trained, and modishly exhibiting at the Royal Academy, had a particular appeal to the ladies – both sides of the print shop counter.

As to market changes, by all accounts there was massive growth in the period. Ian Maxted's study of Georgian publishing counts 8 printsellers, 95 stationers, and 111 booksellers in 1772. By 1802, the numbers are respectively 53, 247, and 308.⁶⁹ In the boom period of the 1780s there must have been many new players appearing and disappearing (many too transient to bother with insurance), regardless of gender. By 1817, the

⁶⁷ MET 59.533.493.

⁶⁸ E.g., HNT-Tour45; HNT-Tour40 drawings for *Tour in a Postchaise* 1784; Huntington Library.

⁶⁹ I. Maxted, *The London Book Trades 1775–1880* (London: Dawson, 1977).

number of printsellers had halved to twenty-seven as a natural process of consolidation saw astute players, such as Tegg and Fores, buy up the plates of others. That at least one woman, Humphrey, was among the small group of long-term winners in this specialist arena shows that gender was not necessarily a barrier to success.

Rowlandson's circumstances certainly changed too. As his reputation as a printmaker soared in the 1780s, it must have made him attractive to the bigger players such as Fores, whose scale would have allowed them to pay more. His aunt died in 1789, her legacy giving Rowlandson the independence to engage in a long tour in Europe – his print output falls off markedly between 1793 and 1797. By the time he resumed printmaking substantially in the late 1790s, the market had consolidated – of the five women, only Humphreys was still trading – and major new players such as Ackerman and Tegg had emerged. From 1801, his sister was in business and might have been a preferred channel.

In conclusion, evidence from surviving prints gives us some insight into the intricate commercial market of resale and distribution deals within which the women printsellers successfully operated, typical of the highly interconnected network of production and distribution of the Georgian publishing trades. Although women publishers account for only a small proportion of Rowlandson's vast lifetime output (about three per cent of some 2,900 prints), they were important in establishing him as a successful printmaker, publishing about thirty per cent of his early production.

Elizabeth Jackson, long obscured by the reissue of her plates by Fores, in particular emerges as a key early sponsor, allowing Rowlandson to try out new genres and develop his skills. She should be credited with first recognising his potential as a book illustrator, launching him on a trajectory that led to his very significant later involvement in the field. And if she was significantly involved in the publication of the *Imitations* then she takes on further importance.