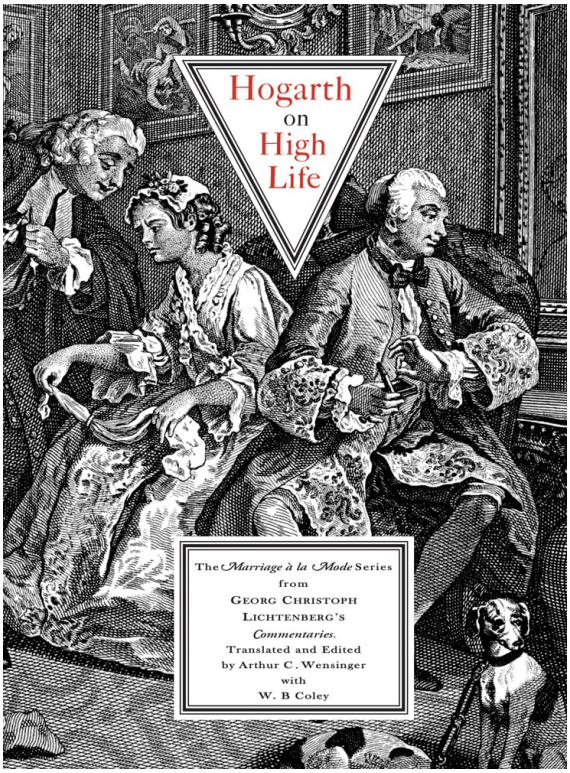
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Hogarth on High Life

The Marriage a La Mode Series from Georg Cristoph Lichtenberg's Commentaries

Georg Christoph Lichtenberg

Jean-Andre Rouquet

Edited by Arthur C. Wensinger

Edited by W. B. Coley

William Hogarth

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- Georg Christoph Lichtenberg's rich, extensive commentaries on Hogarth's 'Marriage à la Mode' paintings, which satirised 18th-century marriages of convenience, brilliantly translated and with much additional material

Marriage a la Mode is the most famous of William Hogarth's 'progresses' or series paintings, the story of a marriage de convenance and its unhappy consequences in fashionable 18th-century London. Contemporaries relished teasing out the meaning of all its rich detail, and the most extensive and popular of all the commentaries on the artist's accomplishment: was that of the witty, many-sided German, Georg Christoph Lichtenberg. Brilliantly translated, thoroughly annotated, this text is accompanied by the earlier and less-known commentary by Hogarth's friend, the French-Swiss enameller Jean-Andre Rouquet, and by a selection of Lichtenberg's remarks (in letters to friends) on his purposes and problems in interpreting Hogarth's work. Included also is another and very rare 'explanation' of the plates, an anonymous 1746 pamphlet titled *Marriage A-la-Mode-An Humorous Tale, in Six Cantos*. A foreword on Lichtenberg, and an historical essay on Hogarth's work by Mr. Coley, supply necessary background on artist and commentary. Of Hogarth's greatness there is little that need be said. But it is worth noting that, of his several 'progresses' or 'modern moral subjects', only*Marriage a la Mode* centres on the upper levels of British society – the aristocracy and the mercantile class.

Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, professor of physics at Gottingen (1742-1799), was a man of varied interests and a shrewd, kindly observer of the human scene; his aphorisms in particular demonstrate why he is considered to have been one of the sharpest intellects of the Enlightenment, and one of its finest prose writers. His commentaries on Hogarth have led a recent critic to speak of him 'simply Hogarth's best interpreter, realizing in words the artist's visual score, and often interpolating a virtuoso cadenza of his own.'

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