What all Advent biscuits have in common is they are labours of love. Time-consuming and fiddly to bake, I nevertheless know of no Berlin family which would not bake at least one or two batches, despite the proliferation of mass-produced variations now available on supermarket shelves. They are then brought out for Sunday Kaffee und Kuchen, to be shared by family, friends and neighbours at each weekend throughout the Advent period. I had experienced this myself on previous visits to my husband’s family, so for our first Christmas as official “Berliners”, I wholeheartedly embraced this.

SUGAR AND SPICE AND ALL THINGS NICE: THE VICTORIAN WOMAN’S ALL-CONSUMING PREDICAMENT

Lisa Coar (University of Leicester)

ABSTRACT

Haunted by the hunger of Eden’s infamous apple-eater, women have long had to contend with condemnatory attitudes towards female patterns of consumption. Nineteenth-century conduct writer Elizabeth Pennell was certainly eager to assert that when Eve stretched forth to taste the Forbidden Fruit, she unconsciously thrust the female appetite into ‘ill-repute’. ‘Foolish fasting,’ she argued, was suddenly ‘glorified,’ until ‘a healthy appetite […] passed for a snare of the devil, and its gratification meant eternal damnation’.¹ With the devil presiding over the dinner-table to consume, or not to consume, became a question which plagued angelic house-dwellers troubled by a grumbling stomach. However, the uneasiness surrounding women’s hunger was far more than a mere dinner-table phenomenon. It entered the boudoir, becoming an indicator of sexuality, and saturated the social domain. With the birth of a consumer-crazed culture, it was assumed that women were hungry for things, corsets and crinolines, diamonds and dinner-plates, tea-cups and carriages, commodities galore.

This article analyses nineteenth-century variations on the notion of consumption and all its lexical derivatives. Using Christina Rossetti’s Goblin Market (1862) and Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865) as literary stimuli, this article ultimately exposes the perils of allowing consumer curiosity and hunger to collide in the public sphere. I broaden the discussion to include Rossetti’s other ‘consumer’ skewed works and, more briefly, George Du Maurier’s Trilby (1894). My analysis charts the dissolution of the boundary between consumer and consumed, contemplates visual consumption and its specular economies and, finally, traces ‘vampiric’ veins throughout the era’s consumptive corpus, focusing on the Pre-Raphaelites.


FULL TEXT:

PDF