



James Gillray's Hogarthian Progresses





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AN EXHIBITION AT THE LEWIS WALPOLE LIBRARY,  
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Curated by Cynthia Roman

Sequential narration in satiric prints is most closely associated with the famous “modern moral subjects” of William Hogarth (1697–1764): *A Harlot's Progress* (1732), *A Rake's Progress* (1735), *Marriage A-la-mode* (1745), and *Industry and Idleness* (1747) among others. Hogarth's enormous commercial and aesthetic success inspired a broad spectrum of legacy “progresses” across subsequent generations of printmakers. James Gillray (1756–1815) was among the most accomplished printmakers to adopt Hogarthian narrative strategies even as he transformed them.

Gillray engaged with the possibilities of sequential narratives from the very earliest stages of his career as a satirical artist. Although there is a long history of sequential narration in popular prints, Hogarth's example provided the most immediate foundation for Gillray's work. *Wife & No Wife, or A Trip to the Continent* (1786) and *The Morning after Marriage, or A Scene on the Continent* (1788) depict two stages of themorganatic marriage of the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert. Although published separately, these two prints reveal the artist's movement toward the format of companion prints, not only in the narration of sequential events across the two images but also in the common

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James Gillray, *Wife & No Wife, or A Trip to the Continent*, 1786

James Gillray, *The Morning after Marriage, or A Scene on the Continent*, 1788



language of the titles that links them. This pairing on the royal marriage recalls Hogarth's pair of prints *Before and After* (1736). Some years later, Gillray published *Harmony before Matrimony* and *Matrimonial Harmonics*, issued as a more deliberate pairing on the same day, October 25, 1805. Rather than targeting specific public figures, these prints are more generic, as is Hogarth's model. Although simplified and reduced, the pair recognizably shares the Hogarthian story line of an ill-fated couple in *Marriage A-la-mode* (1745).

Gillray's deployment of sequential narration appears too in single-plate prints gridded to accommodate multiple episodes. *John Bull's Progress* (1793) traces the unhappy fate of the imaginary hero, a personification of a common British farmer, as he confronts the French Revolution. John Bull's domestic comfort is disrupted when he enlists and marches off to war, leaving his bereft family to suffer in his absence. He returns gaunt, crippled, and one-eyed to find his starving family huddled in a hovel. Gillray also produced narrative sequences based on specific topics and particular individuals. *Democracy, or A Sketch of the Life of Buonaparte* (1800) sets forth with decided irony six imaginary episodes lampooning the origins, life, and military career of the French general.

Despite the success of the single-plate Napoleonic "progress," Gillray abandoned this format. He continued nevertheless to produce sequential narration as multi-plate sets. At the height of the first French invasion scare in 1798, Gillray was engaged by Sir John Dalrymple (1726–1810) to execute an ambitious set of plates forecasting the dire consequences of such an invasion. Originally planned to comprise no fewer than twenty prints,

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James Gillray, *Harmony before Matrimony*, 1805

James Gillray, *Matrimonial Harmonics*, 1805







James Gillray, *John Bull's Progress*, 1793

the project produced just four. Dalrymple subsidized this ambitious set of large, complex images so that they could be sold cheaply and thus reach a wider audience. Sharing Hogarth's conviction that graphic art might exert moral or political influence, Gillray effectively evoked Hogarth's own depictions of political topics decades earlier in *The Invasion*, Plate 1 (*France*) and Plate 2 (*England*). Hogarth's *Four Prints of an Election* may well have been on Gillray's mind as well.

In 1809 Gillray published a complete set of eight plates on the life of political writer William Cobbett (1763–1835) that the artist claims, in a farcical inscription on the print, was based on an autobiographical account: “Vide, my own memoirs in the *Political Register* of 1809.” Gillray's representation of Cobbett as a boy cruelly encouraging a dog to attack a cat recalls Hogarth's depiction of the youthful Tom Nero, who tortures a dog in the first plate of *Four Stages of Cruelty*. Later scenes of drunkenness and trial from the life of Cobbett recall Hogarth's depiction from *A Rake's Progress*, Plate 3, in which the profligate gambles his inheritance and cavorts with prostitutes, or from *Industry and Idleness*, Plate 10, which portrays the idle apprentice brought before the alderman and impeached. At other times, Gillray's language signals his homage to Hogarth in progressive narratives, as in the title of the five-plate series *A Rake's Progress at University* (1806), which chronicles the life and misadventures of a freshman.

Gillray, however, remains true to his own genius. His political and social narratives reveal a master of ironic detachment, a temperament perhaps better suited to the single-plate format that he ultimately preferred. Yet Gillray's forays into Hogarthian progresses kept the idiom relevant for further development by later graphic satirists including Richard Newton, Charles Williams, and William Elmes, whose works are also represented at the Lewis Walpole Library.



James Gillray, *Democracy, or A Sketch of the Life of Buonaparte*, 1800

## CHECKLIST

All items from the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, except where otherwise indicated.

James Gillray  
*Wife & No Wife, or A Trip to the Continent*  
Etching with stipple engraving  
Published March 27, 1786 by W. Holland  
786.03.27.01++

James Gillray  
*The Morning after Marriage, or A Scene on the Continent*  
Etching with stipple engraving  
Published April 5, 1788 by W. Holland  
788.04.05.01++ Impression 1

William Hogarth  
*Before and After, State 1*  
Etching and engraving  
Published December 15, 1736 by William Hogarth  
Kinnaird 23k (a & b)

James Gillray  
*Harmony before Matrimony and Matrimonial Harmonics*  
Etching with hand coloring  
Published October 25, 1805 by H. Humphrey  
805.10.25.02+ and 805.10.25.01+ Impression 1

Bernard Baron (1696–1762) after William Hogarth  
*Marriage A-la-mode, Plate II*  
Etching and engraving  
Published April 1, 1745 by William Hogarth  
Sotheby 17 ++ Box 300

James Gillray  
*John Bull's Progress*  
Etching with hand coloring  
Published June 3, 1793 by H. Humphrey  
793.06.03.01+

James Gillray  
*Democracy, or A Sketch of the Life of Buonaparte*  
Etching with hand coloring  
Published May 12, 1800 by H. Humphrey  
800.05.12.01+ Impression 2

James Gillray  
*Four Prints of Consequences of a Successful French Invasion*  
Etching with engraving and hand coloring  
Published March 1798 by J. Gillray  
798.03.01.03–798.03.01.05++ and  
798.03.06.02++,

George Cruikshank (1792–1878)  
*Consequences of a Successful French Invasion, Plate 2*  
Etching with hand coloring  
Published (1818?) by John Miller  
818.00.00.03

William Hogarth  
*The Invasion, Plate 1 (France) and 2 (England), State 3*  
Etching  
Published March 8, 1756 by William Hogarth  
Sotheby 73++ and 74++

James Gillray  
*A Rake's Progress at University, No. 1*  
Etching and aquatint with hand coloring  
Published October 22, 1806 by H. Humphrey  
In “The Caricatures of James Gillray”  
Auchincloss Collection. Miscellaneous Series, vol. 11, page 42  
Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University

James Gillray  
*The Life of William Cobbett, Written by Himself, Nos. 1–8*  
Etching with hand coloring  
Published September 29, 1809 by H. Humphrey  
809.09.29.01–809.09.29.08 Impression 1

William Hogarth  
*First Stage of Cruelty*  
Etching and engraving  
Published February 1, 1751 by William Hogarth  
Kinnaird 53k (a) Box 215  
  
William Hogarth  
*A Rake's Progress, Plate 3*  
Etching and engraving  
Published June 25, 1735 by William Hogarth  
Kinnaird 8k (b) Box 205

William Hogarth  
*Industry and Idleness, Plate 10*  
Engraving  
Published September 1747 by William Hogarth  
Sotheby 53 Box 100

William Hogarth  
*Midnight Modern Conversation*  
Etching with engraving  
Published March 1732 by William Hogarth  
Sotheby 28++ Box 305





*The Life of WILLIAM COBBETT. written by himself.*  
Engraved on Copper by J. Smith, 1799. By H. Humphreys. 87. St. James's Street.

#### Plate 7<sup>th</sup> —

I did not look behind me till I got to St. Omers; but this being still too near the scene of my detection, I fled to America. There I offered to become a Spy for my most gracious Sovereign, this being scornfully rejected, I contented myself with Plundering & Labelling the Yankees, for which I was fined 5000 dollars, and kicked out of the Country! — Seven years had elapsed since I absconded from England, so I thought that my exploits there might be forgotten, and ventured to return. — I set up the Crown and Mitre, under cover of which I abused the Church and State very comfortably, my Loyalty being thus established. I accepted from the Doctor (so I always call the Right Hon<sup>ble</sup> Henry Z<sup>d</sup>. Viscount of Salsmouth) £4000, which was to be expended in printing & dispersing a pamphlet against the 'Hell Fire Yell of Reform!' — with this money I paid my debts, I purchased a pretty bit of Land at Botley, and sat quietly down to enjoy the fruits of my honest industry. A thousand applications have been made to me, to refund or account for some part of this enormous Sum, but, blast my Eyes! I will see the Doctor damned, and all such Rascals as the Doctor before I open my mouth on the subject! — At Botley my natural bent returned, but upon a larger scale, for being now Lord of the Manor of Botley, & in the receipt of Five Thousand pounds a year from the sale of my Weekly Register, therefore not caring a single God damn for Public Opinion, I reached the peccadilloes of my youth, & with maturer mischief began by sowing dissensions thro' the whole County. I kicked the Sick & the Infirm Labourer into the Street, I oppressed the poor, I sent the Aged to hell; — I damned the Eyes of my Parish Apprentices before they were opened in a morning, and being nobly supported by a loyal band of Reformers, I renewed in our Orgies, my old favourite Toast of 'Damnation to the House of Brunswick' — thus exalted in glory & popularity I found myself on the point of becoming the greatest Man in the World, except that Idol of my thoughts, that object of my Adorations, his Royal & Imperial Majesty, NAPOLEON.

Vol. 1. my own Memoirs in the Political Register. 1799.

William Hogarth

*Four Prints of an Election, Plates 1 and 4*

Etching and engraving

Published 1755–1758 by William Hogarth

Sotheby 39++ and 42++

William Hogarth

*First Stage of Cruelty*

Etching and engraving

Published February 1, 1751 by William

Hogarth

Kinnaird 53k (a) Box 215

William Hogarth

*A Rake's Progress, Plate 3*

Etching and engraving

Published June 25, 1735 by William Hogarth

Kinnaird 8k (b) Box 205

William Hogarth

*Industry and Idleness, Plate 10*

Engraving

Published September 1747 by William

Hogarth

Sotheby 53 Box 100

William Hogarth

*Midnight Modern Conversation*

Etching with engraving

Published March 1732 by William Hogarth

Sotheby 28++ Box 305

James Gillray, *The Life of William Cobbett,*

*Written by Himself*, No. 7, 1809

## SOURCES

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FIRST STAGE OF CRUELTY.



While various scenes of sportive Woe  
The Infant Race employ,  
And torpid Victims bleeding show  
The Bruties in the Boy.

Designed by W. Hogarth.

Behold a Youth of gentler Mien,  
To spare the Creature's pain  
O take, be wise—take all my Tart,  
But Tarts and Tarts are vain.

Published according to Act of Parliament 1763 & 1765.

Learn from this Example—You  
Whom savage Sports delight,  
How Cruelty degrades the new  
Whom Pity should alarm the sight.

Above: William Hogarth, *First Stage of Cruelty*, 1751

Front: Detail, James Gillray, *The Life of William Cobbett*,  
Written by Himself, No. 1, 1809