

Putting the Poor in Their Place

A Brief Guide



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Acknowledgements

Even a small exhibition of this kind quickly accumulates indebtedness. I am extremely grateful to the Yale Center for British Art for the loan of the majority of the prints and paintings in this exhibition, and to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for the loan of Hogarth's set of *Industry and Idleness*. In particular I would like to thank Patrick Noon, curator of prints and drawings, Randi Joseph, and their staff at the Yale Center for British Art, for their helpful answers and prompt attention to all my requests. To Carla Ives and Suzanne Voorsch of the Department of Prints and Photographs, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I extend my thanks for their cooperation in granting my loan request with extraordinary speed. I thank Paul Wilson and Eve Daniels, graduate students of the Department of Art and Art History, SUNY-Binghamton, for their help in gathering information for this exhibition, and for their company on the long trips between Binghamton and the Yale Center for British Art. I thank the staff of University Art Gallery — Nancy Gonchar, curator, Michael O'Kane, technical coordinator, and Norma Moses, secretary — for their indispensable skilled and friendly assistance with this exhibition. To Alex Potts, London, I extend my appreciation of our stimulating talks on some of the issues discussed in this short guide.

Josephine Gear
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Preliminary Note

Numbers in *parentheses* at the end of a sentence refer to the numbers in the exhibition checklist, which follows this text. Numbers in *brackets* at the end of a sentence are endnote numbers.

This exhibition of Georgian prints and paintings is organized around a single theme: attitudes in art toward the poor. Since an exhibition of this size (there are 37 objects in all) cannot be comprehensive, *Putting the Poor in Their Place* limits itself to three commonly held ways of seeing the poor in Georgian Britain (1714-1830): the poor as a moral and social lesson, the poor as objects of charity, and the poor as comic figures. Attitudes toward the poor in the period are, however, enormously complex. The danger of a small exhibition of this kind is that it is forced into an organization which suggests the whole question was much simpler than it actually was. And, the problem with an exhibition guide is that it can be no more than what it states, a guide. Given these limitations, the aim of this guide is two-fold: to provide basic information and descriptions of the works essential to understanding the exhibition, and to present a brief discussion of some of the significant issues found in the exhibition material.

Cover: Charles Wilkin (after Sir William Beechey), *Here Poor Boy!*, stipple engraving, c. 1796, 20½ × 16¾ inches.

The Poor as a Moral and Social Lesson

Georgian Britain was a rapidly developing, socially mobile, and unstable society. One of the more extreme examples of this is the fortunes that were made in trading and banking ventures in a generation and were lost again in less time (there was the fiasco of the joint-stock venture, the South Sea Bubble in 1720). Along with the period's rapid economic and social developments came a new set of mores and values. Life became less hard, and a little more affluent for the new middle class. As in all times of great social change, some observers worried that moral and social standards were lapsing.

These were the social conditions in which William Hogarth (1697-1764) produced what he called his "modern moral" subjects: paintings and prints in sets of two, four, six, eight, or twelve works apiece, consisting of simple moral stories set in modern life. The audience for whom Hogarth made his moral pictures was the ascending middle class, the class to which Hogarth himself belonged.

Hogarth's moral subject pictures possess great charm, humor, wit, and a certain rococo effervescence. They express the buoyancy of a class with a sense of its own star in the ascendancy. Hogarth's pictures also contain some rather leaden moral messages. Be virtuous and lead an industrious life, his pictures appear to say, and the greatest material rewards will be yours. Or, be profligate, lazy, and fall into dissolute ways, his pictures cry,

and your end will be miserably ignoble. In this black and white view of the world, Hogarth tends to associate virtue, industry, and rewards with the middle class, and sinfulness, laziness, criminality, and all manner of unattractive characteristics with the (unemployed) poor. The employed poor do not feature prominently in the work of Hogarth or of the other artists in this exhibition.

The earliest of the two sets of engravings of Hogarth's "modern moral" subjects in this exhibition is *A Harlot's Progress*, consisting of six plates published in 1732 (see 10-15). In six dramatic scenes, Hogarth tells the story of Moll Hackabout. Hackabout is an attractive and poor young woman who arrives in an open wagon from the country seeking work in London (see plate 1). But lacking moral fiber and being a little simple (note the allusion of the dead goose in the lower right of plate 1), she falls easy prey to prostitution, the first work she encounters. In plate 2, Moll Hackabout manages to savor the "good life" as the kept woman of a wealthy London Jew. She's shown set up in a fancy interior, with the latest fashionable furniture, a maid, and an additional illicit lover. Moll's Jewish lover is unaware he is being embarrassed, since his mistress kicks over a small table to distract him while her other paramour makes his escape. But Moll's experience of luxurious high life is only fleeting. The succeeding four plates take us quickly through the un-

fortunate woman's rapid descent into dissolution, disease, and death.

A few years after his popular success with *Harlot's Progress*, Hogarth issued *A Rake's Progress* in 1735 (not in the exhibition) which represents a parallel story to the *Harlot's Progress*. The two *Progress* sets are companion pieces in which the subjects of two works are closely related in theme. It was also Hogarth's common practice to produce contrasting prints or contrasting sets of prints in which the subjects are dramatically opposed to each other. The latter practice enabled Hogarth to punch home moral and social points even more effectively by contrasting the good life and deed to the "wasted" life or action. In the case of the two *Progress* sets, Hogarth did not need a moral counterpart since it already existed in a work of literature: John Bunyan's *A Pilgrim's Progress*, published in 1678.

Bunyan's story offers some interesting moral parallels to the reckless and doomed protagonists of Hogarth's two *Progress* stories. Bunyan's Christian, a poor but virtuous man, progresses through life experiencing many tests and hardships. He endures and prevails, and is rewarded at the end with salvation. To say that Bunyan's story was familiar to every literate person of Hogarth's day gives a far from adequate picture of the book's pervasive presence. Bunyan's *A Pilgrim's Progress* was woven into the texture of the period's Christian consciousness. Given this, it's tempting to conjecture that Hogarth probably relied on Bunyan's well known hero to serve as the necessary moral antidote to his own dissolute pilgrims of London life.

In the much later *Industry and Idleness*, published as a set of twelve plates in 1747, Hogarth relied on no outside popular source to provide comparison and contrast (see 16-27). Hogarth combined, in an alternating sequence, the contrasting moral narratives of two London citizens' lives as they progress from youth to middle age. The first plate sets up the contrast between the two young apprentices who are bound to the master of a textile weaving business. We see the Industrious 'Prentice who is smiling and contented as he operates his loom, while the Idle 'Prentice sleeps at

his post, unaware that his boss glares at him from the doorway. Plate 2, set in a church interior, shows the good young man singing *happily* from an open hymn book. Not only is the Industrious' Prentice "performing the duty of a Christian" as Hogarth's title informs us, he is a *willingly* devout Christian. In subsequent plates, the Industrious, God-fearing 'Prentice gets promoted, and marries the boss's daughter when he finishes his time as an apprentice. In short, the good young man does everything right. Hogarth's final tableau shows us a city street thronged with people out to huzzah and throw off their hats to the industrious 'Prentice. Every balcony

on the high buildings is crowded. Every steep roof has its eager sightseer dangerously astride its top. They are all agog to see the Lord Mayor of London, the former Industrious 'Prentice, ride in a large coach in triumphant procession through the streets.

By contrast the Idle (and heathenish) 'Prentice sinks scene by scene, further and further into his own destruction. Hogarth seals the doom of the Idle 'Prentice in plate 3 (which is the counterpart to the dutiful Christian of plate 2). In this churchyard scene, the Idle 'Prentice half sits, half reclines on a tombstone next to an open grave. In as brutish and villainous-looking company as

Hogarth can draw, the Idle 'Prentice is shown gambling for money. In this scene, the key one in the set of twelve, Hogarth makes a specific link between poverty and evil. In quick succession in the remaining plates allotted his story, the Idle 'Prentice experiences the worst conditions of poverty in Georgian Britain, banishment, treachery, crime (he committed robbery and murder), and the forced end to a wasted life. The final plate, which pairs the Lord Mayor's triumphal procession, shows the apprentice in an open cart traveling a crowded street of spectators, who have come to watch him hang at the gallows in Tyburn. Who could not fail to get



William Hogarth, *A Harlot's Progress*, plate 2, engraving and etching, 1732, 12 1/4 x 15 inches.

Hogarth's point?

To modern eyes, Hogarth's stories are amazingly simple and his manner of making moral points, heavy-handed. But Hogarth's prints struck the right note with his public. Hogarth's first serious venture into capturing the middle-class art public came with the publication of *A Harlot's Progress*. Hogarth advertised the set to the public in the press, stating the set would be sold by subscription. In entering the subscription, customers were to pay half the total purchase price of one guinea, and the remainder on delivery of the print. Over 1,200 subscribers bought the print and, within weeks of its publication, it was so popular with the public that many pirate copies were made and sold.

Hogarth's straightforward, "laying it on thick," if you like, way of telling a story helps explain his success with the public. For his moral pictures, Hogarth cast aside the classical rules of painting and followed instead the tradition of popular art, especially the popular theater. Success in the contemporary popular theater counted as making sure the audience knows what's going on, gets the point, and walks away with a bellyful of laughs. This is what Hogarth achieves. Hogarth knew his public, and knew they would respond to dramatic storytelling since they were theatergoers like himself.

To this end, Hogarth's pictures pile point upon point, and his characters play their utmost to the public, as if they were live actors and actresses on the stage, and he their actor-manager. Larger than life, Hogarth's figures exaggeratedly leer, swoon, or look knowingly out at the audience inviting us to size up the situation (see *Harlot's Progress*, plate 6). Understanding human nature and being a good teacher, Hogarth realized it was as important to entertain and stimulate his public as it was to admonish them.

To interpret Hogarth's representations of the poor as moral object lessons is not the whole story. Notice that many of Hogarth's poor, including prostitutes and beggarly men, exhibit a remarkable insouciance despite their lot in life. How can we account for Hogarth's vigorous way of drawing the poor? Was this just

Hogarth's characteristically energetic hand at work? Or does it reveal that the artist's view of the poor was more complex than it first appears?

The highly stratified class system of Victorian Britain was a thing of the future, and the poor of Georgian Britain had not yet been put firmly in their place. One has only to look at the turbulent crowd scenes in Hogarth to realize how vociferously omnipresent the poor were. The London poor had a reputation for being boisterous, rude to their superiors and foreigners, easily aroused, and ready to take part in any kind of mob action under the right conditions. Although ghetto-izing the poor began in the East End of London with the arrival of significant numbers of laborers and families seeking work, the poor made their presence felt in all parts of the city.

There were innumerable incidents of the kind that reportedly happened one day in mid-century to a fashionable London woman who went shopping in Charing Cross. The woman parked her coach not in the road but on the footpath outside the trinket shop she wanted to visit. In this position, it entirely blocked the path of passers-by. The woman was asked if she would move her coach, but she disdainfully insisted it remain where it was. The crowd quickly took retaliatory action and flung open the doors of the coach, not to harm her in this instance, but to teach her a lesson and "have a bit of a lark" in the process. To the horror of the woman and the amusement of the crowd, the coach was "invaded by a jeering procession of all sorts and conditions of men, some of them extremely dirty and smelly." [1]

The poor permeated Georgian London. It was as difficult to shut them out of sight as it was to repress the fears they aroused. Many of the middle and upper classes justifiably feared mob uprisings of a serious nature, in which property was damaged and lives taken. The last of the 18th century's well known uprisings in London were the Gordon Riots of 1780, which reputedly caused more loss of property in a week than occurred in all the years of the French Revolution. Following the cataclysmic events of the French Revolution,

political and social tensions in Britain were high, and the upper classes feared for their own survival.

Sometimes, in private, they voiced their fears on this subject. "[T]he awakening of the labouring classes, after the first shocks of the French Revolution, made the upper classes tremble." This Marxian-sounding comment comes from a diary kept by an upper-class woman of the period. [2]

However, although the mob-like nature of the crowd is apparent in the last two plates of *Industry and Idleness*, the poor as a threat to life, limb, and property is not Hogarth's point in either this work or the earlier *Harlot's Progress*. If Hogarth portrayed the poor as *them* in his works, if he tried to put the poor in their place, he probably did so out of a fear he intimately knew. This was a fear born out of an acute sense of the precariousness of his social position, of losing it all, of becoming one of *them* if a livelihood, a small business, or an investment disappeared.

Hogarth's own father started a coffeehouse in London, hoping to attract gentlemen and scholars whom he'd "entertain . . . in the Latin tongue." [3] When the coffeehouse failed, Hogarth's father spent four years in debtors' prison, and his mother four years on the streets selling ointments, lotions, and potions. When Hogarth's family slid down the slippery social slope, they descended into what the younger Hogarth might well have regarded as a kind of hell. The alternative Hogarth advocated to his public in *Industry and Idleness* is the one the artist himself took. Hogarth climbed out of the morass of his early life by being extremely industrious, enterprising, and, in the process, a commercially very successful artist. Hogarth thought because he could do it, others could. And if they couldn't there must be something very un-Christian about them.

The Poor as Objects of Charity

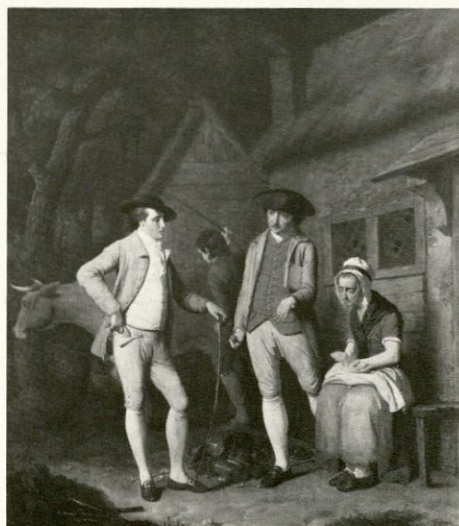
In the 18th century, the philanthropic movement toward relieving some of the miserable conditions of the poor developed. There emerged in art a popular type or genre of paintings and engravings that featured charitable acts and defined certain categories of the poor. These categories consisted of distressed families, widowed mothers, orphaned children, elderly women, disabled soldiers, and the imprisoned, all of

which are represented in this exhibition. While Hogarth saw his raffish rogues as responsible for their poverty, the poor featured in the philanthropic subject pictures are viewed differently. They are seen as unfortunate victims of circumstances beyond their control. To help the poor, it was the responsibility of those more fortunate to make distinctions between the poor, and to aid those who were clearly deserving of charity.

This was a duty not only for adults, but an important one for children as well. In this show, there are several prints representing children giving alms to the poor. See, by William Redmore Bigg (1755-1828), *The Soldier's Widow: or Schoolboy's Collection* and *The Sailor's Orphans: or Young Ladies' Subscription* (6 and 35).

The purpose of the philanthropic image was to help the public identify the "deserving poor," and at the same time encourage feelings of charity and sympathy toward them. To achieve this end the deserving poor had to be given a new look. Gone are Hogarth's leering and loutish figures wearing verminous rags. In their place are neatly dressed families with pretty women and children, and soberly dressed elderly men and women. In the watercolor by Thomas Stothard (1755-1834), *Charity Children and Little Vagabonds*, an allegorical figure of Charity sits between neatly dressed young girls, wearing demure muslin caps, and ragged urchins. Stothard symbolically represents the social and institutional transformations brought about by organized philanthropy of the period (see 36).

The representation of the poor's manners and attitudes changed too. It



Edward Penny, *The Generosity of Johnny Pearmain*, oil on canvas, 36 × 31 inches.



William Ward (after W. R. Bigg). *The Sailor's Orphans or Young Ladies' Subscription*, mezzotint printed in color, 1800, 19 1/8 × 22 3/4 inches.



W.R. Bigg. *The Rapacious Steward or The Unfortunate Tenant*, oil on canvas, $40\frac{1}{2} \times 50\frac{1}{8}$ inches.



Haveill Gillbank (after W. R. Bigg), *The Benevolent Heir or the Tenant Restored to His Family*, mezzotint, $18\frac{1}{8} \times 24$ inches.

was always a strong point with Hogarth to represent the spiritedness of the poor. Many of Hogarth's figures possess a strong sexual identity whether or not they are directly involved in the telling of a moral story. And even when Hogarth represents the poor gratefully (or cheerfully) accepting alms in the form of food or money, they are seen not to give up their independence in exchange (*Industry and Idleness*, plate 6). By comparison, William Redmore Bigg and other artists of the philanthropic genre present a radically redrawn character of the poor (see especially 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 28, 34, 35, 36). Their poor have become worthy recipients of charity and are uniformly desexualized, deferential, ingratiating, and cowed—not spirited. These are the characteristics that were destined to arouse sympathy and charitable feelings. Assigning the poor these characteristics helped the upper and middle classes put the poor in their place.

Who are the alms-givers represented in the charity pictures? John Howard, the subject of Francis Wheatley's picture *John Howard, Esq. Visiting and Relieving the Miseries of a Prison*, was an upper-class philanthropist, well known in his day, who spent his life and a large part of his fortune on prison reform (see 28). Wheatley shows Howard visiting an obviously enfeebled prisoner and his family in jail. Johnny Pearmain, the benefactor in *The Generosity of Johnny Pearmain . . .* painted by Edward Penny (1714-1791), was reputed to have been a member of a leading Shropshire family (see 4 and 34). Penny represents Pearmain paying off the widow's debts at the eleventh hour. The poor woman has been so traumatized by the whole incident, she notices neither her benefactor nor a bailiff who drives away her cow.

In Bigg's *The Rapacious Steward*, the breadwinner of the family is being taken away for inability to pay the rent, while his five dependents swoon at this terrible disaster (see 1 and 8). In the picture's sequel, *The Benevolent Heir*, there is no doubt about the social position of the young couple who rescue the family. Aside from the picture's title, the grand house seen in the distance behind the two figures

confirms them as gentry (see 2 and 9). Similar signs or clues are to be found in the other charity pictures. These enabled the public of the day to identify the social position of the benefactors.

Bigg, Francis Wheatley (1747-1801), and Joseph Wright (1734-1797) of Derby all elicit the viewer's sympathy for their unfortunate victims of poverty. Bigg and Wheatley, however, are no rivals to Joseph Wright of Derby. Wright's *The Dead Soldier*, 1789, is a masterpiece of controlled sentiment (see 5). The painting was engraved twice, once in 1797 by James Heath who bought one of the two versions of the painting, and once in 1804 by William Dickinson (neither engraving is in this exhibition). With a series of

simple but effective techniques, Wright draws us in to study the plight of the young widow. In Wright's picture a beautiful young woman clutches her baby to her breast with one hand, and her dead husband with the other. Wright boldly places the figures in the left foreground, makes an effective screen of the soldier's tent, and further isolates the figures with dramatic lighting and shadows. The woman is essentially alone. Wright dramatically swept away the benefactors when he reduced the cast of characters with which other artists stocked their canvases. Unlike other representations of the victims of poverty, *The Dead Soldier* leaves us with questions. What is the woman going to do? What is going to happen

to her?

The significant exception among the later pictures to representing the poor as broken in spirit is *Distraint for Rent* by David Wilkie (1785-1841), exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1815 and engraved by Abraham Raimbach in 1828 (see 33). Wilkie's picture belongs to the same philanthropic genre as the works by Bigg and Edward Penny (1714-1791). Compare it to Bigg's *The Rapacious Steward* and Edward Penny's *The Generosity of Johnny Pearmain*. The members of Wilkie's victimized family look every bit as broken and incapable of fighting back as their earlier counterparts. But what is startling and new about Wilkie's picture is the clearly expressed anger of the neighbors toward



Joseph Wright of Derby (studio of), *The Dead Soldier*, oil on canvas, c. 1789, 40 × 50 inches.

the bailiffs. In this regard, Wilkie's picture has no counterpart in the earlier works, nor in all of British painting.

Wilkie may originally have planned a sequel showing the generosity of benefactors as a companion piece to *Distraint for Rent*. If he did, he had the occasion to think better of the idea. According to Wilkie's friend and fellow painter, Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846), gentlemen connoisseurs of art (who were also wealthy landlords) who saw the painting in the Academy exhibition criticized it heavily. It offended them and they thought it unfair. Their reaction alarmed Wilkie, who at this stage of his career depended on the patronage of these gentlemen. At any rate,

Wilkie painted no sequel and allowed thirteen years to lapse between the finished painting and the publication of the print.

It is safe to assume that most charity-subject *prints* were bought by the middle class. The question arises, however, that if this were indeed the case, why were the benefactors represented as the gentry? The short answer to this is that the middle class, who greatly admired the gentry (and who felt inferior to them in many ways), had a respect which almost amounted to awe for the gentry's long tradition of manners and morals. As a matter of pride, the middle class consciously emulated many of the practices of their "superiors." To encourage middle-class philanthropic

habits, no better model existed than that provided by their own gentry.

It is by no means clear, however, that the *paintings* from which most of the engravings of charity subjects were made were intended for the middle class. The painting *The Squire's Door* by George Morland (1763-1804), in subject, style, and size seems destined to have hung in the family rooms of a gentleman's house (see 3). The gentry bought Morland's pictures, though he reputedly was rude to them and liked to discourage them from coming to his studio. Knowledge of the early provenance of the paintings is crucial in puzzling out the problematic relationship between the painting, the print, and their audiences. In this instance, not enough is known about the paintings' early owners.



George Morland, *The Squire's Door*, oil on canvas, 15 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches.

The Poor as Comic Figures

Hogarth is, of course, the great master of the comic. Rather than discuss directly Hogarth's comic abilities, this guide now focuses on one or two works by artists who continued Hogarth's tradition.

The well-known artists who worked in the comic idiom following Hogarth are Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), George Morland (1763-1804), and Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827). Gainsborough and Morland painted the rustic life; Rowlandson drew rural and London life with equal ease. All these artists frequently worked in the comic, Rowlandson, nearly entirely. Wilkie (the engraving of whose comic picture *The Village Politicians* is in this exhibition, see 32) is in this instance the odd man out. As a young artist, he ventured into the comic but abandoned it a few years later. He had realized, quite correctly, that the comic in art had essentially run out of steam by his time.

Rowlandson, a popular and prolific artist, worked in the comic all his life. What made him popular were his watercolors and drawings of rustic life, and his views of Londoners enjoying their leisure in the gardens, parks, and open spaces of the city. Who bought Rowlandson's? Gentlemen connoisseurs of title and property purchased Rowlandson's watercolors and drawings, the Prince Regent among them. Printsellers also bought many drawings from the artist and marked them at prices low enough for the less

well-off among the middle class to afford.

Rowlandson on occasion also worked directly for print publishers. Ackermann, the publisher of Rowlandson's *Cries of London* (see two plates from the set, 29 and 30), probably commissioned Rowlandson to produce this set. The artist also produced designs for book illustrations, the most well-known of these being the colored plates for William Combe's *Doctor Syntax's Tour in Search of the Picturesque, A Poem*, published in 1813. The book, also published by Ackermann, sold for one guinea and proved enormously popular, going rapidly through many editions. Rowlandson's works were bought by a mixed public made up of aristocratic patrons of art, gentleman connoisseurs, and the middle class.

Ackermann published Rowlandson's *Cries of London* in 1799. "Buy a Trap, Buy my Trap", and "Water Cresses, Come buy my Water Cresses" are the first and the fifth of eight plates that made up the set. Rowlandson very probably intended his *Cries* as a deliberate satire on Wheatley's *Cries of London* (published 1793-97) which were sanitized images of London's street traders. Nonetheless, each of Rowlandson's *Cries* stands on its own as a comic image.

"Buy a Trap" is a scene of a street hawker, with his many wicker and wooden traps for sale strung about his body. He is seen attempting to sell a trap to a man who stands in a stall.

The features of the rat-trap seller and his potential customer are not comic but are exaggerated into caricature. From a second-story window above the stallkeeper, a pretty young woman looks down on the scene with an amused expression on her face. She is there to cue us on our own reading of the scene. To the fashionable crowd who daily thronged Ackermann's print shop in the Strand (Ackermann supplied a comfortable lounge for his customers to socialize in), the idea of the poor buying rat-traps may have been comic. In any case, Ackermann's customers would have recognized the setting for "Buy a Trap" as one of the rat-infested slums not far from Ackermann's store. The church spire and the old gabled houses seen behind the trapseller were typical of the slums of St. Giles; a short distance from the Strand; and Westminster, which was just the other side of the Thames from the Strand.

"Water Cresses, Come buy my Water Cresses" represents two street hawkers attempting to sell bunches of watercress. One is an attractive young woman carrying a basket of watercress and her baby on her back, and the other is a young child. They are standing outside a house on fashionable Portland Street which bears the name plate of Mrs. Burke on the door. An older man knocks on the door of the house and glares at the young child trying to sell him watercress. Two women hanging out of an upper window smile as they take in the scene below them. Their role (as the young woman's in plate number 1) is to cue us into our responses to the scene.

The blowsy and bejeweled appearance of the women at the window indicates that they are prostitutes and Mrs. Burke's house, a brothel. The man who knocks at the door is, of course, a client of the brothel. The two prostitutes may be amused at the scene because of the sexual implications of the proffered bunches of watercress, or they may simply be amused at the man's embarrassment. Rowlandson gives the brothel visitor what the period understood as Semitic features, and he savagely caricatures them—as he does the features of the man in the stall in plate 1. Rowlandson may or may not have borrowed

Hogarth's image of embarrassed "Jewish lust" from *A Harlot's Progress*, or the figure may have been a stock one both Hogarth and Rowlandson borrowed from popular art.

Superficially, Rowlandson seems to be a direct descendant of Hogarth. But Rowlandson's observations of the poor are based on a far less ambivalent attitude toward them than Hogarth's. Rowlandson, one feels, did not share Hogarth's fundamental respect for the poor. Rowlandson snickers at the poor, and he makes a modern audience uncomfortable with his cues and invitations to join in and share his fun.

David Wilkie's *The Village Politicians* was exhibited in the Academy exhibition of 1806. Abraham Raimbach engraved it, and the artist and engraver co-published it in 1814. The *Politicians* represents a group of villagers seated around a table engaged in a heated discussion. The oldest-looking member of the group holds a newspaper, the implication being that something he read aloud sparked off the debate. Wilkie had plucked the inspiration for his picture like a hot chestnut from the fires of the period's political unrest. In the early years of the century, the laboring classes were awakening to a political consciousness, and political discussions of two or three or more people, organized or spontaneous, were a feature of the times.

Wilkie, however, successfully cooled the subject. First, he effectively removed the scene from any contemporary relevance by making the setting of the *Politicians* an inn of his native Scotland, a land regarded by the average visitor to the Royal Academy as a remote and romantic place. Second, he painted *Politicians* in a style reminiscent of the 17th-century Dutch interior scene so beloved by English art collectors. (Wilkie's painting was in fact bought by the Earl of Mulgrave, a Scottish lord and art collector, who visited Wilkie's studio and saw Wilkie working on the painting.) Third, Wilkie portrayed his figures as standard rustic comic types, the sage, the hothead, the slow thinker, and the idiot.

Sir George Beaumont, a discerning collector and patron of the arts, was one of many who highly praised

Wilkie's picture. Sir George responded so enthusiastically to Wilkie's comic *Politicians* that he gave the young artist Hogarth's mahl stick, saying Wilkie had proved himself the owner worthy of it. Wilkie's *The Village Politicians* successfully put the poor in their place for his times.

John Barrell (in "The Private Comedy of Thomas Rowlandson," *Art History*, December 1983) argues that "rapid pictures" (i.e. Rowlandson's watercolors and drawings) were intended for "diverting only the private man." Further, Barrell continues, "it

climate of the late Georgian period. Barrell specifically discusses pictures of the "rapid" medium, which excludes the Rowlandsons and the Wilkie in the exhibition. Nonetheless, Barrell's remarks suggest an interesting way of accounting for the hostility toward the poor that surfaces in Rowlandson's caricatures and that underlies Wilkie's type-casting of the poor. Is this the flip side of the coin to the benevolence and the paternalism of the charity pictures of the same period?



Abraham Raimbach (after David Wilkie), *The Village Politicians*, engraving and etching, 1814, 20 × 24½ inches.

was in the informal graphic media that a comic image of the poor could pass without condemnation, for in the private spaces of their lives the polite could allow themselves the pleasure of not always demanding of themselves that they judge the behaviour of the poor . . . in the insistently moral terms of the public world" [4].

In other words, Barrell suggests that Rowlandson's graphic work, because of its more transitory nature, could get away with certain attitudes, which the more public media (of oils and prints) no longer could, especially in the extremely politically sensitive

Checklist of Objects

Preliminary Note: The measurements are given in centimeters (inches in parentheses). The measurements of the prints are of the plate mark and, in all cases, the height is given before width.

Paintings

1 William Redmore Bigg

The Rapacious Steward; or The Unfortunate Tenant, c. 1801

Oil on canvas, 102.9 x 127.3 (40 1/2 x 50 1/8), Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B 1981. 25.42

2 William Redmore Bigg

The Benevolent Heir; or The Tenant Restored to his Family, c. 1801

Oil on canvas, 102.2 x 127.6 (40 1/4 x 50 1/8), Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B 1981. 25.43

3 George Morland

The Squire's Door, c. 1790

Oil on canvas, Stretcher: 39.2 x 33.5 (15 3/8 x 13 3/8), Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B 1976. 7.58

4 Edward Penny

The Generosity of Johnny Pearmain; or Widow Costard's Cow and Goods Distrained for Taxes, are Redeemed by the Generosity of Johnny Pearmain, 1782

Oil on canvas, 91.5 x 78.75 (36 x 31), Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B 1981. 25.4981

5 Joseph Wright of Derby

The Dead Soldier, 1789

Oil on canvas, 101.6 x 127 (40 x 50), Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B 1974. 3.25

Prints



6 Robert Dunkarton after William Redmore Bigg

The Soldier's Widow; or Schoolboys' Collection

Mezzotint, published by James Daniell, 1802, 50.25 x 64.55 (19 3/4 x 25 3/8). Color Printed with hand coloring, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B 1977. 14.11088

7 Benjamin Duterreue after George Morland

The Squire's Door

Stipple engraving, published by J.R. Smith, 1790, 38.1 x 50.1 (15 x 19 3/4), Color printed with hand coloring, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B 1977. 14.12013

8 Haveill Gillbank after William Redmore Bigg

The Rapacious Steward; or Unfortunate Tenant

Mezzotint, published by James Daniell, 1803, 50.1 x 62.4 (19 3/4 x 24 1/2), Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B 1981. 25.767

9 Haveill Gillbank after William Redmore Bigg

The Benevolent Heir; or The Tenant Restored to his Family

Mezzotint, published by James Daniell, 1803, 46.1 x 60.9 (18 1/8 x 24), Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B 1981. 25.768

10-15 William Hogarth

A Harlot's Progress, Plates 1-6

Engraving and etching, 1732

Plate 1 32.5 x 38.7 (12 3/4 x 15 1/4)

Plate 2 31.2 x 38.1 (12 1/4 x 15)

Plate 3 29.8 x 36.9 (11 3/4 x 14 1/2)

Plate 4 31.8 x 38.7 (12 1/2 x 15 1/4)

Plate 5 32.5 x 38.7 (12 3/4 x 15 1/4)

Plate 6 31.8 x 38.7 (12 1/2 x 15 1/4)

SUNY-Binghamton, 1965. 162-167

16-27 William Hogarth

Industry and Idleness, Plates 1-12

Engraving and etching, 1747

Plate 1 "The Fellow 'Prentices at their Looms" 27 x 35.5 (10 5/8 x 14) State II

Plate 2 "The Industrious 'Prentice performing the duty of a Christian" 26.8 x 35.5 (10 9/16 x 14) State II

Plate 3 "The Idle 'Prentice at Play in the Church Yard" 27.3 x 35 (10 3/4 x 13 3/4) State II

Plate 4 "The Industrious 'Prentice a Favorite and Entrusted by his Master" 27 x 35.2 (10 5/8 x 13 3/8) State II

Plate 5 "The Idle 'Prentice Turned Away and Sent to Sea" 27 x 35.2 (10 5/8 x 13 3/8) State II

Plate 6 "The Industrious 'Prentice out of his Time and Married to his Master's Daughter" 26.8 x 35.8 (10 9/16 x 13 3/8) State IV

Plate 7 "The Idle 'Prentice Returned from Sea and in a Garret with a Common Prostitute" 26.4 x 34.3 (10 3/8 x 13 1/25) State II

Plate 8 "The Industrious 'Prentice Grown Rich and Sheriff of Lon-

don" 26.7 x 35 (10 1/2 x 13 3/4) State II

Plate 9 "The Idle 'Prentice Betrayed by his Whore and Taken in a Night Cellar with his Accomplice" 27 x 35 (10 5/8 x 13 3/4) State III

Plate 10 "The Industrious 'Prentice Alderman of London, the Idle One Brought before him & Impeached by his Accomplice" 26 x 34.3 (10 1/2 x 13 1/2) State II

Plate 11 "The Idle 'Prentice Executed at Tyburn" 27 x 40.2 (10 3/4 x 14 7/8) State II

Plate 12 "The Industrious 'Prentice Lord Mayor of London" 26.7 x 40 (10 1/2 x 15 3/4)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Plates 1-10, 12, Gift of Sarah Lazarus, 1891. 1.9-18, 91.1.20; Plate 11, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1932. 32.35 (48)



28 James Hogg after Francis Wheatley

John Howard, Esq. Visiting and Relieving the Miseries of a Prison

Line engraving, published by Thomas Simpson, 1790, 50.0 x 62.5 (19 1/2 x 24 5/8), Yale Center for British Art, Gift of David Alexander, B 1980. 20.2

29 H. Merke after Thomas Rowlandson

Cries of London

"Buy a Trap, a Rat-Trap, Buy my Trap," Etching and Aquatint with hand coloring, published by R. Ackermann's, 1799, 29.2 x 37.5 (11 1/2 x 14 3/4), Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B 1977. 14. 12982

30 H. Merke after Thomas Rowlandson

Cries of London, 5

"Water Cresses, Come buy my Water

Cresses," Etching and Aquatint with hand coloring, published by R. Ackermann's, 1799, 29.8 x 36.2 (11 3/4 x 14 1/4), Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B 1977. 14. 12983



31 William Nutter after Francis Wheatley

The Benevolent Cottager

Stipple engraving, published by Bull & Jeffryes, 1788, 54.7 x 40.6 (21 1/2 x 16), Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B 1977. 14. 14511

32 Abraham Raimbach after David Wilkie

The Village Politicians

Engraving and etching, published by Wilkie and Raimbach, 1814, 51.0 x 62.5 (20 x 24 1/2), Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B 1977. 14. 14559

33 Abraham Raimbach after David Wilkie

Distraint for Rent

Engraving and etching, published by Wilkie and Raimbach, 1828, 50.8 x 66 (20 x 26), Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B 1977. 14. 14550

34 William Sedgwick after Edward Penny

Widow Costard's Cow and Goods Distrainted for Rent, are Redeemed by the Generosity of Johnny Pearmain

Stipple engraving, published by John Boydell, 1784, 35.5 x 27.3 (14 x 10 3/4), Yale Center for British Art,

Paul Mellon Collection, B 1978, 43. 293

35 William Ward after William Redmore Bigg

The Sailor's Orphans; or Young Ladies' Subscription

Mezzotint, published by the painter, 1800, 48.5 x 60.3 (19 1/8 x 23 3/4), Color printed with hand coloring, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B 1977. 14. 11085

36 Charles Wilkin after Sir William Beechey

Here Poor Boy!

Stipple engraving, State 1, published by the painter, 1796, 52.1 x 42.5 (20 1/2 x 16 3/4), trimmed within the plate mark, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund, B 1970, 3. 483

Drawing

28

37 Thomas Stothard,

Charity Children and Little Vagabonds

Watercolor, pen and ink, pencil, Signed lower left 14.6 x 17.1 (5 3/4 x 6 3/4), Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B 1977. 14. 5155

Endnotes

1 Derek Jarrett, *England in the Age of Hogarth* (London, 1974), 15.

2 E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, 1968), 60.

3 Jarrett, 147.

4 John Barrell, "The private comedy of Thomas Rowlandson," *Art History*, 6, 4, December 1983, 433, 434.

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