

**British Satire from Hogarth to Cruikshank
(1760-1820)**

Exhibition labels for docents

**This exhibition was organized and labels were written by Drew Stevens from the holdings of
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British Satire

Satire was one of the staples of London life in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. It had been given new importance by the prints of William Hogarth, whose artistic skill and earnest desire to reform his fellow man set a high standard for the satirists of his day. Though satirizing types more often than individuals, Hogarth produced a number of personal and political satires late in his career.

Gillray, Cruikshank, and Rowlandson, the most popular printmakers of their generation, produced prints in far larger quantities than Hogarth and made them very quickly, to keep them abreast of the times. National and international events spurred them to flurries of printmaking. News of important battles to rumors of royal peccadilloes were likely targets for them, but human vanity and excesses continued Hogarth's style of more anonymous satire.

Persons

Famous people were natural targets for satires, whether royalty, politicians, or simply someone whom the satirist disliked. They were fair game for satire in the famously free British press. Collections of satires were shown in their publishers' windows for the amusement of passersby, or one could rent a portfolio of satires for an evening's entertainment at the coffeehouse.

William Hogarth

English, 1697–1764

Simon Lord Lovat, August 1746

Etching (state 2)

University Fund purchase, 66.8.57

Simon, Lord Lovet was one of the most notorious of a group of rebels in Scotland who had fought through the winter of 1745 and been defeated by English troops in April of 1746. Hogarth produced this very simply drawn image during the fall of that year, just after Lovet had been sent to the Tower of London and others involved in the rebellion had been executed. It was among the most popular of Hogarth's prints, selling as many as 10,000 impressions in his lifetime. This combination of popular subject and quick production set a new tone for Hogarth's works, presaging the more simplified satires of the next generation.

William Hogarth

English, 1697–1764

John Wilkes, Esqr., May 1763

Etching (state 1)

University Fund purchase, 66.8.56

Shown cross-eyed, and with an oddly shaped wig whose waves suggest horns, Wilkes was a personal foe of Hogarth, having criticized in the *North Briton* Number 17, on the table beside him. Wilkes had just been released from jail for attacking the king in *North Briton* 45. The cap of liberty, which would be used to signify French revolutionaries, is precariously perched above his head.

William Hogarth
English, 1697–1764
The Bruiser (Charles Churchill), August 1763
Etching and engraving (state 7)
University Fund purchase, 66.8.73

After his caricature of Wilkes, Hogarth was attacked by Charles Churchill in a long and insulting epistle. Hogarth's reply, produced two months later, is this print, that portrays Churchill as a drunken bear supported by a club whose knots are lies in the journal *North Briton*. Churchill's epistle is seen under the pug, Hogarth's pet. This is among Hogarth's last prints.

Isaac Cruikshank
Scottish, 1764–1810/11
Winging a Shy Cock, 1808
Hand-colored etching
Loan of Art and Susan Mitchell

Lt.-General Whitelocke had been in command of a British attack on Buenos Aires in 1807. When the attack foundered, he capitulated, managing to save the lives of those taken prisoner, but also agreeing to evacuate the province within two months. At his court-martial, which had concluded two days before the publication of this print, he was found guilty of unnecessarily and shamefully surrendering advantages gained at heavy cost.

In this print, he is shown being stripped of his signs of rank while a demon tempts him with suicide.

James Gillray
Scottish, 1757–1815
Uncorking Old Sherry, 1805
Colored etching
Gift of the Heirs of William S. Marshall, 53.8.11

Richard Sheridan, member of the House of Commons, was criticized by Pitt for a particularly long oration in the course of a debate over a bill tendered by Pitt.

Of Sheridan's speech, Pitt replied, "All his hoarded repartees, all his matured jests, . . . all his severe invectives . . . he kindles into a blaze of eloquence, and it comes out together, whether it has any relation to the subject in debate or not." The debate lasted

well into the early morning of March 7, and by March 10 this print had been published showing Pitt uncorking a bottle containing the head of Sheridan which froths violently.

The scene is the House of Commons, and in the benches are various bottled members including Fox labeled as "True French Wine," to demean his ideas as suspiciously revolutionary.

C. Williams
British, active 1801–1830
A New Bravura with a Duett Affettuoso, 1802
Hand-colored etching
Gift of the heirs of William S. Marshall, 53.8.5

There was a rumored dalliance between the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Elizabeth Billington, who at the time was the lead in Sheridan's opera *The Duenna*. Here the Prince of Wales, recognizable by the three feathers in his hat, stands between the actress and Mrs. Fitzherbert, whom he had secretly married seven years before. His brother, Prince Frederick Augustus, Duke of York, cautions him and waves a patent medicine that supposedly cured syphilis.

Isaac Cruikshank
Scottish, 1764–1810/11
The Pot Calling the Kettle Black, 1791
Colored etching
Gift of the heirs of William S. Marshall, 53.8.2

The two women in conflict are Mrs. Dorothea Jordan—an actress rumored to be in an affair with Prince William Henry, Duke of Clarence (second from the right)—and Mrs. Maria Fitzherbert, who had been secretly married to George, Prince of Wales (at the far right) in 1785. Mrs. Fitzherbert's confidence in her secure position was misplaced; at the time it was illegal for the prince either to marry a Catholic or to marry without the consent of his father, the king. The marriage was annulled in 1794, when George agreed to marry Caroline of Brunswick, in order to persuade Parliament to pay off his enormous debts.

This print was been captioned by an unknown owner with the identities of all the participants.

James Gillray
British, 1757–1815
A New Way to Pay the National Debt, 1786
Colored etching
Gift of Harold E. Kubly, 55.4.4

This print, quite critical of King George III and Queen Charlotte, shows them receiving a wheelbarrow of money from Pitt. They stand before the treasury from which they have filled their pockets to overflowing. On the walls of the treasury behind them are tattered handbills exhorting economy and charity. The lack of charity is also represented by the quadriplegic sailor, begging at the lower left. The print was occasioned by Pitt's proposal to pay off the personal debts of the king and queen which was debated two weeks before the publication of the print.

At the right the Prince of Wales, notorious for his debts and in rags, is offered a £200,000 loan by the son of the French Duc d'Orléans, an arrangement that deeply disturbed some British because of implications of French influence.

Politics

Satire not only took political issues as one of its subjects, but proved to be a persuasive force like the attack ads of today's campaigns. Charles James Fox, a Whig politician who opposed many of the policies of James III, said that satires "had done him more mischief than the debates in Parliament or the works of the press."

William Hogarth

English, 1697–1764

The Times, Plate 1, September 1762

Etching and engraving

University Fund purchase, 66.8.66

Political satire was never one of Hogarth's main interests, and in his autobiography he says that this particular print was made more to make money than to advance the art of satire. It introduces some of the main characters who would hold sway over British politics for the next three decades in the rather tiny person of Fox who appears coming out of the doghouse at the lower left of the print. The complex imagery places Charles in the middle with the dove of peace flying over him as he attempts to put out the fire that threatens Europe (symbolized as a row of houses marked with a fleur-de-lis for France, an eagle for Germany, and globe for, well, the world. Various allies and enemies help or hinder this process, including William Pitt the Elder, stilts taking the place of his crutches and a millstone around his neck symbolizing his questionable annual income.

Thomas Rowlandson

English, 1756–1827

A Charm for a Democracy, 1799

Engraving

Loan of Art and Susan Mitchell

Democracy, here equated with the French revolution, holds no charms in this satire; the most recent example before the public in 1799 was the bloody revolution in France, followed by the rise of Napoleon. It was common to conflate the opposition with the radical press and portray it championing the excesses of the French revolution.

In this print opposition members including Fox and Sheridan pay homage to a demon who oversees a cauldron fed by a fire of sedition in inflammatory books and papers. The devil demands, "Pour in streams of regal blood, then the charm is firm and good," in an allusion to the French regicides. Meanwhile the king at upper right, through divine influence, prepares to put the company to flight.

Unknown

English

Prospero on the Enchanted Island, 1798

Hand-colored etching

Loan of Art and Susan Mitchell

George the Third stands on a French flag, on a cliff in Albion, a poetic name for England, and points his whip across the English channel to Paris, where a demon squats. The print's background shows ships flying English and French flags towing other, dismasted ships toward Albion; this probably refers to Nelson's victory over the French in the battle of the Nile on August first of 1798.

The demon that possesses Paris wears a tricolor cockade behind his ear, symbolic of the French Revolution. So the print uses the occasion of an English victory over France to uphold England's system of constitution monarchy.

James Gillray

Scottish, 1757–1815

Political Dreamings, 1802

Colored etching

Gift of Harold E. Kubly, 55.4.5

The peace settlement that was signed with France was vigorously argued against by William Windham, the sleeping character in the center of this print. At one point in the debate he asked facetiously whether the terms that allowed France to retain its conquests and former colonies were “idle dreams, the phantoms of my disordered imagination?”

Typically, death is seen wearing French colors and treading English accomplishments and icons. Meanwhile, from the head of the bed French royalty executed in the revolution and English, who might be in danger if the revolution spreads across the channel, plead to Windham. Fox, as a demon squats, at the foot of the bed, and Pitt guides the hand of a young man who writes “Peace” on the death warrant of Britannia whom Napoleon leads to the guillotine. In the background at the far left a French flag flies from the Tower of London.

James Gillray
Scottish, 1757–1815
More Pigs than Teats, 1806
Colored etching
Gift of Harold E. Kubly, 55.4.6

The jostling piglets around the sow represent the various parties competing for positions in the Fox government. The majority of those who were successful were of Fox's opposition party, who were rewarded with positions including that of the Lord of the Treasury and Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Even the Prince of Wales, a supporter of Fox, is identifiable in the crush by his blue sash.

Farmer John Bull's comment, "She'll make but bad bacon for Boney, when they's all done sucking o' her," refers to Napoleon Bonaparte.

C. Williams
British, active 1801–1830
Amsterdam, a Drama, 1787
Hand-colored etching
Loan of Art and Susan Mitchell

In July and August, during a civil war in Holland, a revolutionary group called the Patriots with the support of the French was attempting to oust the Orangists, who were eventually supported by England and Prussia. With the defeat of the Patriots at Amsterdam, William V of Orange's tenure as Statholder was secured.

In this print, the final acts of the revolution are played out. An obese William V deals out blows to the Dutch merchants, represented by frogs who try to curry favor with gifts; his queen is in the background. An international audience watches, including Louis XVI of France, who witnesses the defeat of his allies, and George III of England below him who waves a club at him, threatening to become the next act in the pantomime. At the left side a conflict, brewing between Turkey and Prussia in the persons of their rulers, also threatens to take center stage.

Londoners

The foibles of the rich and poor could still be jeered at, even if the subject was anonymous. However, since part of the entertainment of these prints was puzzling out the characters involved, it is certain that perfectly anonymous characters in prints were often identified with particular people.

William Hogarth

English, 1697–1764

The Sleeping Congregation, 1736

Etching and engraving

University Fund purchase, 66.8.68

In an unusually simple print, Hogarth satirizes the tedious pastor who has managed to put the entire congregation to sleep, aside from the clerk who leers at a young parishioner. Before nodding off, her reading has been the section of the prayerbook entitled “On Matrimony.”

Thomas Rowlandson

English 1756–1827

A Charity Sermon, 1805

Pen, black and brown ink, and watercolor over pencil

Edward Blake Blair Endowment Fund purchase, 1999.79

Rowlandson's watercolor places the fat and irritable Reverend Cantwell in front of a handbill stuck to a wall proclaiming “Rev. Cantwell Sermon on Charity,” while he rebuffs the pleas of a young mother and her children.

William Hogarth
English, 1697–1764
A Midnight Modern Conversation, 1732/33
Engraving
Gift of Robert Avery, 49.6.2

Hogarth may have decided to publish this print (which is based on a painting of about a year before) in response to the hubbub in London against a new excise tax being proposed on liquor and tobacco. This satire, where drunken excess is ironically called “Modern Conversation,” was enormously popular and was pirated by other printmakers as well as being reproduced on fans, snuff-boxes, and tankards. Though the print's caption claims that it contains no portraits, this may be disingenuous since various guesses were made of the people in the print.

Isaac Cruikshank
Scottish, 1764–1810/11
A Long Headed Minuet, ca. 1806
Colored etching
Gift of the Heirs of William S. Marshall, 53.8.7

These grotesque, but stylishly dressed figures are featured in several satires of the period, and they may represent an upwardly mobile class of London society with pretentious ambitions.

Robert Cruikshank
Scottish, 1789–1856
A Dandy Fainting, or An Exquisite in Fits, December 11, 1818
Colored etching
Gift of Harold E. Kubly, 55.4.3

The dandy was a recurring figure in the satires around 1800. He is generally shown dressed in tightly fitting clothes with pinched waists betraying the wearing of stays (a kind of whalebone-stiffened girdle), gloves, and high collars. The dandies are characterized as vain and aesthetic, as here where a combination of tight stays and a fine performance has caused one of a group of their company to faint in a particularly elegant opera loge.

William Hogarth
English, 1697–1764
The Distressed Poet, 1740 (first state 1736/37)
Etching and engraving
University Fund purchase, 66.8.29

Showing an anonymous poet scribbling in a squalid garret while their landlord presents his wife with a bill, this satire of type, rather than particular individual, was in general the rule for Hogarth. Inspired perhaps by Pope's *Dunciad* (itself a satire on the mediocre poets eking out a living), the print spells out the sad results of overblown ambition.

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Thomas Rowlandson
English, 1756–1827
The Chamber of Genius, 1806
Etching with color wash
Gift of the Heirs of William S. Marshall, 53.8.12

The struggling artist, like the grub-street writers of Hogarth's time, became a commonplace for frustrated ambitions. In Rowlandson's print the genius paints a Blakean prophet in the midst of a chaotic chamber where books, musical and alchemical instruments, and clothing are strewn haphazardly about. One child tends the fire, while the other pours a cup of gin. The genius himself has overturned a chamberpot. However, Rowlandson's choice of verse for the caption is sympathetic enough that some critics regard this as a self-portrait.

C. Williams

British, active 1801–1830

A Bit of Flattery, 1811

Hand-colored etching

Gift of Harold E. Kubly, 55.4.7

This satire on painters and their sitters places a painter named Flannegan in front of a portrait of an immense woman, painted as Juno. His flattery of the woman may be intended to secure another commission to paint her.

Isaac Cruikshank

Scottish, 1764–1810/11

Very Unpleasant Weather, April 27, 1820

Etching with color wash

Gift of the Heirs of William S. Marshall, 53.8.9

In a literal interpretation of the cliché “raining cats, dogs, and pitchforks” Cruikshank illustrates the implications of such a downpour, as people on the street are variously pummeled and pierced. Strangely unaffected is the fashionably dressed man at the right of the print.

Isaac Cruikshank

Scottish, 1764–1810/11

Taking an Emetic, March 12, 1800

Color etching

Gift of Harold E. Kubly, 55.4.2

One of a pair of prints parodying the indignities of contemporary medicine, this print contrasts the tidy drawing room with the activity of the vomiting woman and her apparently similarly disposed cat.

France

Frequently at odds with the English, French celebrities and stereotypes are often the butts of English satires. Particularly during and after the French Revolution, and the rise to power of Napoleon, English satirists show a deep distrust of the French combined with fear that the chaos of the revolution might spread to England.

William Hogarth

English, 1697–1764

The Gate of Calais, or the Roast Beef of Old England, 1749

Etching and engraving

University Fund purchase, 66.8.33

Hogarth's own arrest during a trip to France gave rise to this print that ridicules French soldiers as thin and French priests as fat. Hogarth himself appears at the left of the print, drawing. The hand on his shoulder belongs to the guard who is about to arrest him.

James Gillray

Scottish, 1757–1815

French Liberty—British Slavery, 1792

Hand-colored etching

Gift of James S. Watrous, 67.11.1

Contrasting the starving French with the well-fed British was already an old tradition. In this print, the optimism of the French revolutionary (recognizable by his cap of liberty decorated by a ribbon cockade) despite his dinner of raw onions is also shown in contrast with the obese Briton grumbling about taxes while he tucks into a hearty meal in comfortable surroundings.

Isaac Cruikshank

Scottish, 1764–1810/11

Buonaparte at Rome Giving Audience in State, March 12, 1797

Color etching

Gift of Harold E. Kubly, 55.4.1

This is the first known appearance of Napoleon Bonaparte in British satires. The rag-tag general visiting a variety of indignities on the Pope of Rome derives from rumors that the treaty of Tolentino, which was being negotiated when this print was published, would be disastrous for Italy.

C. Williams

British, active 1801–1830

A Trip to Paris or John Bull and His Spouse Invited to the Honors of a Sitting!!, 1802

Hand-colored etching

Gift of the Heirs of William S. Marshall, 53.8.1

England and Ireland, represented by a bumpkin John Bull and pretentious Hibernia, are entertained by an overly solicitous Bonaparte. Recently joined by the union into an uneasy alliance, England and Ireland

are faced with the disturbing prospect of a newly friendly France after the treaty of Amiens in March 1802. After the treaty, English tourists immediately flocked to France.

Isaac Cruikshank

Scottish, 1764–1810/11

The Hero's Return, February 22, 1813

Hand-colored etching

Gift of the Heirs of William S. Marshall, 53.8.8

When Napoleon returned to Paris from the Russian front in December of 1812, he was worn from the campaign and the rigors of the trip. Coming through Paris without fanfare, Napoleon reached Versailles without being recognized. This print implies that the reason for his incognito was because he had lost nose, ears, and fingers during the campaign. His son and wife respond in terror and despair.

