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John Gay's The Beggar's Opera: early eighteenth century responses in the arts to cultural, sociological and political issues in London life.

Frances Clare Sherwood

Differing responses in art media to these contemporary issues of London life are explored, taking John Gay's The Beggar's Opera as the focal point for discussion. Initially, a general survey is made of Gay's role as cultural, social and moral critic. Comparison with George Frederick Handel's Floridante allows Gay's work to be placed in the context of operatic responses to contemporary society, highlighting usage both of overt portrayal and indirect satire.

Gay's approach to political issues is examined alongside that of Dean Swift's Gulliver's Travels enabling an estimation to be made of the effectiveness of these art media as tools of political propaganda. Similarly, responses in the field of painting are discussed in the light of representative works of James Thornhill and William Hogarth's A Harlot's Progress and A Rake's Progress.

In considering all these responses it is noted that art can be interpreted at differing levels, from the sophisticated to the naive. All these art media are then placed in the context of artistic philosophy of the period, thus facilitating an objective assessment of the parallels and differences of art's responses to contemporary issues. Taking into account inherent limitations in the media, to conclude our study, Hogarth's The Beggar's Opera Scenes are compared and contrasted with Gay's prototype.

The thesis highlights the trend towards realism in the arts during this period. Nevertheless, we are left with the conundrum that art, 'per se', can only 'mirror' life. It does not necessarily solve its problems.

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Music. University of Durham Department of Music 1989.

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Department of Music

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PREFACE

Art in any period reflects and interprets social, cultural, economic and political forces. At the same time, the objectivity of the artist is tempered by the need for and demands of patronage. This thesis aims to analyse early eighteenth-century responses in the arts to such issues in contemporary London life.

This period is particularly noteworthy since it demonstrates an important change in perspective, away from artificiality towards realistic observation, with a corresponding regard for the truth. Moreover, art concerned itself increasingly with the life of the lower classes, thus meeting the tastes of a more heterogeneous audience. Through satire, the artist, as social critic, lampooned social and moral evils of character and action which needed remedying.

Nowhere is this more powerfully exemplified than in John Gay's The Beggar's Opera (1728), the focus of this thesis. This opera best enables an objective study to be made of responses in the arts to issues of London life. First, it marks a radical departure in opera because of its use of popular tunes and 'low' subject-matter. Second, Gay through this work exercises his talent for satire, a tool of political and social propaganda, complying with the contemporary maxim that art should entertain as well as instruct. Finally, the possibility that this work is biased by Gay's own disappointed search for preferment, highlights the artist's subjective response



to the complex system of patronage that permeated contemporary society.

Gay's response to London life in this work will be considered alongside that of contemporary artists in the fields of opera, literature, and painting. Comparisons will be made with George Frederic Handel's opera Floridante (1719), and Dean Swift's Gulliver's Travels (1726). In the field of painting James Thornhill's Allegory of London and The Four Cardinal Virtues (The Aldermen's Court Room, Guildhall, 1727), will be considered, and in greater depth, William Hogarth's A Harlot's Progress (1732) and A Rake's Progress (1733). Finally, by considering the limitations inherent in each medium, an attempt will be made to assess the effectiveness of the artist's objective as a critic of society.



Part I

Early eighteenth-century responses in opera  
and literature to social, cultural  
and political issues

Chapter 1

John Gay: life and works

The Beggar's Opera was composed in the Autumn of 1727 at precisely the time when Gay's long-cherished hopes of achieving financial security through a place at court had come to a disappointed end.

Gay was born in Barnstaple in 1685, the younger son of parents of the provincial gentry. For a young man with talent, but without independent wealth, the patronage system offered the only realistic means of advancement, and Gay, in common with many of his contemporaries, devoted most of his life to working it. In an age when literature and politics were closely interrelated, Gay went for some years in expectation of being given an easy government position. Sinecure often followed the publication of poems, and Gay had excellent friends. But, as he himself bitterly commented: "They wonder at each other for not providing for me, and I wonder at them all".<sup>1</sup>

In 1707, Gay moved to London and took a post as secretary to his childhood friend Aaron Hill, a wealthy and well-connected young man who was able to introduce his protégé to a circle of influential people in the capital. Hill helped Gay to publish his first important poem, Wine in 1708, and his patronage opened the door to friendship with many of the most influential writers of the day, including Joseph Addison and Richard Steele and notably, Alexander Pope. In 1712, Gay and the latter collaborated

on a volume called Miscellaneous Poems and Translations. Gay's literary reputation was now becoming established; his poem Rural Sports was published in January 1712 and a play, The Wife of Bath, was performed the following May. By the end of that same year, Gay had composed his brilliant set of mock pastorals, The Shepherd's Week.

Gay, by this time, had many influential friends, one of whom obtained for him the appointment of domestic secretary to the Duchess of Monmouth. At the same time he strove constantly to gain royal patronage, but with little success. In 1714, he accompanied the Earl of Clarendon on a diplomatic mission to Hanover, where he was favourably received by the Princess Caroline. She continued to receive him when she came to London as the Princess of Wales later that year. However, she disregarded all his requests for a place at court.

By the beginning of 1714 Gay was a member of the Scriblerius Club, a group of young literary wits, which included Pope and Swift, centred around the Tory politician, Lord Oxford. Indeed, the wits of the Scriblerius Club were intimately associated with the Tory Government, which, unfortunately for Gay, fell from power at the death of Queen Anne in the Summer of 1714. Thus, hopes of advancement through political patronage collapsed. Gay's old friends were now powerless to help him and the newly triumphant Whigs regarded him as an enemy.

In spite of this, Gay's literary career continued to flourish. The year 1716 saw the publication of his most ambitious poem yet, the mock-georgic Trivia, or the Art of

Walking the Streets of London, as well as the production of a comic play, Three Hours After Marriage, on which he had collaborated with fellow Scriblerians, Pope and Dr John Arbuthnot. Both works were successful and profitable, but neither provided long-term financial security. It seemed that he had achieved this in 1720 when the publication of his Poems on Several Occasions earned him the comfortable sum of £1,000. Alas! Gay was unable to resist the speculative fever which was sweeping England at the time. He invested most of his money in the South Sea Company stock, and when the South Sea Bubble<sup>2</sup> burst the bulk of Gay's fortune went with it.

Gay's hopes of patronage waxed again in 1721, when the political tide appeared to be moving in favour of his old friend Sir William Pulteney, but the real power lay in the hands of Sir Robert Walpole, who was revealing himself to be the master politician of the age, and who had long distrusted Gay's Tory inclinations. Thus, Gay had to wait until 1723 to receive even a minor post, a commissionership of State Lotteries worth £150 per annum. At the same time Gay was granted an apartment in Whitehall. Yet, still dissatisfied, he continued to reach out to Walpole with willing hands. "He seemed, at least for a time, hardly less willing to be patronized than to criticise. Walpole heard his appeals, but he soon tired of their ways."<sup>3</sup> Gay's chief difficulty was that his principal friend at court was the Prince of Wales's mistress, Mrs Howard. Caroline, the Princess of Wales, remained outwardly friendly to Gay, but kept her husband

under efficient control and was, moreover, an ally of Walpole's. In consequence, the voice of Mrs Howard, was unlikely to be influential when it came to filling vacancies in the royal household.

Gay himself, aware of this, decided by 1725 to try another tactic. Princess Caroline had a four-year-old son, Prince William Augustus, for whom Gay wrote a series of verse fables. These Fifty Fables were published in March 1727. They show both his ability as a satirist and his unflinching attitude towards the hypocrisy of high society. The last of them, The Hare and Many Friends, has unusual strength and bitterness. Gay, himself, is the hare, worn out from being hunted and imploring the other fleeing animals for assistance. They all have excellent reasons for not giving him any. The Fables were an immediate and long-lasting success, and Gay must have thought that his hopes for preferment were at last to be realized, especially when on the death of George I, June 1727, Princess Caroline became Queen. But, Walpole's hold over the Government was as strong as ever.

Although Walpole had subscribed to the 1720 edition of Gay's Poems on Several Occasions and had agreed to Gay's appointment in 1723, any close relationship between the two men seems to have evaporated by the time Henry Bolingbroke and Pulteney organised the Opposition Party in 1727. This was probably because of the failure of the Queen Caroline-Walpole alliance to recognise Gay's merits in any material sense, and because of Gay's close alliance

with Walpole's foremost Tory critics. When the new list of court appointments was published in October 1727, Gay, in spite of years of flattery and intrigue, was offered only the post of Gentleman Usher to the two-year-old Princess Louisa, worth £150 a year. Bitterly, he refused this.

There seem to have been many machinations employed afterwards in his favour. Diligent court was paid by Mrs Howard, to engage her interest for his promotion. Nonetheless, solicitations, verses, and flatteries were thrown away; the lady heard them, and did nothing. Nevertheless, all the pain which Gay suffered from the neglect, or, as he perhaps termed it, the ingratitude of the court, may be supposed to have been driven away by the unexampled success of The Beggar's Opera, produced at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre in January 1728.

Like some of the characters he was to create in The Beggar's Opera, Gay, through his earlier works, had "sniffed the perfumes of the rich but inhaled the sour smells of the poor".<sup>4</sup> The Mohawks (1712), a tragi-comical farce, exposed the brutality of certain men of fashion who habitually banded together and carried out attacks by night on innocent travellers and wayfarers. Gay's trifle makes fun of the incompetence and cowardice of the constable, the watch and the magistracy. We find a trace of that topsy-turvy morality, that atmosphere of villainy, from the best possible motives, in these words of the Emperor of Mohawks:

May the dull slave be bigotted to virtue;  
And tread no more the pleasing Paths of Vice,<sup>5</sup>  
And then at last die a mean whining Penitent.

Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London (1716)

likewise presents a vivid and many-sided picture of contemporary London society. Take for example these extracts from the third book, Of Walking the Streets by Night:

Where Lincoln's Inn's wide space is rail'd around,  
Cross not with vent'rous steps, there oft is found  
The lurking thief, who while the day-light shone,  
Made the walls echo with his begging love;  
That crutch which late compassion mov'd, shall wound  
Thy bleeding Head, and fell thee to the ground. 6

Again, the prostitutes 'Of Drury's many courts and dark abode' are treated with realism and moral undertones:

'Tis she who nightly strowls with saunt'ring pace,  
No stubborn stays her yielding shape embrace;  
Beneath the Lamp her tawdry ribbons glare,  
The new-flower'd manteau, and the flattern air;  
...With flatt'ring sounds she soothes the cred'lous ear,  
My noble captain! Charmer! Love! My dear! 7

Moved by a natural wish to capitalise on the success of The Beggar's Opera Gay composed a sequel, Polly in the Summer of 1728, but the staging of this less well-known work was forbidden by the authorities. Walpole probably expected the sequel to be a wholehearted attack on himself, the court, and the government. He could not afford to take any chances. Further, he wanted to discourage Gay from writing more satirical plays, as Lord Hervey wrote in his Memoirs:

Sir Robert resolved, rather than suffer himself to be produced for thirty nights together upon the stage in the person of a highwayman, to make use of his friend the Duke of Grafton's authority as Lord Chamberlain to put a stop to the representation of it. 8

The Beggar's Opera was Gay's last success. The fate

of its sequel bore out the play's most cynical assumptions about public life and Gay wrote little more after Polly. A couple of minor plays and a second volume of Fables complete his catalogue of works. He lived increasingly away from the intrigues and glamour of the town, spending most of his time at the country residence of his last patroness and friend, the Duchess of Queensberry. He died in December 1732.

The air of surface good-humour concealing a wry, bitter sense of the pervasiveness of human folly and wickedness which runs through Gay's literary output, is aptly reflected in the epitaph he composed for himself:

Life is a jest; and all things show it,  
I thought so once; but now I know it. 9

\* \* \*



Early eighteenth-century London life

At the time of The Beggar's Opera, London society was radically divided between the extremes of poverty and wealth. A vast and complex system of patronage operated throughout the social strata. The rich and powerful had control over a large number of more or less well-paid positions both in Church and State, and these they disposed of as their interest or inclinations led. Many of these positions included, in turn, the power to dispose of other lesser positions, so that the system extended the whole way down the social scale until it reached the level of the labouring poor.

The metropolis at this time was growing rapidly out from its centre within the city walls. The city had been largely destroyed and rebuilt after The Great Fire of 1666, and partly as a consequence, the prosperous classes had moved westwards. They set themselves up in grand, spacious and well-ordered squares, in deliberate contrast to the winding alleys and courtyards of other parts of London. Moreover, here, the prevailing wind gave the prosperous classes some relief from the "Fumes, steams, and stinks of the whole Easterly Pyle".<sup>10</sup> This division of London into city and West End became more marked towards the end of the seventeenth century, a great age of speculative building. By the turn of the eighteenth century, the gentry were moving from the old fashionable quarters of St Giles, Covent Garden and Soho into the new developments to the west.

As the rich moved to these new western suburbs, the parts of London that they vacated became progressively disreputable. The increase in population, and the consequent demand for cheap housing meant that fortunes could be made in speculative development at the lower end of the market. Existing structures were expanded and new buildings erected, uninhibited by planning restrictions and without the slightest regard for the provision of adequate lighting or sanitation. As a result the poorer quarters of London became warrens of filthy alleys, and narrow, dark courtyards bordered by these ramshackle tenements or 'rookeries', crammed full with tenants.

The readiest relief from this squalor and misery was through alcohol, and from 1720-1750, an epidemic of spirit drinking swept through the London slums. This situation had been exacerbated from about 1710, by an official policy to encourage the newly-developed distilling industry. This provided both a source of governmental revenue and a new market for farmers at a time when the price of grain was low, and soon came to be regarded as essential to the prosperity of Britain.

Everything was done to promote the new industry. The price of its products, of which gin was the most important, was kept very low to encourage the widest possible consumption and the trade was completely unrestricted. Anyone who could pay the low excise duty was free to distill spirits, and once distilled, they could be sold without even a licence. In the slum quarters of St Giles,

one house in every four was a gin shop by 1750.<sup>11</sup> Most of the gin shops were also cheap brothels where stolen goods were received, embodiments of a vicious spiral of drunkenness, degradation and crime.

Scenes of brutal depravity were commonplace, such incidents being widely documented in the records of the period. Take for example the pathetic case of Judith Dufour, who took her two-year-old child out from the workhouse where it was lodged, one afternoon in 1734. The child had just been given new clothes, and for the sake of these Judith Dufour strangled it, leaving the body in a ditch in Bethnal Green. She sold the clothes, for which she received the sum of one and fourpence, and spent the money on gin.<sup>12</sup>

The dark courtyards and alleyways of the older and poorer quarters of early eighteenth-century London were, not surprisingly, dangerous as well as squalid. They were a jungle which the well-dressed and respectable explored at their peril. In 1730, the magistrates received a complaint from the Covent Garden tradesmen that: "Several people of the most notorious characters and infamously wicked lives and conversation have of late ... years, taken up their abode in the parish... There are frequent outcries in the night, fighting, robberies and all sorts of debaucheries committed by them all night long."<sup>13</sup> Further, "It was said that a well-dressed man couldn't walk from the Piazza of Covent Garden to the Rose Tavern, a distance of about fifty yards, without risking his life twice."<sup>14</sup>

With the brutalizing combination of poverty, filthy living conditions and widespread alcoholism, it is no surprise, that crime was endemic in the London slums. A typical example was the thoroughfare of Lincoln's Inn Fields. It was the happy hunting ground of the pick-pocket, the cut-purse and the foot-pad. It was the haunt of truculent beggars and cripples, who had no difficulty in extracting money from the timid. The newspapers of the period abounded with paragraphs recounting the dangers of the Fields. We read how:

Last week a gentleman coming from Lincoln's Inn Fields Play-House was robb'd of thirty seven shillings by two Men and one Woman. As he was passing over the Fields to go to Little Turnstile, they drew him off the Foot Path into one of the quarters. Each of the men held a pistol to his breast and the Woman pull'd his waistcoat open and held a penknife to his breast which she scratched with the same; and although a great many people were passing by he durst not cry out for help, for as the people press'd them the Rogues made as if they had been in a friendly discourse with him. The three made off undiscovered. 15

The crime-wave was further exacerbated by the chaotic and ineffectual system for policing the capital. Responsibility for maintaining law and order was shared partly by the Justices of the Peace, assisted by Constables, partly by the High Constables, partly by the Beadles and the Watch, partly by the King's messengers, together with various bodies of men under the Sheriffs, and partly by the City Marshalls. The Constables, Beadles and Watch had severely limited powers of arrest and could not function outside their precinct boundaries except by permission of the neighbouring Constables.

Not only was this system cumbersome and redundant, it

was also hopelessly corrupt. This was because virtually every permanent official involved in the administration of London, from the City Recorder downward, had to buy his place as there was no money to pay adequate salaries. The cost of official places was high.

Prisons were run on commercial lines, and here the system was open to tremendous abuse and petty corruption was widespread. In 1728, the price of the post of Keeper of Newgate Prison was £5,000 and the man who laid out so large a sum for his position felt entitled to recoup his investment by any means whatever. A cell in the Press Yard at Newgate, came to be regarded as the most desirable part of the prison, offering a little light and fresh air, and was one of the most expensive rooms in London; for the privilege of lodging here, a prisoner paid a deposit of £500 plus a weekly rent of twenty-two shillings, excluding 'garnish', the system of tips to guards and fellow-prisoners demanded by custom. Prisoners with means could if they pleased, hold high revel within prison walls. There was no barrier to visitors other than the rapacity of the officials. On the other hand, a poor man could not expect much mercy. Newgate, the largest of all the London prisons, was also the worst. Daniel Defoe, in his novel Moll Flanders (1722), presents a graphic description of the prison as it appeared to Moll:

'Tis impossible to describe the terror of my mind, when I was first brought in, and when I looked round upon all the horrors of that dismal place I looked on myself as lost, and that I had nothing to think of but of going out of the world, and that with the utmost infamy: the hellish noise, the roaring, swearing, and clamor, the stench and nastiness, and all the dreadful crowd of

afflicting things that I saw there, joined together to make the place seem an emblem of hell itself, and a kind of entrance into it. 16

The enforcement of law in eighteenth-century London was obviously inefficient and corrupt and the only response the authorities could make to what appeared to be a rising tide of crime was to increase the savagery of the punishment meted out to those who were caught and convicted. Whipping, hanging, beheading, disembowelling, the horrors of the press-yard, the nailing of the ear to the pillory, branding and other forms of torture were commonplace. This extract from The British Journal for May 18, 1728, exemplifies such draconian measures:

"Yesterday by Order of the Magistrates a woman was whipt down the City, nail'd to the tron, then had a Bit pinch'd out of her Nose with a new invented Machine and was afterwards sent to the House of Correction for thieving, House-Breaking, and other wicked Practice."<sup>17</sup>

The law's most severe instrument was considered to be the gallows. Between about 1680 and 1722, the number of offences punishable by death was increased from eighty or so to over three hundred and fifty. Thefts became capital when the amount stolen was one shilling or more from a person, five shillings or more from a shop, or forty shillings or more from a house, but smaller thefts became hanging offences if they were carried out with menaces; breaking and entering was always capital, as was any theft committed between sunset and dawn.

This extract taken from records of the Proceedings of London Sessions from December, 1732, to October 1733,

recounts the harsh penalties awaiting those convicted:

Ebenezer Dun was hanged for breaking and entering the house of Sarah Loyzada, and stealing 4 pewter-dishes, a Stew pan, a Sauce Pan, and a Coffee-Pot. About the Hour of One in the Night. Joseph Fretwell was hanged for putting Henry Madding in Fear on the Highway and taking from him 3d.-Halfpenny. At the end of those Sessions (a busy five days' work) 87 prisoners had been tried - 6 were hanged, 2 Burnt in the Hand, 40 Transported, 2 sentenced to small fines and Imprisonment, and Bartholomew Harnet (for wilful and Corrupt Perjury) "to stand in the Pillory at the Royal Exchange, at the End of Chancery Lane in Fleet Street, and at the End of Old Bedlam in Bishopsgate Street, to suffer 12 months Imprisonment, and afterwards to be transported for seven years." 18

However draconian these measures seem, fear of hanging appeared to have little effect on the crime rate. The authorities, powerless to enforce the existing laws, responded by creating new ones. In 1706 an act was passed which made the receiving of stolen goods a capital offence. This also contained a clause encouraging criminals who were prepared to inform on their accomplices; if the evidence led to conviction, the informer received not only a free pardon but a reward of forty pounds. The intention behind this act was to break up the gangs of thieves by encouraging them to betray one another. However, its real effect was to bring into being a class of professional informers, called 'thief-catchers' or 'thief-takers', who operated by perjuring themselves and blackmailing their victims, often young persons who had taken up crime against their will in the first place.

The system of offering rewards for the conviction of felons offered enormous power to those clever and unscrupulous enough to exploit it. No one grasped the opportunity more successfully than the self-styled,

"Thief-Taker General of Great Britain and Ireland",  
Jonathan Wild. The following advertisement appeared in  
The Daily Post of March 26, 1724:

Lost on Saturday night a pocket, being torn from a woman in Cornhill, in the narrow passage going into the Jamaican Coffee-house, in which was a Diamond ring in a shagreen case, in a green and white purse, a laced Handkerchief, and a silver Snuff Box with a cypher on it, a pair of Silver Buckels, some money and a key. If any Person will bring the aforesaid Things to Mr. Jonathan Wild in the Old Baily, shall receive 4 guineas reward; or whosoever will discover the person or persons concern'd in the said robbery shall have 5 guineas reward for such discovery paid by the said Jonathan Wild." 19

In spite of this poverty and depravity rife in London, the lower-classes nevertheless had their own forms of entertainment, reflecting the brutality of their lifestyle. Bear-baiting and other barbaric sports prevailed. This extract from The Daily Journal of May 2, 1727, describes such an event at the Bear Garden, Hockley-in-the-Hole:

A famous bull from Tothill Fields to be baited, which never fought before. Two dogs to fight. Ten letgoes, for a guinea each dog, at the Bull. The dog that goes fairest and furthest in wins the money. Likewise the biggest bear in England to fight two Dogs at a Time with other variety of bull and Bear baiting. Likewise a Bull, Bear, and Ass, to be turned loose in the Game Place and Dogs after them. 20

For other amusements, many took great delight in visiting Bridewell on whipping days, and Bedlam to see the poor raving, shrieking, mad people. For the better-off, theatre-going was a fashionable recreation. The interest in drama now became more widespread among the new trading class as well as the older aristocracy. The theatre-place was a meeting-place, a fashionable amusement, rather than a place of art. Many minds and many tastes had to be satisfied; for everyone, political plays, and for those



who desired merely to be amused or have their senses tickled, the pantomime and the ballad-farce and the opera.

This wider audience was nevertheless segregated according to 'quality'. On each side of the stage, and in boxes, were seated the nobility and gentry. Their presence so close to the performers must not only have been a source of embarrassment but must seriously have interfered with the action of the piece as well as 'exits' and 'entrances'. The 'quality' still looked upon actors and actresses as 'rogues and vagabonds' and thought nothing of taking liberties which must have led occasionally to disturbances, such as a drunken nobleman crossing the stage during a performance. They looked upon every part of the theatre as open to them, and the managers had to make regulations for their own protection.

The announcement at the end of an advertisement in The Daily Journal of May 25, 1727, acknowledges:

We hear that this evening the famous captain Lemuel Gulliver is to be at the New Play-House in Lincoln's Inn Fields very handsomely attended and dress'd in a rich Habit, the like of which was never seen in England before. The two stage boxes are kept for him and his Company; the new Dramatic Entertainment call'd the Rape of Prosperine is to be acted upon this Occasion, and in Honour to the captain some decorations and additions will be made to it which have not been acted before. The Master of the House has promised the captain that neither during the Play or entertainment any Person shall be admitted behind the scenes that the captain may not be too much press'd with the crowd. 21

This heterogeneous and ebullient society captured the attention of the world of contemporary arts. With the gradual move away from the tight strictures of classicism, artists readily adapted their role as 'social critic' to encompass contemporary issues in a manner which was both

comprehensive and comprehensible to an ever widening audience. Foremost amongst these 'social critics' was John Gay. Nowhere is his role more clearly demonstrated than in The Beggar's Opera.

## Chapter 2

### The Beggar's Opera: John Gay, the social critic

"At first sight, The Beggar's Opera may seem a fairly straightforward work, and its immediate attractiveness is undoubtedly one of its virtues; but the apparent simplicity is deceptive. This is a play of many layers and facets. It is very diverse and complex."<sup>22</sup> The soundness of this judgment will be tested both in my examination of the overt structure of the work, its plot and music, and later, when considering John Gay's role as social, cultural, and political satirist. Only then will the full implication of this statement become clear. In this chapter I shall be focusing attention on Gay's preoccupation with topographical references and the contemporary world of the 1720s. Against this background, the effectiveness of his role as social critic as portrayed in The Beggar's Opera will be demonstrated.

The vision of contemporary society offered in The Beggar's Opera had probably been taking shape in Gay's mind for some time before the Summer of 1727. Eleven years earlier, in a letter dated 30 August, 1716, Dean Swift had written to Alexander Pope suggesting that: "A sett of Quaker-pastorals might succeed, if our friend Gay could fancy it... Or what think you of a Newgate pastoral, among the whores and thieves there?"<sup>23</sup>

No doubt Swift's suggestion was the germ of the idea, but that which gave rise to the dramatic form into which that suggestion materialized was more likely the furore

created by the contemporary exploits of Jonathan Wild and Jack Sheppard. On 14 October 1724, as a result of information provided by Wild a thief called Blueskin Blake was brought to trial at the Old Bailey. Before the Sessions began, Wild was seized by Blake around the neck and Blake attempted to cut his throat with a penknife. The knife was blunt, Wild survived the wound and Blake was duly hanged. However, the incident caught Gay's imagination in his ballad Newgate's Garland. What makes this ballad interesting is its association of the criminal milieu of Blueskin and Wild with more general levels of corruption and rogues in higher places. After describing Blueskin's attack, Gay widens the themes; now that Wild has been removed, common criminals will be as free to exercise their trade as great ones have always been. The view proposed in the last stanza, that the highwayman is at least frankly criminal and therefore more honest than those whose robberies are cloaked in respectability, is echoed everywhere in The Beggar's Opera:

Some, by publick revenues, which pass'd through their  
Hands,  
Have purchas'd clean Houses, and bought dirty Lands,  
Some to steal from a charity think it no sin,  
Which, at home ('says the Proverb') does always begin;  
But, if ever you be  
Assign'd a trustee,  
Treat not Orphans like Masters of the Chancery,  
But take the High-Way, and more honestly seise,<sup>24</sup>  
For every man round me may Rob, if he please...

Peachum, announces the theme in the opening air of The Beggar's Opera (Act I scene 1):

.... And the statesman, because he's so great,  
thinks his trade as honest as mine. 25

When we turn to the unwritten sources of The Beggar's Opera we discover a plethora of material which existed ready at hand, for Gay to include. Gay's knowledge of contemporary events and his familiarity with real life would be gained through observation, readings of local news, and common gossip of the town. Of course, Wild appears frequently in the writing of the time, almost always in a comic or satiric context, and he is seen in his comic apotheosis as Peachum in The Beggar's Opera. With reference to the many writings on the life and manners of this character, for example, Captain Alexander Smith's Memoirs of Jonathan Wild, we find much to suggest that Gay used the traits, customs, and activities of Wild for the purposes of his work. Smith speaks in his introduction of: "The neglect of such Prosecutions (as those of men like Wild), occasion'd by our shameful Negotiations with thieves, or their agents, for the recovery of stolen Goods, by which, in reality, we became aiders and abettors to them".<sup>26</sup> Peachum's name reminds us that, like Wild, his trade is to impeach or inform upon his criminal acquaintance for the sake of the reward. Tracing Wild's notorious career, will help us to detect more readily the parallelisms of these two characters' activities.

By 1714, Wild had turned to the twin trades of thief-taker and receiver and was making himself master of the London underworld. Later, he moved inside the law and set himself up as a public benefactor. He advertised widely in the newspapers to the effect that anyone who had been so

unfortunate as to have been robbed might come to what he called his Lost Property Office in the Old Bailey. There he would settle a fee for the return of the stolen property. The client would be asked to return later, at which time the 'lost property' would be returned by an anonymous hand reaching through a panel in the office wall. With this system Wild transferred all the risks to the thieves. He never actually held the stolen property so he could not be accused of receiving it. Thief-taking prevented the thieves from disposing of their loot to anyone but Wild, ensured his control over the underworld, brought in forty pounds a time and earned the goodwill of the public, to whom Wild represented himself as the only power capable of bringing criminals to justice efficiently. In 1724 he finally overreached himself and was hanged for the offence of receiving a reward for the return of goods which he knew to have been stolen.

Peachum's soliloquy in Act I scene 3, in which he weighs up the members of his gang, deciding who shall hang immediately and who shall be spared to thief a while longer, is a precise reflection of Wild's method. Similarly, the scenes showing the partnership between Peachum and Lockit (Act II scene 10 and Act III scenes 5-6) could well reflect such a collaboration between Wild and the corrupt forces of authority which was so necessary to the thief-taker's success. Like Wild, Peachum operates both within and without the boundaries of the law; as a bringer of criminals to justice, he is the servant of the 'respectable' society on which he preys in his other role

as the master of thieves. Wild and Peachum share a seedy surface respectability which masks their unscrupulous crookedness. The cynical hypocrisy of this position is brilliantly exploited by Gay using Wild's career as the governing metaphor for his vision of the society at the time.

Another fruitful source, if Gay drew from contemporary material for his Macheath, is the career of Jack Sheppard. Sheppard became associated with Wild, who had a hand in finally apprehending the rogue. In 1725 the exploits and execution of Sheppard formed the one topic London people were never tired of discussing, particularly his escapes from prison during the autumn. The sympathy of the mob was with him, because of its hatred of Wild and his gang of informers and of its delight in Sheppard's defiance of the brutal criminal laws in force in those days.

Sheppard's journey from Newgate to Tyburn was one long triumphal procession and The Daily Journal of November 17, 1725, tells how after the sentence was carried out:

The Populace having a Notion that it was designed to convey him to the Surgeons, carry'd off the Body upon their Shoulders to an Ale house in Long Acre, and the Undertaker and his men got off with great difficulty.<sup>27</sup>

During the following year the book trade was flooded with versions of the Life and Adventures of John Sheppard. The Reverend Villette recounts adventures of Sheppard which closely resemble some of the events of The Beggar's Opera. Sheppard seems to have frequented The Black Lion alehouse

in Drury Lane, where he made merry with the women of the town. His arrests were frequent, but so were his escapes from Newgate.<sup>28</sup>

If Gay needed additional patterns from real life for his hero highwayman, he could have found many reports of the deeds of other celebrated 'gentlemen of the road'. The Newgate calendars are full of accounts of many minor Macheaths. For further realism of The Beggar's Opera one has only to consult the Old Bailey Sessions Papers, The Annals of Newgate. It is not unlikely that Gay had several times visited the prison, then a definite part of London life, and that he had observed the institution with the idea of later putting some of its oddities and picturesque happenings into literary form. Gay's letter to Swift, on October 22, 1727, says:

You remember you were advising me to go into Newgate to finish my scenes the more correctly. I now think I shall for I have no attendance to hinder me; but my opera is already finished. 29

The early eighteenth century was an age of callous indifference to poverty and suffering, when men, women, and children were transported or hanged for very trivial thefts, without the prevalence of crime being in the least checked. The pages of Gay's opera present a vivid representation of the reckless, dissolute, and predatory spirit of a large section of the city population of England. Realism, largely from the author's own experience, must be considered paramount in any consideration of The Beggar's Opera. We can readily assume, then, that 'The dramatist knew the city at first hand, and he



reproduced one side of it with which he had become acquainted, registering genuine names, making direct allusions, and using familiar material to the utmost. If Gay had called his piece The Newgate Opera he could not have found a more appropriate title. Aside from the London setting, the tone of the play is typically English, making a realistic appeal - in story, characters, and style - to the English people.<sup>30</sup>

Certainly, there are numerous allusions to well-known people of the time, whether singers like Francesca Cuzzoni and Faustina Bordoni: (Introduction)

BEGGAR: As to the parts, I have observed such a nice impartiality to our two ladies, that it is impossible for either of them to take offence',

politicians like Walpole, (Act I scene 3)

PEACHUM: Robin of Bagshot, alias Gorgon, alias Bluff Bob, alias Carbuncle, alias Bob Booty,

or criminals like Wild. In addition, reference to current events such as George II's Coronation (Act III scene 5) and to recently enacted legislation like 'The act for destroying the mint' and 'the act too against Imprisonment for small sums', which Mrs. Trapes complains about in Act III scene 6, would have fixed the work in the 1720s.

The portraits of the women of the underworld are rather plainly drawn. Mrs. Trapes whose profession is made possible by men like Macheath, knows the ways of the female as well as her betters, and talks readily about her customers and the styles of the time, as this extract from her conversation with Peachum in Act III scene 6 indicates:

'... If you have any black velvet scarfs, they are a handsome winter-wear; and take with most gentlemen who deal with my customers'.<sup>31</sup> 'Tis I that put the ladies upon a good foot. 'Tis not youth or beauty that fixes their price. The gentlemen always pay according to their dress, from half a crown to two guineas; and yet those hussies make nothing of bilking<sup>32</sup> of me. Then too, allowing for accidents - I have eleven fine customers now down under the surgeon's hands.<sup>33</sup> - what with fees and other expenses, there are great goings-out, and no comings-in, and not a farthing to pay for at least a month's clothing - We run great risks - great risks indeed.'

As for the women of the town, Macheath describes them himself as they appear in answer to his summons in the Tavern Scene in Act II scene 4:

Dear Mrs. Coaxer, you are welcome. You look charmingly today. I hope you don't want the repairs of quality; and lay on paint Dolly Trull! Kiss me, you slut; are you as amorous as ever, Hussy? You are always so taken up with stealing hearts, that you don't allow yourself time to steal anything else. Ah Dolly, thou wilt ever be a coquette!...

The names of the prostitutes represent a variety of terms for outrageous or slovenly sexual attitudes: Mrs. Coaxer, Dolly Trull, Mrs. Vixen, Betty Doxy (a 'doxy' was a prostitute), Mrs. Slammekin (a 'slammekin' was a slattern), Suky Tawdry, Molly Brazen, Diana Trapes (a 'trapes' was a slattern). It will be noticed that Jenny Diver is distinguished among them, for a 'diver' is a pickpocket. Moreover, she is singled out by the use of her first name in the stage-directions, while the other prostitutes, as

if to emphasise their functions are called by their surnames.

Further, actuality extends to the ladies' dress, actions, and topics of conversation. They are portrayed as direct counterparts of the figures of high society. Take for example the following conversation between Mrs. Slammekin and Dolly Trull (Act II scene 6) in which they parody the manners of the polite world in insisting that the other take precedence on leaving the tavern.

MRS. SLAMMEKIN: Dear madam-  
DOLLY TRULL: I would not for the world-  
MRS. SLAMMEKIN: 'Tis impossible for me-  
DOLLY TRULL: As I hope to be saved, madam-  
MRS SLAMMEKIN: Nay, then I must stay here all night-  
DOLLY TRULL: Since you command me.  
(Exeunt with great ceremony).

Gay, throughout The Beggar's Opera is seen then to answer the spirit of the age, making everyday events and 'ordinary people' a legitimate subject for art. Most of the functional names of the other characters are self-explanatory. Peachum: to 'peach', it may be noted, had a strong sense of betrayal above the ordinary sense of informing. Lockit: 'Lock it', is an appropriate name for the Chief Jailor of Newgate Prison. Etymologically, 'Macheath' is a 'son of the heath', suitable for a highwayman. The heathlands around London were notorious for the frequent highway robberies that took place there. A 'filch' was a beggar's staff with an iron hook at one end, used to pluck objects out of windows. Nimming Ned: to 'nim' was one of many cant words for stealing. Likewise to 'budge' (Ben Budge) means to steal clothes from houses left open. 'Twitcher' (Jemmy Twitcher), is a

pick-pocket.

Topographical analogies are also made. Bagshot Heath in Surrey, (Robin of Bagshot) was a favourite haunt of highwaymen. Paddington (Harry Paddington): a 'pad' was a highwayman. The gallows at Tyburn were located in the Parish of Paddington. A day on which executions took place was known as a 'Paddington fair day', and 'to dance the Paddington frisk' was to be hanged. The Mint (Matt of the Mint), was an infamous district in Southwark that had been a virtual stronghold of debtors and criminals.

Gay's people include many who never appear on the stage, but whose names, mentioned frequently, help to create that atmosphere of roguery and low life which pervades the piece, for example Tom Gagg, Ned Clincher, Brother Tom, Slippery Sam, Curl-pated Hugh, Tom Tipple, Black Moll, Betty Sly, and Suky Straddle are intimately introduced, through a casual reference. It is this sense of realism that makes The Beggar's Opera like a visit to an actual place. 'But it is London as a curious and eternally fascinating study in human nature that he enjoys, not London as a social structure. As representative of 'the town' and its distorted moral attitudes, London is a wicked and corrupt place; but as purely objective scene, apart from the inevitable human judgments we must make of it, London is a remarkable place, full of all sorts of bustling, scurrying people in the midst of infinitely varied actions, kind, cruel, or merely foolish.'<sup>34</sup>

How then, does Gay, in The Beggar's Opera reflect

this contemporary world of London in a cohesive plot, suitable for the stage? The plot, reduced to a minimum, is very slight, however diverting, and has no great dramatic force of itself. Macheath, captain of a gang of highwaymen, has secretly married Polly, whose father, a thief-taker, captures her husband for a reward. In prison he is embarrassed by his engagement with Lucy, the keeper's daughter, who, on persuasion, manages his escape. He is retaken, condemned, reprieved, and obliged to have one wife at last. This plot is considerably embellished by the disputes of Polly and Lucy over the hero, and the conversations of the rogues with whom he associates. The charm of the narrative is mainly circumstantial. Without the many songs, the play would be a short one and somewhat bare. The piece is cut up into numerous scenes organized into three acts. Yet, this very division is responsible for a brisk, staccato sort of movement which keeps the action changing often, like a moving picture.

The play is introduced by a Beggar and a Player. After the overture, Peachum, a receiver of stolen goods, is discovered making up his accounts with the help of Filch, a young thief, one of his gang. Mrs. Peachum enters and talks about Macheath, the captain of a band of highwaymen. She is much concerned about his relation with her daughter Polly and anxious to find out whether Polly is legally married to him or not, and she induces Filch to tell her privately what he knows. Polly enters and is forced to confess that she is married, to the great indignation of her parents, as they have every intention

of eventually bringing Macheath to the gallows. Polly has concealed Macheath in her own room. She explains her parents' plot against him. Macheath makes his escape.

Act II opens with a scene in a tavern near Newgate where Macheath's gang are assembled. Macheath warns them of Peachum's treachery, but reminds them that he is a necessary agent for them, who must not be offended. Macheath calls for drink and women; the eight women of the town enter, dance and drink with Macheath. Under cover of their embrace they take away his pistols; Peachum enters with Constables who arrest him, and he realizes that he has been the victim of a deliberate plot. The next scene shows Macheath received in Newgate by Lockit, the gaoler. Lucy, Lockit's daughter, is in love with Macheath and furiously jealous of Polly; she reproaches him bitterly and he evades admitting that he is married to Polly. Lockit re-enters with Peachum to discuss their plans. They quarrel and then make up. Lockit tells his daughter to get what she can out of Macheath and then let him go to the gallows. Macheath hopes to bribe Lockit to let him escape. Polly enters to visit Macheath, who is much embarrassed between the claims of the two ladies, who after much display of courtly manners proceed to tear each other's hair; they are interrupted by Peachum, who seizes Polly and drags her away. Lucy proposes to steal the keys of the prison, and elope with Macheath. Macheath warns her that if they escape together they will easily be discovered, and she reluctantly allows him to make off without her.

Act III continues in Newgate. Lockit forces Lucy to confess that she allowed Macheath to escape. Lucy can only give vent to her jealousy of Polly. Lockit sends for Filch, who tells him where Macheath is to be found. The next scene is a gaming-house. Macheath has had bad luck on the road, but his gang are still loyal to him. The scene changes to Peachum's lock, where he discusses Macheath's capture with Mrs. Trapes, one of the women of the town. We return to Newgate, where Lucy has made up her mind to poison Polly. Polly enters and there is an exaggeratedly polite scene of reconciliation. Lucy invites her to drink with her, but Polly is on her guard and refuses, dropping the glass on the ground. Lockit and Peachum bring in Macheath who has been caught again. Each of the girls claims him as her husband and each makes a pathetic appeal to her father on his behalf, but they are both inexorable and Lockit takes Macheath away to his trial at the Old Bailey. After a dance of prisoners in chains by way of interlude we see Macheath in the condemn'd hold. He drinks heavily of wine and then of brandy. Two of his gang call to say good-bye, followed by Polly and Lucy, both in great distress. Macheath cynically advises them to ship themselves off to the West Indies as a last chance of obtaining husbands. At this moment the bell is heard tolling for Macheath's execution and the play suddenly turns to grim tragedy. Four more women come in, with a child apiece, and Macheath is taken to the cart. Here the Player and the Beggar interrupt the action; the Beggar is for poetical justice and a stern

moral lesson, but the Player insists that 'an opera must end happily' in order to comply with 'the taste of the town' (Act III scene 16) so the Beggar calls to the rabble on the stage to shout 'a reprieve', and the opera ends with a general dance.

For an explanation of the title, The Beggar's Opera, we need look no further than the Introduction. In this, Gay tells us that the opera was originally written to celebrate the marriage of two ballad singers, James Chanter and Moll Lay. A portion of the Introduction, which consists of a short dialogue between a Beggar and a Player, may be quoted, as throwing a little light on Gay's object. The Beggar who is supposed to be the author says:

BEGGAR: I own myself of the company of beggars; and I make one at their weekly festivals at St. Giles's. I have a small yearly salary for my catches, and am welcome to a dinner there whenever I please, which is more than most poets can say....  
This piece, I own, was originally writ for the celebrating the marriage of James Chanter and Moll Lay, two most excellent ballad singers.

However, is all this to be taken seriously, or only as a piece of raillery in keeping with the spirit of the opera itself? Gay's contemporary J. Ralph, writing on The Beggar's Opera in The Touchstone (1728) goes so far as to say that 'Its rags of Poetry and scraps of Music make its title the most apropos thought upon earth... something more execrable in relation to Music than the world ever dreamt of seeing on any stage.'<sup>35</sup> The concerted opinion, however, is that the weight of hypothesis as to the origin of the musical form of the opera is on the side of Gay's familiarity with English ballad singing, while the



popularity of ballads with people of every degree ought certainly to be taken into account. As Fuller has deftly commented:

When a beggar comes to write an opera (to celebrate the marriage of two ballad singers) he knows nothing of Alexander the Great, but everything about the criminals who rule the underworld he inhabits. The wedded pair would have wanted to hear ballads, naturally, and this accounts for the novelty of Gay's extensive use of ballad tunes, but they would also have wanted an opera about the leaders of organized crime to whom they very likely themselves owed allegiance. 36

As Gay writes in his earlier work Trivia:

Let not the ballad-singer's shrilling strain  
Amid the swarm thy list'ning ear detain:  
Guard well thy pocket; for these 'Syrens' stand  
To aid the labours of the diving hand;  
Confed'rate in the cheat, they draw the throng,  
And cambrick handkerchiefs reward the song. 37

For a large body of new songs set to specified old airs, Gay did not have to search very far. Beggars were a regular feature of English life, and many professional beggars were often itinerant songsters. Gay's interest in ballads and their singers as literary material is evident from his humorous description of their drunken representative of the order in Saturday of The Shepherd's Week:

He sung of Taffey Welch, and Sawney Scot,  
Lilly-bolero and the Irish trot,  
Why should I tell of baterman or of Shore,  
Or Wantley's dragon slain by valiant moore,  
The bow'r of Rosumond, or Robin Hood,  
And how the grass now grows where Troy town stood?<sup>38</sup>

In turning our consideration to the term 'opera' as applied to The Beggar's Opera it would seem, from the advertisements of the period that the word 'opera' was applied to dramatic entertainments 'ad captandum', and the average person accepted the term without troubling very

much about its exact meaning. Bearing all this in mind, it is not straining the point to conjecture that Gay had no particular object in calling his play an 'opera', save as an indication that it was provided with songs and was in the fashion. An additional argument in favour of this hypothesis is that the songs were originally intended to be sung without any accompaniment. Nevertheless, the employment of popular airs necessarily required that the songs themselves should belong to the simple and unpretentious type that might be heard in the repertory of the street-singer, hence the name 'ballad opera', the 'ballad' being defined in 1728 as a 'song, commonly sung up and down the streets'.<sup>39</sup> The credit for the addition of continuo accompaniments by Dr. Johann Christoph Pepusch is due to the Duchess of Queensberry, who when attending a rehearsal objected to the voices being unsupported by an orchestra, and protested vehemently. Presumably the idea was that the songs would be more acceptable if garbed in contemporary fashion.

A full appreciation of Gay's opera is only possible if we understand the references to the then popular tunes. This enables us to assume the right understanding of the culture and literature of England in the first half of the eighteenth century. Although The Beggar's Opera contains an overture specially composed by Dr Pepusch (then Music Director of Lincoln's Inn Fields) fifty-one of its sixty-nine airs were derived from popular and anonymous tunes, of which twenty-eight were Old English, seventeen Old Irish, five Old Scottish, and three Old French songs. The

remaining eighteen were by individual composers; three by Henry Purcell, two each by John Barrett, Henry Carey, Jeremiah Clarke and George Frederic Handel; and one each by Giovanni Bononcini, John Eccles, Girolamo Frescobaldi, Francesco Geminiani, Dr Pepusch, Lewis Ramondon and John Wildord.

The chief source of the songs was Thomas d'Urfey's Wit and Mirth: Or Pills to Purge Melancholy edited originally by Henry Playford. Gay undoubtedly knew the work in its final six volume edition published 1719-20. Forty of the airs can be found in this collection. Almost all of the Scotch songs in the opera are to be found in William Thomson's Orpheus Caledonius: or, A Collection of Scots Songs Set to Musick by W. Thomson (London: 1725-6).

All the lyrics are Gay's, with the exceptions of Nos. 1 and 44: 'Through all the employments of life', and 'The modes of the court' were written by Lord Chesterfield; no. 6 'Virgins are like the fair flower' by Sir Charles Hanbury Williams; no. 24, 'Gamesters and lawyers' by Mr Fortescue, Master of the Rolls; and no. 30 'When you censure the age' by Dean Swift. Gay sometimes chose tunes whose original words were relevant to his purpose, the presumption being that the audience would be aware of this relevance. Thus for Lockit's song about the infamies of 'gamesters' (Air 43), he chose 'Packington's Pound',<sup>1</sup> because in his own Newgate's Garland this had been associated with words about the 'cogging of dice', the fraudulent control of the way they fell. Macheath's disillusioned comment on the power of money 'If you at an

office solicit your due' (Air 33), takes hints from the subject matter of the two original songs set to the same tune in Durfey: Advice to the ladies (Ladies of London, both wealthy and fair) and Advice to the beaus (All jolly rakehells that sup at the rose).<sup>II</sup>

Transformation of the original song is a frequent occurrence. Such an example being Durfey's song in The Country Wake, called The Mouse Trap, in which he bewails the hampering effect of marriage on a man's liberty. In contrast to the carefree frolics of bachelor days, he describes the married state in terms like the following:

We're just like a Mouse in a trap,  
Or vermin caught in a Gin:  
We sweat and fret, and try to escape,  
And curse the sad Hour we came in.

This was the worst Plague could ensue,  
I'm Mew'd in a smoky House;  
I us'd to Tope a bottle or two,  
But now 'tis small beer with my spouse.

Remembrance of these words gives additional piquancy to Mrs Peachum's praise of marriage in Air 5. Only after a woman is married, she declares, does she win her freedom. Maidens are like unminted gold, with no currency: but

A wife's like a guinea in gold,  
Stamp'd with the Name of her spouse;  
Now here, now there; is bought, or is sold;  
And is current in every house.

Lucy's confession to her father, 'When young at the bar' (Air 41) is a rare example of debasement by Gay of his original:

When young at the bar you first taught me to score,  
And bid me be free of my lips, and no more;  
I was kiss'd by the Parson, the squire, and the Sot:  
When the guest was departed, the kiss was forgot.  
But his kiss was so sweet, and so closely he prest,  
That I languish'd and pin'd 'till I granted the rest.



Indeed, social satire targeted at the cultured classes is an underlying preoccupation of Gay throughout The Beggar's Opera.

\* \* \*

John Gay, social and cultural satirist:

The Beggar's Opera and George Frederic Handel's Floridante

The originality of The Beggar's Opera is implicit in its title, which to an audience in 1728 would have seemed a striking contradiction in terms. 'Opera', to an audience at that time meant the Italian opera which had first appeared in London in 1705 and which had been much in vogue ever since. Frequent reference to the triviality and absurdity of the Italian operas of the day, was made in The Spectator. Later, Dr Samuel Johnson was to write resignedly of Italian operas as 'an exotick and irrational entertainment, which has been always combated and always has prevailed.'<sup>41</sup>

As well as being musically novel, the Italian operas that enraptured fashionable London in the first decades of the eighteenth century were remarkable for the sumptuousness of the costumes and the sophistication of the stage machinery. The libretto of Handel's opera Rinaldo (1711) requires the heroine to be carried through the air in Act I in a 'chariot drawn by two huge dragons, out of whose mouths issue fire and smoke'.<sup>42</sup> In fact with so much spectacle to engage its attention, the audience at an opera was unlikely to concern itself greatly with the details of the plot, which in most instances was absurd, and considerably remote from the concerns of the everyday.

It was not the plots but the spectacle, and the singers, that attracted fashionable London to the Italian opera. The Royal Academy of Music founded in 1719 'for

the encouragement of Operas', sent Handel to Italy to recruit artists. In 1721 the castrato Senesino was lured to London and in 1723 he was joined by the soprano Francesca Cuzzoni; both were paid sums of £2,000 for the season. Faustina Bordoni arrived in 1726. She was paid £2,500, even more than Cuzzoni, and a jealous rivalry between the two ladies erupted. The three great singers were brought together on the stage in May 1726 in Handel's Alessandro, an opera carefully constructed so that neither Cuzzoni nor Faustina could claim to have the better role. Matters came to a violent if farcical head at a performance of Bononcini's Astyanax in June 1727 in which both ladies appeared, at which they came to blows on stage.

John Gay referred sardonically to this 'Italian opera mania' in a letter to Dean Swift dated 3 February 1723.

He wrote:

As for the reigning amusement of the town, tis entirely Musick, real fiddles, Bass Viols and Hautboys not poetical Harps, Lyres, and reeds. There's nobody allow'd to say I sing but an Eunuch or an Italian Woman. Every body is grown now as great a judge of Musick as they were in your time of Poetry, and folks that could not distinguish one tune from another now daily dispute about the different Styles of Hendel, Bononcini, and Attilio. People have now forgot Homer, and Virgil & Caesar, or at least they have lost their ranks, for in London and Westminster in all polite conversation's Senesino is daily voted to be the greatest man that ever liv'd. 43

It is possible, however, that Gay had a personal grudge against Italian opera because it was much patronized by royalty and nobility, and that therefore he took satisfaction in breaking the idol of those from whom he had not received the favours he desired. In the following pages, I shall discuss this hypothesis in the light of



The Beggar's Opera and in examining in depth John Gay's role as a cultural and social satirist we shall indeed see, that not only is this 'a play of many layers and facets' but also one which is 'very diverse and complex'.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, it will be seen that Gay condemns not so much Italian opera 'per se' but the completely uncritical theatregoers who had turned it into a fashionable cult.

The full force of Gay's satire, both cultural and social, cannot be understood unless his work is considered alongside contemporary opera. For this reason, I have chosen to examine in detail Act III scenes 13-15 (The Beggar's Opera) together with Act III scenes 6-7 from Handel's Floridante.<sup>45</sup> These scenes will effectively demonstrate the important transition in opera from a more artificial, classical style to that of a more 'realistic' portrayal of social and moral issues. Further, these particular scenes will also magnify Gay's preoccupation with satire and enable us to assess the effectiveness of this 'weapon'. This should demonstrate the confident assertion that 'The Beggar's Opera is much more than a mock-opera, but at one level that is what it is. In addition, it is ultimately impossible to separate the social satire from the operatic burlesque since they are two sides of the same coin.'<sup>46</sup>

By the time Gay wrote The Beggar's Opera in 1727, opera in England had become virtually synonymous with Italian opera, a theatrical form characterized by great dignity and seriousness, and peopled with mythological figures or personages of high rank from the distant past.

That an opera could be a beggar's, consequently amounted to a contradiction in terms. Indeed, Gay's very title implies therefore that his own opera is both a burlesque of the Italian form and a radically new kind of English opera, the first comic opera, since before Gay, most operas were devoid of levity and none sported such a flippant and unlikely title as The Beggar's Opera.

Gay's opera begins by mocking the conventions of the Italian form.<sup>47</sup> In this short scene, the supposed author of the opera, the Beggar, explains his work to the Player, and claims that although written to celebrate the marriage of two English ballad singers it is, to all intents and purposes, an orthodox opera. Instead of announcing explicitly in his own voice that he is about to burlesque Italian opera, Gay chooses the more subtle satiric method, of adopting a 'mask' or 'persona', that of the Beggar, and speaking indirectly through him. The Beggar's seriousness is Gay's sleight of hand; his words are undermined from within so that we do not take them at their face value. Gay's gibe at Italian opera is unmistakable when the Beggar says: 'I hope I may be forgiven, that I have not made my opera throughout unnatural, like those in vogue; for I have no recitative'. The Beggar appears to be apologizing for not making his opera 'throughout unnatural', but by implication these words carry their own qualification and disapproval.

The rest of the Beggar's speech in this opening scene can also be interpreted on two planes. He is pleased with himself for using 'the similes that are in all your

celebrated operas: the swallow, the moth, the bee, the ship, the flower, etc.' The simile aria was a characteristic feature of heroic opera in the Italian style, and Gay fulfils the Beggar's promise: 'The swallow, the moth, the bee, the ship, the flower' duly appear in Airs 34 (swallow), 4 (moth), 15, and 6 (bee and flower), ship (10 and 47). What Gay implies, however, is that such similes have been rendered inexpressive in Italian opera by over usage; after all, they 'are in all your celebrated operas'.

The Beggar also seems to be proud of his 'prison scene which the ladies always reckon charmingly pathetic'. As his words imply, a prison scene was almost a 'sine qua non' in Italian opera and tended to occur at a high point of the dramatic action, inviting emotional appeal. The irony here, lies in the fact that not just one scene, but almost half of The Beggar's Opera takes place in a prison, and in addition, that the prison is not some historically or geographically remote one with romantic association, but contemporary Newgate Prison in the heart of London.

As regards 'the parts', the Beggar's self-congratulation at achieving 'a nice impartiality to our two ladies, that it is impossible for either of them to take offence' carries a more immediately topical irony. This had been Handel's policy in Alessandro, and the original audience had no trouble connecting the Beggar's words with the Cuzzoni-Faustina rivalry, still the talk of the town. This connection made, the quarrel scenes between Polly and Lucy take on an extra comic significance as reflections of the jealous convention in the opera world.

As in Handel's opera, the hero makes his choice between the two ladies only at the very end. (The story concerns two women, Rossana (Faustina) and Lisana (Cuzzoni), both in love with Alexander the Great (Senesino). He wavers indecisively between them for virtually the whole length of the opera, only choosing Rossana at the last possible moment before the final curtain.)

The waggishness of the Introduction is indicated by the Beggar's claims that except for using speech instead of recitative his work must be allowed an opera in all its forms.' In The Beggar's Opera time is measured by the sessions of the criminal court, and the outlook for most of the characters seems to be hanging or transportation. For the mythological or courtly setting of opera, Gay substitutes Newgate Prison and a group of thieves and whores. For exalted heroes and heroines, he substitutes 'captain' Macheath, the leader of a gang of highwaymen, Polly, the daughter of an organizer of crime and a receiver of stolen goods, and Lucy, the daughter of the very corrupt Chief-Jailor of Newgate. By means of irony and by explicit references to beggars, to ballad singers, who were not particularly reputable, and to the notorious London parish of St Giles-in-the-Fields, the resort of thieves, highwaymen and prostitutes, Gay indicates throughout the Introduction that the content of The Beggar's Opera is totally unlike that of Italian opera.

Gay's burlesque of Italian opera is for the most part indirect and non-parodic but his burlesque purpose explains many features of The Beggar's Opera. In order to

maintain a superficial resemblance to Italian opera, Gay adopts several of its formal characteristics. The three act structure of the work typifies operatic convention. The overture is another appropriate aid to imitation, and is well announced through the last speech of the Introduction, a knavish method of calling attention to a leading earmark of operatic medium.<sup>IVa</sup> In substance it may contain a slight satire on Italian music. Dr Pepusch, to maintain the spirit of Gay's English balladry, borrowed one of the old melodies of the text, One evening, having lost my way, (Air 47) and embellished it, perhaps to suggest regular operatic style.<sup>IVb</sup> Although Gay's use of speech instead of recitative is a significant departure from operatic practice, his actual lay-out of the airs corresponds to that of operatic arias. The sudden switching from speech to song and back again without any attempt to justify the interpolation of an air on realistic grounds, recalls the alternation of recitatives and arias in Italian opera. Again, like Italian opera not all of Gay's airs are solos, some being duets, one being a trio, and a few involving a chorus.

Whether Gay intended specific situational correspondence to Italian opera remains hypothetical. However, there are several unmistakable though general parallels with the form, and these culminate in the coup de théâtre when the Beggar and the Player enter to produce a happy ending out of apparent catastrophe. Lucy's attempt to eliminate her rival, Polly, by poisoning her (Act III scenes 7-10) is one such example. Having helped Macheath

to escape from Newgate, Lucy is tormented by 'Jealousy, rage, love and fear' because she believes, wrongly, that he is with Polly. Lucy has the rats-bane ready when Polly comes to visit her at Newgate, and suggests that they have a drink to cheer themselves up. However, at the moment when Lucy forces a glass containing the poison on Polly, the recaptured Macheath is brought back to the prison and Polly is so shaken at the sight of him in chains that she drops the glass and spills its contents. Gay bases this episode on a popular feature of a number of contemporary Italian operas, the scene set in a prison in which one of the principal characters narrowly escapes death in the form of a cup of poison. Handel meets this criterion in Act III of Floridante. Further operatic parallels are apparent in Air 38 (Act II scene 13), 'Why how now, Madam Flirt?' in which Polly and Lucy attack each other verbally:

LUCY: Why how now, Madam Flirt?  
If you thus must chatter;  
And are for flinging dirt,  
Let's try who best can spatter;  
Madam Flirt!

POLLY: Why how now, saucy jade;  
Sure the wench is tipsy!  
(To him) How can you see me made  
The scoff of such a gipsy?  
(To her) Saucy jade!

Of particular interest is the fact that the monosyllabic words at the end of the third line of each stanza, 'dirt' and 'jade', must be sung in melismatic or coloratura style, each word running for seventeen notes and occupying almost three bars.<sup>V</sup> Such ornate, bravura singing, is standard in operatic arias but very rare in ballads, and

is the only sustained example in a work where Gay usually fits one syllable to one note of music. That Gay should draw such attention to the operatic parallel in this song is significant, since the rivalry between Polly and Lucy is bitterly and vulgarly expressed. The contrast between matter and operatic manner is therefore exceptionally pronounced, and this in turn highlights the undignified personal behaviour of Cuzzoni and Bordoni in comparison with the dignified roles they took in operas. Off stage, the prima donnas behaved as Polly and Lucy do on stage.

Seemingly, Gay's opera does not offer a complete and detailed parody or travesty of its fashionable predecessor, but, rather, indulges in numerous satirical strokes. The kind of prison scene in Italian opera that 'the ladies always reckon charmingly pathetic', is outlined in Act III scene 11 in which a woman (in this case Polly and Lucy) visits her lover or husband (Macheath) who is awaiting death; the greater his suffering and her grief, the more 'charmingly pathetic' the scene would be. Earlier in Act II scene 13, Gay provides a counterpart to such scenes by exposing the imprisoned Macheath simultaneously to Polly and Lucy, each of whom regards herself as his wife. The result, a comic confrontation between a rake and two of his women, one of whom, Lucy, is pregnant by him, is the antithesis of the decorous intensity of operatic prison scenes. Additionally, it also travesties the situation of a hero like Alessandro, (Handel's opera of that name) who is faced with an almost impossible choice

between Rossane and Lisaura. Macheath, under verbal bombardment from both women, responds in the rollicking Air 35, 'How happy could I be with either', by deciding to ignore both of them. The operatic parallel is reinforced by the subsequent use of two duets. In Air 36, 'I'm bubbled' (deceived) the vocal line passes back and forth between Polly and Lucy just as it does between the singers of operatic duets.<sup>VI</sup> However, the situation from which the song arises, their discovery of Macheath's duplicity in making identical promises to both of them, is atypical of Italian opera.

As an interlude before the scene changes to the condemned cell, Gay specifies 'A Dance of Prisoners in Chains' at the end of Act III scene 12. This plainly grotesque dance is a low-life counterpart to the dignified ballet dancing that had been incorporated in many operas, and the completely arbitrary way in which it is introduced is itself a comment on the frequent insertion of dances into Italian operas, with little or no dramatic justification. In Act II scene 4, although sounding more formal and operatic ('A dance, à la ronde in the French manner'), is performed, not by deities in a temple or by aristocrats in a court, but by Macheath and 'whores in a tavern near Newgate'. It too is introduced in a gratuitous way when Macheath hears harp music: 'But hark! I hear music... E'er you seat yourselves, ladies, what think you of a dance?'

Gay again follows operatic precedent with his inclusion of Air 68, All you that must take a leap in



Act III scene 15, sung by Lucy, Polly and Macheath. It was common operatic practice for the principal characters to join in a trio at the climax of the work. Gay's choice of tune for this 'hanging trio' is particularly apt since All you that must take a leap was a ballad about the execution of two criminals.<sup>VII</sup> The burlesque effect is greatly intensified at this point by the sudden arrival of four more of Macheath's 'wives', each accompanied by a child, so that he is confronted by no less than six of his 'wives' and four of his children. Gay deliberately plunges what in opera would be intended to be a profoundly moving climax, to the level of farce. Ironically, only in this ludicrous situation does Macheath acquire the moral strength of an operatic hero and welcome death as a deliverance: 'What - four wives more! This is too much. Here - tell the Sherriff's Officers I am ready.' As Macheath is led away, the action is interrupted and the dramatic illusion shattered by the entry of the Player and the Beggar.<sup>48</sup> This is a low-life equivalent of the device deus ex machina, common in opera, involving a surprise intervention or unexpected discovery that produces a virtually magical transformation. No matter how closely Italian operas approached tragedy, happy endings were 'de rigueur'. In The Beggar's Opera the Player prevents the law taking its natural course by expostulating to the Beggar about Macheath's imminent execution. Nevertheless, the Beggar admits that he is 'for doing strict poetical justice' with Macheath executed and all the other characters hanged or transported. However, he relents in

the face of the Player's irrefutable argument:

Why then, friend, this is a downright tragedy. The catastrophe is manifestly wrong, for an opera must end happily.

The play then ends with the conventional song and dance to celebrate Macheath's release.

This episode not only allows Gay to criticise explicitly Italian opera, to burlesque by means of Macheath's reprieve the miraculous reversals of fortune and character with which operas frequently conclude, but, also, it secures a fitting finale to his comedy. More importantly, it enables him to ridicule 'the taste of the Town'. It was the uncritical response of the public to Italian opera that perturbed Gay. Lord Cobham's ironic suggestion that The Beggar's Opera should have been printed 'in Italian over against the English, that the Ladys might have understood what they read'<sup>49</sup>, with its biting insight into fashionable theatre-goers, must have appealed greatly to him. In the aforementioned episode, Gay implies not only that the public is indifferent to his serious moral purpose but also that their lack of taste is symptomatic of debased moral standards, indeed of the immoral forces exposed and attacked in the play.

It was not necessary then for Gay to indulge in a close burlesque of the absurdities of contemporary Italian opera to get his effect. By brief suggestion he could point a broader attack. His corrective agents were English, rather than pseudo-Italian: a waggish operatic title, an introductory chat with the audience, a few keen items of burlesque, and English ballad tunes, these were

the sharp tools with which he ventured to cut away the bonds of a worshipful allegiance to Italian opera. As P. E. Lewis rightly acknowledges:

While in many respects Gay does adhere to the 'forms' of Italian opera, the world he presents is the very unoperatic one of St. Giles-in-the-Fields. He completely inverts Italian opera, with its classical, mythological or similarly elevated narratives and its exotic atmosphere, by setting The Beggar's Opera very firmly in the criminal underworld of contemporary London. 50

The fact that low-life characters of The Beggar's Opera burst into song in the manner of operatic figures in itself creates burlesque humour. Occasionally, Gay enhances the burlesque by making the hackneyed similes mentioned by the Beggar express attitudes, especially towards love, which are not found in the relatively chaste world of Italian opera. Such an example is the simile of the moth which appears in Air 4, 'If love the virgin's heart invade', in which Mrs. Peachum reflects that if her daughter, like any other girl, 'plays about the flame' and loses her virginity, she may end up as a whore - 'Her honour's singed, and then for life,/ She's - what I dare not name'. In each of these Airs the operatic simile is burlesqued by being made to convey non-operatic subject-matter, but it is simultaneously rinsed clean in order to express a truth about the realities of contemporary life. The girl who succumbed to her sexual desires premaritally was, like the moth in the flame, quite likely to destroy herself. If she was known to have lost her virginity, she might well be cast out of the society that had nurtured her, and left to her own resources which

usually meant prostitution. Polly's Air 6: (What shall I do to show how much I love her) 'Virgins are like the fair flower in its lustre', clarifies the severity of a social code that demanded such a penalty for a momentary human failing, and also conveys the fragility of virginity and the sense of sadness at its loss by means of the very image which Gay is burlesquing - flowers. It is Gay's juxtaposition of a natural garden and Covent Garden, which was a redlight district as well as London's vegetable, fruit, and flower market, that makes this possible. The cut flower ('once plucked, 'tis no longer alluring') being sent by the gardener to the market at Covent Garden signifies the deflowered virgin being virtually forced by society to the other Covent Garden, the flesh-market of the brothels ('There fades, and shrinks, and grows past all enduring, / Rots, stinks, and dies, and is trod under feet.')

For evidence of the comprehensive social satire in The Beggar's Opera we need look no further than the text itself. This contains many obvious examples, a small number of which I have selected to illustrate the differing targets of Gay's attack. Much of the wit of the work is directed at the vices, fashions, and follies of men, as Gay himself stated in the Preface to Polly: 'My only intention was (in The Beggar's Opera) to lash in general the reigning and fashionable vices; and to recommend and set virtue in as aimable a light as I could.'<sup>51</sup> Gay's widespread use of topical references strengthened the force of this satire and helped to make it immediately

accessible to his contemporaries. A well-aimed witticism could be much more effective than direct moralising. The extent to which Gay's moral function of satire was successful 'as an instrument for exposing folly and vice and so for correcting all those deviations from the standards he upheld,<sup>52</sup> will be demonstrated. Although the characters, as well as the actual setting of The Beggar's Opera depict the lower classes of London life, their vices and follies, which Gay attacks, permeated all strata of London society. This very indirect nature of his attack strengthened the force of his moral intent.

One aspect of Gay's social satire is directed at the contemporary ideas of love, marriage, and widowhood. These are highlighted in the scenes in which Polly is confronted by her parents after their discovery of her marriage to Macheath. Here, Gay makes his ironic burlesque reflect satirically on the moral vacuum at the heart of London's aristocracy and gentry. When Peachum and his wife discover that Polly has secretly married Macheath against their wishes, they question her about her reasons and suggest that the main one must be the hope of becoming a rich widow as soon as possible. Following his wife's claim that Polly has married because she would do like the gentry - a little earlier Mrs. Peachum asserts that Polly 'loves to imitate the fine ladies' (Act I scene 4), Peachum puts it to his daughter that she holds the common view as of a gentlewoman about marriage, namely that widowhood is at the height of matrimonial achievement. As Peachum tells Polly: 'The comfortable estate of

widow-hood, is the only hope that keeps up a wife's spirits.' (Act I scene 10)

To Polly's horror, her parents not only plan Macheath's death but expect her to assist them. Peachum assures her that there is 'no malice' in his proposals, simply good business sense. Through the Peachums, Gay lays bare the sordid realities behind the glittering exteriors of many high-society marriages. Even Polly's parents do not regard her marriage to a highwayman as likely to be any worse than her marriage to a peer would have been, and there is the positive advantage that criminals are more easily disposed of than lords.

As far as the Peachums are concerned, love belongs entirely to the world of fiction and fantasy, to the romances and 'cursed playbooks', as Mrs. Peachum refers to them, that Polly reads, and to some extent, confuses with reality. In her naivety, Polly identifies Macheath with 'great Heroes' and quite wrongly believes that he cannot be 'false in Love' when Polly explains that she has married for love, not (as 'tis the fashion) coolly and deliberately for honour or money (Mrs. Peachum exclaims, before fainting from shock, that she thought the girl had been better bred ) (Act I scene 8). Marriage among the upper classes would seem to be a business totally unconnected with love, which can be bought, even if it cannot be found, outside marriage. If Polly believes she is behaving 'like the gentry' in marrying Macheath, she is deluding herself about what that entails and will have to accept the consequences outlined by her mother: (Act I

scene 8)

Can you support the expense of a husband, hussy, in gaming, drinking and whoring? Have you money enough to carry on the daily quarrels of man and wife about who shall squander most? There are not many husbands and wives, who can bear the charges of plaguing one another in a handsome way.

Thus, Gay not only presents a travesty of the absurdly idealistic love often portrayed in Italian operas, but simultaneously satirises the unpleasant actualities of many high society marriages. Much attention is also given to the practice of keeping mistresses. This is partly due to the demand for realism in the low-life setting of The Beggar's Opera, but it is featured mainly for the benefit of the men of fashion, who openly associated with characters of the Jenny Diver type.

Gay even finds a chance to play upon the custom of fashionable drinking. Mrs. Peachum, like any fine lady, talks of the cordial she keeps for her own use. Polly confesses that her mother always 'drinks double the quantity whenever she is out of order' (Act I scene 8). Later, when Polly refuses the glass of poison which Lucy offers her, Lucy protests that the girl is 'so squeamishly affected about taking a cup of strong-waters as a lady before company... Brandy and men (though women love them never so well) are always taken by us with some reluctance - unless 'tis in private' (Act III scene 10). The widespread bout of gin-drinking at the time is truthfully reflected in this statement of Lucy: 'I run no risk; for I can lay her death upon the gin, and so many die of that naturally that I shall never be called in question'

(Act III scene 7).

The extreme fashion of quadrille is plainly ridiculed. The Peachums know the game as well as their betters, and so do the highwaymen. Bob Booty is coming to play it with Polly and her mother. Macheath, in the most pathetic situation, at the end of Act I, assures Polly that no power can tear him from her, using as his strongest figure 'You might sooner tear... any woman from Quadrille' (Act I scene 13). Mrs. Peachum finds that handsome daughters 'have as much pleasure in cheating a father and mother, as in cheating at cards' (Act I scene 8).

By making the prostitutes act and talk at times like respectable ladies of fashion, as reflected in their elaborate and often barbed compliments to one another, their mode of dress, and their drinking, Gay not only suggests that they share things in common, but also, is able to ridicule aspects of high-society behaviour and expose the hypocrisy essential for keeping up appearances. The inflated conversation between the two prostitutes, Mrs. Slammekin and Dolly Trull at the end of Act II scene 6, effectively illustrates this point. Each tries to out-do the other in courtesy over who should go first through the tavern door. Considering what, and where they are, their language is absurdly inflated:

MRS. SLAMMEKIN: Dear madam-

DOLLY TRULL: I would not for the world-

MRS. SLAMMEKIN: 'Tis impossible for me-

DOLLY TRULL: As I hope to be saved, madam-

MRS. SLAMMEKIN: Nay, then I must stay here all night-

DOLLY TRULL: Since you command me.

(Exeunt with great ceremony.)



Furthermore, having had an argument they are desperately trying to score off each other. The mock-heroic incongruity effectively demonstrates that such behaviour over so trivial a matter would be ludicrous in any social context, including high society, which takes inane niceties seriously, and further, that politesse is for the most part a sham, often a mask for bitterness.

When the prostitutes arrive at the tavern in Act II scene 4, Macheath's address connects them with polite society: 'All you fine ladies, who know your own beauty, affect an undress.' Their style of clothing advertises their sexual wares, but in hinting that 'fine ladies' also dress to display their physical attributes to best advantage, he suggests that the behaviour of upper-class women is no less sexually motivated. However, 'fine ladies' differ markedly from the whores who make no attempt to disguise what they are up to. In private it would be a different matter, hypocrisy being inescapable in polite circles. On greeting Jenny Diver who is 'As prim and demure as ever!', Macheath calls her 'a dear artful hypocrite' because 'There is not any prude, though ever so high bred, hath a more sanctified look, with a more mischievous heart.'

Further satire of women concerns the cordials they keep for their private drinking. When Macheath orders drinks for the whores, he urges them not to be coy about ordering spirits, only to be told by Jenny Diver that 'I never drink strong-waters, but when I have the colic'. Macheath recognizes that she is playing the prude, because

this is 'Just the excuse of the fine ladies!' to justify their gin-drinking, which was otherwise regarded as low and vulgar. In making Jenny protect her public image by behaving so decorously, Gay satirizes the 'fine ladies' who hide their weaknesses and dissipation behind a virtuous veneer.

Women's mercenary attitudes towards marriage and widowhood also come within the boundary of Gay's 'firing range'. As an example of how Polly loves to imitate the 'fine ladies', her mother explains to her father that she allows Macheath to take liberties with her 'in the view of interest', for purely selfish or business reasons (Act I scene 4). This allows Gay to accuse 'fine ladies' of seldom acting except out of self-interest. Mrs. Peachum, who acts out the part of a gentlewoman and respectable businessman's wife to the full, illustrates this hypocrisy of 'fine ladies'. After telling her husband 'I never meddle in matters of death; I always leave those affairs to you' (Act I scene 4), she appears upset by his talk of murder, claiming that she cannot 'help the frailty of an over-scrupulous conscience.' However, when she learns of Polly's marriage, she does 'meddle in matters of death' by urging Peachum to arrange Macheath's trial and execution, her 'over-scrupulous conscience' apparently forgotten. For a 'fine lady', then an 'over-scrupulous conscience' would appear to be an affectation which it is pleasant to indulge when there is nothing at stake, but which soon evaporates when anger and self-interest are aroused.

The worship and power of money do not escape either

from Gay's treatment of influences in the social scale. Gay's great objection is that money is being constantly misused and over-esteemed. This misuse causes false class distinction based on the illusory socio-financial chain of being, instead of on the real chain which has its links ordered according to merit and virtue. Parochial distinctions due to wealth, to keeping in vogue with social foibles of dress and amusement, or to places acquired by flattery and bribery, build up this false social chain which Gay tries to expose and tear down by his ironic attacks. For Gay, selfishness and greed are the main driving forces of urban society from the aristocracy to the underworld, and money is both the principal goal aimed at, and the standard for measuring success. In The Beggar's Opera Gay depicts society as a casino, where both sexes play. Since the only purpose that motivates their play is the desire of gain, it follows that very few persons are above sharp practice. 'Most ladies take a delight in cheating, when they can do it with safety', declares Mrs. Trapes (Act III scene 6).

From such references Gay leads to prominent mention of gamblers and gambling. Matt of the Mint is made to say: 'Of all mechanics, of all servile handicrafts-men, a gambler is the vilest. But yet, as many of the quality are of the profession, he is admitted amongst the politest company' (Act III scene 4). References to money abound. Most of the characters, reflecting an upper stratum, consider, with Macheath, that 'Money well timed, and properly applied, will do any thing' (Act II scene 12);

or, with Peachum, that 'Money ... is the true fuller's earth for reputations, there is not a spot or a stain but what it can take out. A rich rogue now-a-days is fit company for any gentleman' (Act I scene 9). According to Peachum it is one of 'the customs of the world' to 'make gratitude give way to interest', (Act I scene 11), and Lockit claims that 'the Custom of the world' allows him to 'make use of the privilege of friendship' (Act III scene 2) to cheat Peachum. Significantly, Lockit compares their behaviour to that of 'honest tradesmen'. Ruthless competition is the norm, even between friends. This predominantly is explicit in his soliloquy in Act III scene 2 when he is planning to 'overreach' Peachum: 'Of all animals of prey, man is the only sociable one. Every one of us preys upon his neighbour, and yet we herd together.' Gay's satire, then, is an effective panoramic survey of the distorted moral values produced at all social levels by urban life, although his satire serves chiefly as an exposé of corruption in high society.

It is natural that the town society which Gay pictures as founded on greed for money and self-interest, and devoid of honour and justice, should be rampant with crime. Murder is not only common but justifiable in the eyes of syndicate bosses like Peachum. Petty larceny is the most frequently perpetrated criminal act, and an examination of Peachum's register (Act I scene 3) indicates how his business associates operate. However, these overt criminal acts are nothing compared to the much more subtle methods of fleecing victims which Peachum has developed.

He has the power to hang either the thief or the purchaser by a little treachery. Lockit, concentrates on extortion and the selling of liberty or protection. Thus, The Beggar's Opera is a dramatic georgic on how to evade justice and make a living through crime. However, it is more than this, because the implied moral commentary of its satire is so vehement. Gay uses irony in his attempt to show us that it is the habits, and customs which society has evolved that are bad, not the very basic nature of man. What better way then of eradicating society's vices by making them known. However, Gay's satire on society ends on a note of compounded mockery. What happens to Macheath provides a key to the standards of that civilization's view. The Beggar (Gay) claims that the moral - that punishment is meted out only to the poor - demands Macheath's death. The Player insists that this ending would not 'comply with the taste of the town' (Act III scene 16). Gay (as pretended cynic) succumbs to the Player. The moral of the play is dismissed as the town in its ethical degradation dismisses morality.

Most of the banter in the work is levelled at the 'fine gentlemen' and the 'fine ladies'. Polly has violated her mother's social code 'because forsooth she would do like the gentry' (Act I scene 8). Indeed, it is those in the honourable walks of life, among them lawyers, courtiers, and statesmen who come in for the hottest fire. Of all the professions, law is most highly satirized. This was well recognized in the eighteenth century. As Hannah More related in a letter of 1778, concerning a

performance of The Beggar's Opera: 'But the best of all was Sir William Ashurst, who sat in a side box, and was perhaps one of the first judges who ever figured away at The Beggar's Opera, that strong and bitter satire against the professions, and particularly his.'<sup>53</sup> This is exemplified in Peachum's comment in Act I scene 1: 'A lawyer is an honest employment, so is mine. Like me too he acts in a double capacity, both against rogues and for 'em'.

One of Gay's most severe condemnations of professional deceit and hypocrisy is voiced by Peachum in Act I scene 1:

Through all the employments of life  
Each neighbour abuses his brother;

The priest, lawyer, and statesman are compared to Peachum, a man whom even the thieves and whores despise, though they are forced to do his bidding because he is 'the great man'. The receiver of stolen goods, or 'fence', is thoroughly dishonourable because he is always playing a double game. Gay's satire on the professions is more concerned with the problems of honour and self-interest. The point which he wishes to make is that just as the go-betweens, the bawd and fence, should be the most reliable and dependable persons for their sort of business, so should professional men, such as lawyers responsible for justice, priests responsible for general morality, and statesmen responsible for the welfare of whole society, be conscientious guardians of both the individual and the state entrusted to their care. By identifying these professions in motive and practice with Trapes, Peachum

(the betrayer even by name), and Lockett, the trustee (as jailer) of public welfare who can be bought, Gay mirrors the deceptions, treachery, avarice, and selfishness of those influential men who love their honour and betray their trust for similar motives of self-interest.

The function of Gay's irony in The Beggar's Opera is to reverse the traditional concepts of class distinction. In reality, all of the characters in the ballad opera are of the lowest class of society. However, economic differences, based on the having or not having of money, combine with the varying ethical and moral sentiments of individuals to separate the characters into pseudo aristocrats and pseudo bourgeoisie for contrast with certain of the poorer classes who keep their social as well as their artistic integrity. At the end of the opera, (Act III scene 16) after the Player has persuaded the Beggar to reprieve Macheath, to satisfy the taste of the town (a satirical indication on Gay's part of the hypocrisy, and lack of integrity in the artists of his time), the Beggar summarizes his dramatic purpose:

through the whole piece you may observe such a similitude of manners in high and low life, that it is difficult to determine whether (in the fashionable vices) the fine gentlemen imitate the gentlemen of the road, or the gentlemen of the road the fine gentlemen.

Gay's exposure of high life by picturing the low as equally bad, though equally refined, may be due primarily to his disappointment in failing to receive favour from a branch of the society he laughs at here. For burlesque has a two-edged blade, though both edges need not be equally sharp. 'Had the play remained, as I at first

intended,' says Gay, in the persona of the Beggar, with glancing irony, 'it would have carried a most excellent moral. 'Twould have shown that the lower sort of people have their vices in a degree as well as the rich: and that they are punished for them.'

The Beggar implies that the vices of the upper classes are so well known as not to need pointing out. He is drawing attention instead to the less obvious fact that 'the lower sort of people', such as criminals and prostitutes, also have vices. This ironic reversal of conventional social prejudices and valuations is a witty but devastating indictment of 'the rich', who are implicitly blamed for setting the lower classes a bad example thus being ultimately responsible for others' vices as well as their own. It is therefore a terrible perversion of natural justice that only 'the lower sort of people' are punished for their vices, since those who should be punished, 'the rich', succeed in evading the force of the law.

Gay is being extremely ironic when he makes Macheath speak of himself as a 'man of honour' or be called a 'gentleman' and a 'great man' as though he were an aristocratic hero, but the irony bounces back to raise doubts about those who do regard themselves as 'men of honour' or are called 'gentlemen' and 'great men' in real life. In fact, are courtiers and aristocrats, politicians and other professional men, any better than common criminals like Macheath?

Macheath and his gang of highway-robbers, whom Gay



ironically likens to a group of aristocrats, repeatedly express their conviction that high society is more corrupt than the underworld. The aim of presenting the thieves in a better light than the aristocrats is to heighten the social injustice involved in having them punished for crime committed on a small scale, which the aristocracy and bourgeoisie commit on a grand scale and from which they prosper rather than suffer. A further means on his part of showing this social injustice is to equate the practices of various professions with those of the thieves. The problem is posed by Jemmy Twitcher at the beginning of Act II:

Why are the laws levelled at us? Are we more dishonest than the rest of mankind? What we win, gentlemen, is our own by the law of arms, and the right of conquest.

The thieves, though dishonest, exert some measure of valour to attain their money, money which is barely enough for the necessities of life, but 'the rest of mankind' usually practise their kind of deceit to earn an enormous wealth which is usually wasted on the foibles of luxury.

When Matt of the Mint proposes robbing a gambler who 'is never without money,' Macheath quickly rejects the idea, pointing out that 'He's a good honest kind of a fellow, and one of us.' (Act III scene 4). Goodness and honesty are paradoxically associated with criminals rather than with their 'betters', who are implicitly accused of being even worse than professional thieves. In Act II, 'A fox may steal your hens, sir', lawyers are equated with thieves but whereas a thief may steal 'your goods and

plate', a lawyer will not be content with less than 'your whole estate'.

When Gay was writing, bribery was endemic in court circles and political life. Gay's point is that such behaviour, however widespread, is not different morally from the misdeeds of criminals. Rather, it is less excusable, since high society should be setting standards. Additionally, because of the hypocrisy involved, the deceitful attempts to cover up morally reprehensible conduct or even to present it as honourable makes it even less so.

The money-lenders, who lend cash at exorbitantly high interest rates are suggested by Macheath as being more appropriate targets. 'I hate extortion,' declares Macheath (Act III scene 4). He is really accusing the money-lenders of both theft and usury, in spite of their not being regarded as 'criminals' by society. However, in exploiting situations for financial gain, is their behaviour morally superior to that of criminals; further, is money-lending at extortionate rates significantly different from robbery? If not, why is one form of robbery socially acceptable and the other not? The charge of 'extortion' which carries with it the charge of usury and covetousness, are sins which are not attributable to Macheath. His generosity is attested shortly before he speaks of the money-lenders. He provides with cash Ben Budge and Matt of the Mint, saying, 'When my friends are in difficulties, I am always glad that my fortune can be serviceable to them.' (Act III scene 4). However,

Macheath's liberality leads Ben to lament that 'so generous a man' is 'involved in such difficulties, as oblige him to live with such ill company, and herd with gamesters', and since, according to Matt, 'many of the quality are of the profession,' the 'ill company' is identified with the upper classes. Furthermore, Macheath runs the risk of being corrupted by them, a point made in Act I scene 4 by Mrs. Peachum: 'What business hath he to keep company with lords and gentlemen? He should leave them to prey upon one another.' In Act III scene 4, Matt comments on the absurdity of a world in which the lowest form of humanity, gamblers, are 'admitted amongst the politest company' while highwaymen are treated with contempt and relegated to the lowest echellons of society. Matt draws attention to the fact that social status has no relation to moral qualities. If upper-class gamblers are respected, there is no reason on moral grounds why lower-class highwaymen should not be at least equally respected.

A further issue pervading the work is whether there is any significant difference between the activities of the gang and those of the army. This is raised by Jemmy Twitcher. 'What we win, gentlemen, is our own by the law of arms, and the right of conquest' (Act II scene 1). Macheath, who is called 'captain' throughout, looks upon himself in the military capacity, as 'a gentleman by his profession', as Peachum points out in Act I scene 8. Yet, the implication is that he treats his subordinates very much better than an officer would. In Act II scene 1 Ben Budge defends the gang's 'military' activities on

idealistic grounds, giving voice to a democratic and egalitarian ideology, arguing that 'we are for a just partition of the world.'

However, Gay does not accept the gang at their own idealistic estimate of themselves. Their actions do not always accord with their words. Take for example the revelation in Act III scene 14 that Jemmy Twitcher has peached Macheath, presumably by providing evidence against him at his trial. This act of betrayal has the effect of furthering Gay's satire on high society. Macheath accepts with resignation 'that the world is all alike, and that even our gang can no more trust one another than other people'. He had taken it for granted that there is very little honesty and loyalty in the world, but had believed in his gang, who 'have still honour enough to break through the corruptions of the world' (Act III scene 4). The word 'even' used in connection with 'our gang' makes it clear that highwaymen, apparently the last hope for mankind, are now no better than their social superiors, but there is the further implication that this debasement actually stems from those superior. Macheath makes this point more markedly in Air 44: 'The modes of the court so common are grown,/ That a true friend can hardly be met;' the source of social degeneration is pinpointed at the court, whose 'modes' are spreading throughout the whole of society, even to the underworld. Macheath, however, remains untarnished in spite of associating with aristocrats, and in giving money to Ben Budge and Matt of the Mint he proves that he is 'not a meer court friend, who professes

every thing and will do nothing ' (Act III scene 4).

The characters Peachum and Lockit correspond to the bourgeoisie, the increasingly powerful Whig merchant class of the eighteenth century. Peachum's tactics are those of the deceased Wild, a supposedly respected magistrate who was in reality a receiver of stolen goods, and Gay attempts to show us through their actions and motives how the Peachum and Lockit families represent the two prime bourgeois evils, hypocrisy and avarice. The middle class represents for Gay the true perverters of morals through their attitude toward money; they are the hoarders and the usurers. Their spirits are devoured by money because they love money as an end in itself and not as a purposeful means. It is the utterly cold-hearted practicality of a father's willingness to sell his daughter's honour (Act I scene 4) and chances of marital fulfillment for the sake of business deceptions which appals us in these words of Peachum:

Look ye, wife. A handsome wench in our way of business is as profitable as at the bar of a Temple coffee-house, who looks upon it as her livelihood to grant every liberty but one... Married! If the wench does not know her own profit, sure she knows her own pleasure better than to make herself a property! My daughter to me should be, like a court lady to a minister of state, a key to the whole gang.

His cynicism is so deeply rooted that moral values are meaningless to him, and he has no qualms about using bribery to achieve his purposes. For Peachum, 'murder is as fashionable a crime as a man can be guilty of'. In his mouth, words change or lose their normal meanings. He speaks of the executions he is planning as 'decent', and

commends Nimming Ned for rescuing (stealing) goods from fires. His complaint in Act I scene 3 that Slippery Sam has 'the impudence to have views of following his trade as a tailor, which he calls an honest employment' arises mainly from Sam's view, naive in Peachum's eyes, that thieving is more dishonest than tailoring.

Lockett, as chief-jailor of Newgate, is a low-life equivalent of a civil servant or bureaucrat. His superficially polite manner, resembling the facades adopted by officials in public life, hardly disguises his totally selfish nature. When the newly-arrested Macheath arrives in Newgate in Act II scene 7, Lockett greets him with, 'Noble Captain, you are welcome', but in his next breath demands a bribe: 'You know the custom, sir. Garnish, Captain, garnish.' Gay is satirizing the small-scale racketeering which was rife in contemporary prisons, but more importantly he implies that what goes on in Newgate is no different from what goes on in the corridors of power at court and in Whitehall except that the latter is on a much larger scale. Gay achieves this by making Lockett speak in a hybrid way, using the language of the beau monde as well as that of his own class. He speaks as a jailor when he makes a direct demand for the 'garnish', but his subsequent request for a bribe is euphemistically phrased in the idiom of courtiers and politicians, 'uses me with civility' is the polite equivalent for 'gives me a bribe' in 'when a gentleman uses me with civility, I always do the best I can to please him.'

Further analogies between Lockett's and Peachum's

activities and thief-takers and the 'employments' of politicians are drawn in Act II scene 10. Lockit and Peachum's activities as thief-takers, betraying their friends and acquaintances and sending them to almost certain death, are not in the least bit 'reputable' and could not possibly be called a 'profession'. However, the assumption behind Lockit's high-minded way of speaking about nefarious, underhand deals is that he and Peachum behave in much the same way as 'the people in employment' and members of the accredited professions, like law and politics, who are nevertheless regarded as 'reputable.'

(Air 30: How happy are we)

When you censure the age,  
Be cautious and sage,  
Lest the courtiers offended should be:  
If you mention vice or bribe,  
'Tis so pat to all the tribe;  
Each cries - That was levelled at me.

By the standards that prevail in high society, Lockit is convinced that he is 'reputable'; his only sin is not to belong to high society. To be 'reputable' has nothing to do with honesty and integrity, only with social status. Although Peachum slightly qualifies Lockit's claim to be 'reputable', his words carry a satirical sting: 'In one respect indeed, our employment may be reckoned dishonest, because, like great statesmen, we encourage those who betray their friends'. The implication is that 'great statesmen' ought to provide an example to the nation and should not conduct their affairs like Peachum and Lockit; but since they do indulge in such deviousness as encouraging 'those who betray their friends', they are

morally indistinguishable from Peachum and Lockit.

Thus, as a social satirist Gay examines the role of man in society. He disapproved of what he saw. He probably recognised that his power of remedying such evils was negligible. Nevertheless, he felt it his duty to follow the satirist's calling by highlighting those vices which debase man and his society. Both through the direct portrayals of examples of nobler and simpler lives and through the negative assertion of moral values by using ironic contrasts, Gay attempted to show the existence of a moral code, and an alternative way of life much preferable to the one operative in his own day.

Having made a general survey of Gay's role as a cultural and social satirist it is now appropriate to examine these attributes in the context of Act III scenes 13-15 from The Beggar's Opera alongside Act III scenes 6-7 from Handel's Floridante,<sup>54</sup> both depicting prisoners in condemned cells. This will demonstrate the important transition from the 'artificial' classical style so inherent in Italian opera to the more realistic portrayal and setting of social, and moral issues as seen in The Beggar's Opera. More importantly, this will place Gay's work in perspective of operatic responses as a whole to contemporary society. Finally, the assumption that Act III scene 13, particularly shows the close linkage between social satire and operatic burlesque will be tested in the light of the following remark: 'The whole scene is treated as the most extravagant burlesque, and it is time to pursue the hint which Gay has dropped earlier about



pathetic prison scenes, and inquire whether anything in particular lies behind the burlesque here.'<sup>55</sup>

After a dance of prisoners in chains by way of an interlude we see Macheath in the condemned hold. This is the 'prison scene' promised by the Beggar in the Introduction. Macheath, in a melancholy posture, laments his fate, and in between singing fragments of old songs, fortifies himself with copious draughts of liquor for the ordeal of hanging.

Ben Budge and Matt of the Mint come to say good-bye to him. His last request is that they should take revenge against Peachum and Lockit before they themselves come to the sorry pass in which he finds himself. Lucy and Polly appear, both in great distress. Macheath cynically advises them to ship themselves off to the West Indies as a last chance of obtaining husbands. They protest that they would gladly take his place; 'Would I might be hanged!' Macheath joins in and the piece takes on the character of a dirge, more particularly when the sound of a passing-bell is heard. Four more 'wives', with a child a piece appear, claiming Macheath as husband, until he protests that he is ready to go with the Sheriff's officers to execution.

Gay accentuates the realism of this commonplace situation by giving to Macheath language which is appropriate not only for the moment but which is also indicative of his social class. Colloquial slang is readily used instead of the tendency for hyperbolic, poetical language typical of contemporary opera. This

demonstrates the actuality both of the setting, and the language of The Beggar's Opera. Furthermore, greater use of spontaneous spoken dialogue rather than 'staged' songs, heightens the reality of his interpretation. Parlakian aptly sums up Gay's usage of language in his opera when he remarks:

My own impression is that Gay's genius has given us, in his opera, a language that satisfies Aristotle's dictum that "each class of men, each type of disposition, has a language suited to it." 56

The following three extracts from scene 13 illustrate this point:

Air 59: Of all the girls that are so smart  
Of all the friends in time of grief,  
When threat'ning death looks grimmer,  
Not one so sure can bring relief,  
As this best friend, a brimmer. 57

Air 65: Did you ever hear of a gallant sailor  
But can I leave my pretty hussies,  
Without one tear, or tender sigh?

Air 66: Why are mine eyes still flowing  
Their eyes, their lips, their busses<sup>58</sup>  
Recall my love. Ah must I die!

Gay further heightens the expression of Macheath's language in his soliloquy in scene 13 through the ballad tune settings. The medley made up of ten songs of a fragmentary nature, effectively portray Macheath's fearful mood at his impending death. Nowhere else does Gay use fragments of tunes and nowhere else does one Air follow another without any speech intervening. The effect of fast-moving music quotation results in Macheath not only singing, but talking, thinking, and drinking in the music, with a different Air at every turn to suit the mood or motion.<sup>VIII</sup> More specifically, the melodic shape

effectively paints Macheath's spoken thoughts. In Air 58, for example, the descending melodic lines, with the appoggiatura 'sigh', intensifies the bitterness of Macheath's situation: 'O cruel, cruel, cruel case!'.<sup>VIIIa</sup> Again, in Air 62, the melodic ascending line beneath his words 'But valour the stronger grows,/ The stronger liquor we're drinking' underlines his desire to put a brave face on the reality of approaching death by boosting his spirits with drink.<sup>VIIIb</sup> The swinging 9/4 tempo also illuminates his somewhat inebriated state.

The melodic lines sung to Macheath's words in the trio (Air 68 in scene 15):

MACHEATH: I fear! I doubt!  
                  I tremble! I droop! See, my courage is out.  
(Turns up the empty bottle.)  
POLLY: No token of love?  
MACHEATH: See my courage is out!

encompasses a wide intervallic span of a 13th - C - A, as well as wide leaps; for example, the phrase 'I fear! I doubt! I tremble.' Appropriately, the lugubrious words are set to a dirge in 3/2 time.<sup>VII</sup> Moreover, Gay's very choice of ballad tune, All you that must take a leap in the dark! (taken from Pills to Purge Melancholy, 6), entitled 'A hymn upon the execution of two criminals, by Mr. Ramondon' (1710), a serious ballad written about two criminals who repented publicly before their hanging, appropriately reflects Macheath's predicament. Its introductory stanzas will sufficiently display its character:

All you that must take a leap in the Dark,  
Pity the Fate of Lawson and Clark;  
Cheated by Hope, by Mercy amus'd,

Betray'd by the sinful ways we us'd:  
Cropp'd in our Prime of Strength and Youth,  
Who can but weep at so sad a Truth;  
(Cropp'd in our Prime, etc)

Once we thought 'twould never by Night,  
But now alas 'Twill never by light;  
Heavenly mercy shine on our Souls,  
Death draws near, hark, sepulchres bell Toles:  
Nature is stronger in Youth than in age,  
Grant us thy spirit Lord grief to asswage.  
(Grant us thy spirit, etc) 59

As has been mentioned already, Macheath, in scene 13 sings a soliloquy to music taken from no less than ten different songs so that the airs 58-67 coalesce into an extended piece of singing. Despite the Beggar's initial claim that this opera contains no recitative, Macheath's segmented utterance and abrupt change of tune, interrupted only when he pours himself stiff drinks, is not unlike operatic recitative, especially as it concludes with a full-length Air (Air 67: Green sleeves), in the same way as recitative prepares the way for an aria.<sup>VIIIc</sup> In opera such rapid changes of thought and emotion as Macheath's can be encompassed only in recitative, never in arias. However, to introduce recitative Gay would have had to employ the services of a composer. What he does instead, is to suggest a parody of recitative in Macheath's meditations in the condemned hold. The ladies, as the Beggar announces in the Introduction always reckon a prison scene 'charmingly pathetic', and in this affecting passage it would not do to allow his hero to express himself in ordinary fashion. Here, Gay constructs a medley, linking phrases out of nine familiar melodies (including one from Henry Purcell's Bonduca, Michel Farinel's Ground, Henry Carey's Sally, the popular Why are

mine eyes still flowing? and Chevy chase and other ballad tunes), and rising to Green sleeves by way of a closing aria. From Gay's scrupulous avoidance before this of anything resembling recitative, one would expect the bulk of Macheath's monologue to be spoken, so the startling use of song is extremely effective in bringing home the operatic parallel.

Further instances of operatic burlesque are discernible in these prison scenes. The only sung trio, Air 58, divided between Polly, Lucy and Macheath, 'Would I might be hanged!' occurs at what might be called the most 'charmingly pathetic' moment when Polly and Lucy visit Macheath in the condemned cell just before he is about to be taken to Tyburn to be hanged (Act III scene 15). This could be seen to be a parody of the customary multiple aria at the conclusion of the Italian opera. The high point of many Italian operas occurs in the closing scene when the protagonists are brought together to sing a fairly complex trio or other ensemble, depending on their numbers. This song is at one level a burlesque imitation of operatic climaxes. In earlier scenes, Polly, Lucy and Macheath are on stage together for some time, (as in Act III scene 11), and Polly and Lucy even sing two duets in his presence: Air 52: The last time I went o'er the moor (Act III scene 11), and Air 36: Irish trot (Act II scene 13), but it is only at the 'tragic climax' that all three sing together. The unheroic and ungallant but decidedly human behaviour of Gay's 'hero', Macheath, adds much to the burlesque effect of this mock-trio: (Act III

scene 15)

O leave me to thought! I fear! I doubt!  
I tremble! I droop! See, my courage is out.  
(Turns up the empty bottle.)

The yearning of both Polly and Lucy to share Macheath's fate on the gallows ("LUCY: Would I might be hanged!/ POLLY: And I would so too!") is a comic transformation of the attempts by self-sacrificing operatic heroines to kill themselves in order to save their lover's lives. Polly and Lucy only wish that they might suffer in Macheath's place. Elmira, however, in Handel's Floridante, Act III scene 7, attempts to exhibit 'L'ultima prova d'un amor fedele!' ('The ultimate proof of her faithful love'), by drinking the poison instead of Floridante. The burlesque effect is greatly intensified by Gay at this point in his opera by the sudden arrival of four more of Macheath's 'wives', each accompanied by a child, so that he is confronted by no less than six of his 'wives' and four of his children. Gay deliberately plunges what in opera would be intended to be a profoundly moving climax to the level of farce. The scenes in which a wife or mistress visits her condemned husband or lover are among the most emotionally indulgent in Italian opera. In his prison scenes, such as Act II, scene 13 and Act III scene 11, Gay ridicules such sentimental episodes by introducing two 'wives' instead of one and developing the situation accordingly. For a final attack he increases the number of 'wives' in the condemned cell to six. His burlesque method is to inject into a shock situation of opera a commonplace of farce - the scene in which a philanderer or

rake is simultaneously confronted by the two or more women he has married or been having affairs with. Ironically, only in this ludicrous situation does Macheath acquire the moral strength of an operatic hero and welcome death as a deliverance: 'What - four wives more! This is too much. Here - tell the Sheriff's Officers I am ready.' Previously, Macheath had been far from being 'above the fear of death', needing a constant supply of drink to put on a brave front.

The utter fatuousness of Gay's lyric in Air 66 (Why are mine lips still flowing) (Act III scene 13) would seem to point to a travesty of the operatic libretto: 'Their eyes, their lips, their busses'. Notice the emphasis placed on the most indelicate word, 'busses' ('Kisses') by means of the pseudo-operatic 'fioritura'.<sup>VIII</sup> The admirable hint of St. Sepulchre's bell for 'operatic' effect in scene 15, 'But hark!' sings Macheath, 'I hear the toll of the bell' whereupon they all echo in chorus, 'Tol de rol lol, etc', is a further instance of operatic burlesque.<sup>VII</sup>

Instances of operatic burlesque are apparent then in these scenes. However, there is little probability that Gay intended a serious attack upon Italian opera. His ridicule does not go beyond poking affectionate fun at conventions, which, like most conventions objectively regarded, have their ludicrous side.

Gay's ballad tunes furnished additional material for satire and burlesque. The one feature which all the tunes had in common was that they were well known, so the

piquancy of the situation came from the fact that the new words were often a satiric gloss on the implications of the familiar melody. Sometimes, indeed, Gay rewrote the original words to suit his satiric purpose as in Macheath's medley in scene 13. Such an instance is Air 61, Chevy Chase which Gay transforms into a drinking song to stimulate Macheath's false courage:

But now again my spirits sink;  
I'll raise them high with wine.  
(Drinks a glass of wine.)

The tune was associated with a ballad entitled, Three children sliding on the Thames, which begins:

Some Christian People all give Ear  
Unto the Grief of us,  
Caus'd by the death of three Children dear,  
The which it happen'd thus. (60)

The rambling description of the children's drowning seems designed to show the indifference of the king and 'a great lord' who are only interested in their wager about whether the ice will support the weight of all three. The ballad concludes with advice to parents to keep their children home and with the following prayer:

God bless our Noble parliament,  
And rid them from all fears;  
God bless th'commons of this Land,  
And God bless some o' th' peers.

Further social connotations can be put on the choice of this particular tune associated with the drowning of three urchins and the pending fate of Macheath.<sup>VIIIe</sup> Both instances, are of little significance to society as a whole, as seen through the eyes of high society, upon whom Gay concentrates his attack.

Again, at the climax of the scene, Macheath, in the



condemned hold, facing the prospect of immediate execution, meditates on a society in which the very mechanism of justice is unjust, one in which criminal behaviour is virtually universal but in which only the poor are punished for it. Gay brilliantly intensifies the irony of Macheath's vision by having him express it in a song to the tune of the Elizabethan love lament Green sleeves. The gentleness and courtesy of an older age evoked by the melody clashes starkly with the bitter words Macheath sings to it:

Since laws were made for every degree, To curb vice in others, as well as me, I wonder we han't better company, Upon Tyburn Tree! But gold from law can take out the sting; And if rich men like us were to swing, 'Twould thin the land, such numbers to string Upon Tyburn Tree!	Alas my love, ye do me wrong, To cast me off discourteously: And I have loved you so long, delighting in you companie. Green sleeves was all my joy, Green sleeves was my delight: Green sleeves was my heart of gold, and who but Ladie Green sleeves. <sup>61</sup>
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Similarly, Air 62 To old Sir Simon the King is aptly chosen by Gay for satirical effect. Ironically enough the earliest known setting to this ballad tune deals with the subject-matter of temperance, a direct contrast to Macheath's drunken state:

But valour the stronger grows,  
The stronger liquor we're drinking.  
And how can we fell our woes,  
When we've lost the trouble of thinking?  
(Drinks)

D'Urfey included five stanzas of the song in Pills to Purge Melancholy, 3, no. 143, which begins: 'In a humour I was of late'... and depicts the incoherent but amusing

thoughts of a drunken sot. The last stanza illustrates the effects achieved in the whole:

So fellow if you'll be drunk,  
Of frailty it is a sin,  
Or for to keep a punk,  
Or play at in and in;  
For drink and Dice and drabs,  
Are all of one condition,  
And will breed want and scabs,  
In spite of the physician:  
Who so fears every grass,  
Must never piss in a meadow,  
And he that loves a pot and a lass,  
Must never cry oh! my head oh!  
Says Old Simon the king. 62

A further setting to the same tune, the reformed drunkard, is an answer to the original. Its first stanza is as follows:

Come my hearts of gold,  
Let us be merry and wise;  
It is a proverb of old,  
Suspicion hath double eyes:  
Whatsoever we say or do,  
Let's not drink to disturb the brain;  
Let's laugh for an hour or two,  
And ne'er be drunk again. 63

Gay, in choosing this tune alludes to the widespread spirit drinking of the time, rife amongst the lower classes and points the moral of a need for temperance through all strata of society.

Having now established that operatic burlesque and social satire are widespread in Gay's opera, we must place this work in the perspective of contemporary operatic responses to London life by looking at Act III scenes 6-7 from Handel's Floridante. This will enable us better to understand Gay's reasons for parodying the Italian genre, but more importantly, to consider whether Handel in any way could be said to respond to, or reflect contemporary

London life. Furthermore, this will demonstrate that the arts in the early eighteenth century saw a period of change in this medium, as in other art media.

Floridante is chained to a pillar, tortured more by love than by fetters. Elmira comes in guarded, with a cup of poison in her hand. Oronte has ordered her to give it to Floridante but she prepares to drink it herself; he cannot reach her on account of his chains. Enter Oronte, who takes the cup from her and orders her to be confined separately while Floridante drinks it. Coralbo and Timante break in with armed men, snatch the cup from Floridante, arrest Oronte, and proclaim Elmira Queen of Elisa. She looks forward to crowning Floridante at her side. This is the synopsis of Act III of the opera.<sup>64</sup>

Unlike Gay's libretto, Paolo Rolli's in Floridante is highly convoluted and hyperbolic. Even allowing for the fact that it was written in Italian, which would distance it from the understanding of all except the very educated, the language itself is poetical, ossified, and staid. However, this was conventional in Italian opera. This extract from Elmira's speech in scene 7 illustrates the melodramatic, stereotype of operatic language:

Misera, amato Prence!  
Oh di non mai più intesa tiranna crudeltà!  
Vuol l'empio Oronte,  
Ch'io stessa, io stessa a te,  
Cor del cor mio,  
Porti la morte in questo nappo.

Woe is me, beloved prince!  
Oh unspeakable tyrannous cruelty!  
The impious Oronte, wants that none other than myself  
should bring to you,  
Heart of my heart,  
Death in this goblet.

Usage of oxymorons and extravagant expressions are again far removed from colloquial language, for example,

Floridante's utterance:

Lascia ch'io stempri in baci su te il cor mio!  
Tu dolce puoi far morte.

Let me melt my heart in kisses on you!  
You can make death sweet.

The dramatic predicament of Floridante in these scenes acquires greater impetus through Handel's music.<sup>IX</sup> Scene 6 opens in F minor, a key traditionally associated with evil. The underlying dotted rhythm for Floridante's phrase: 'e quest' orrore non mi fanno già spavento' ('and this horror causes no fear in my breast') (mm.13-15, and subsequent phrases) expresses<sup>IXa</sup> the dichotomy of the text and Floridante's inner feelings, since the rhythmic suggestion of agitation contradicts his outward show of bravery. Furthermore, repetition of the phrases, a stylized operatic cliché, has the effect of driving home to the audience the dramatic anguish of Floridante in scene 7, when he realizes he is incapable of preventing Elmira drinking the poisoned goblet. This is highlighted by the intervallic leap of a minor sixth at the words 'Ah Numi!' ('Oh gods!') in m. 32.<sup>IXb</sup> Usage of the tritone at the word 'morte' ('death') E - A sharp (m.33) in Elmira's phrase 'bever la morte;' ('I want to drink death') and previously in m. 23 at the phrase: 'A me vien morte' ('death comes to me') E - sharp, is another effective operatic cliché.<sup>IXc</sup> Thus as remarked in Schirmer History of Music: 'In opera, music played a crucial dramatic role. It elucidated and stressed meanings and emotions

that otherwise might have gone unnoticed, and one unusual rhythm, chord, or melodic interval was often enough to reveal the unexpected.<sup>65</sup>

Floridante, meditating in his dungeon, displays fine courage without any of the fortifying draughts which Macheath found so necessary under similar circumstances. He greets as his deliverer the cup of death which his love comes to bring him: 'Oh cara soave morte!' he cries to Elmira: 'Oh troppo a te crudele, troppo pietoso a me, fiero tiranno! Candida man, lascia ch'io stempri in baci su te il cor mio! Tu dolce puoi far morte.'

(Oh dear gentle death!  
Oh too cruel to you,  
Too merciful to me,  
Proud tyrant!  
O pale hand,  
Let me melt my heart in kisses on you!  
You can make death sweet.)

Macheath's recitative and aria is a mockery of those sung by operatic heroes in prison. Instead of exhibiting courage and fortitude while awaiting execution, the much more human Macheath drinks heavily in a not very successful attempt to go to the gallows bravely and concentrates his thoughts on alcohol and women. Gay equates his hero's courage with the amount of liquor he contained at the moment. Macheath tugs at the bottle after nearly every phrase. Raising his spirits with a brimmer, he boldly chants:

Since I must swing, - I scorn, I scorn to wince or whine.  
(Rises.)

But his next words are, 'But now again my spirits sink;' and he promptly endeavours to 'raise them high with wine'.

After another phrase or two, he turns to brandy for further assistance. Thus he ascends by degrees to his ironic aria:

Since laws were made for every degree,  
To curb vice in others, as well as me,  
I wonder we han't better company,  
Upon Tyburn Tree!

But the effect soon wears off; 'O leave me to thought!' he entreats Polly and Lucy in the trio which follows:

I fear! I doubt!  
I tremble! I droop! See, my courage is out.  
(Turns up the empty bottle.)  
POLLY: No token of Love?  
MACHEATH: See, my courage is out.  
(Turns up the empty pot.)

It could be said, however, that any response on Handel's part to contemporary moral and social issues is only indirect. Universal values of love, loyalty, constancy, and bravery are brought to the fore in this classical portrayal. Furthermore, the setting is far removed in time and place from the contemporary London which Gay portrays. Handel is providing the more conventional entertainment for the 'blinkered' high society of eighteenth-century cultural London whose desire for 'escapism' was met by such operas. In addition, Italian opera was an extravaganza of pure entertainment, appealing much more to the eye than to the ear, the subject-matter having little direct bearing on issues of the day. Gay, on the otherhand, by burlesquing Italian opera in the aforementioned scenes, is poking fun at, and indirectly satirizing, this established operatic audience. It must be remembered that Gay's ballad opera was intended for, and drew audiences from, far wider sections of society. Thus, of necessity, it concerns itself with and reflects,

contemporary issues in London life, as well as universal moral concepts. In the study of these scenes we see that Gay's The Beggar's Opera marks an important turning point in the trend towards realism in the dramatic arts. We shall later be considering evidence for a similar transition in the field of painting.

Chapter 3

Politics in early eighteenth-century London

In reflecting contemporary life in London, Gay, in The Beggar's Opera drew attention, both through overt portrayal and indirect satire not only to cultural, social and moral concerns, but also to the important political issues which permeated the life of that time. Indeed, with the artists' dependence on patronage it was almost inevitable that political considerations should play a central role in art media.

In 1714 at the time of the Hanoverian Succession of George I, the distinction between Whig and Tory still represented a real division of interest and opinion between groups competing for national power. The Whigs formed a party of new men and new interest. Their leaders were drawn from the greater landed families who had gathered territory and influence with each turn of the political wheel during the latter years of the seventeenth century and few of their titles could be traced to an earlier period. From such aristocrats, those other beneficiaries of seventeenth-century expansion, the moneyed men, found a greater measure of social recognition and political understanding than from the squires who cherished a long lineage, and thought of national policy only in terms of advantage to the landed interest. As new men the Whigs appropriated the new ideas of the age. They stood for limited monarchy and the supremacy of parliament, for the Petition of Right,<sup>67</sup> and the Toleration Act,<sup>68</sup> and the



Protestant Succession, for hostility to France, the enlargement of commerce and the security of property whether in lands or funds.

Against these new men, the Tories, a party of Church and King, stood on the defensive, counter-attacked during the closing years of Anne's reign, and then went down to irretrievable defeat in 1714. With Tory opposition reduced to insignificance, the victorious Whigs soon fell to the inevitable factions of 'ins' and 'outs', the former led by Sir Robert Walpole and the latter, a coalition of Tories and disaffected Whigs, by William Wyndham and William Pulteney.

The internal division of the dominant party could not, of course, alter its fundamental economic and political orientation. Although some Tory thinking went into the strategy of the opposition, both 'ins' and 'outs' continued to represent basically the same interests: those of the landed gentry and the trading classes. Guided mainly by former colleagues of Walpole, personally embittered against 'the Great Man' himself for his having dismissed them from high office, the 'outs' could really have no other design than simply that of advancing themselves as Whig leaders by thrusting Walpole from his post. Pursuing that one design they were soon plunged into an unprincipled and factious opposition. In spite of this, 'the Great Man' remained in power for twenty years (1721-1742) by means of political persistence, an ability to weed out capable rivals and a judicious use of patronage. He was committed to the policy of giving England a period of

uninterrupted quiet during which the material benefits of the Glorious Revolution<sup>69</sup> were secured. To do this he had to keep himself in office, settle the Hanoverian Succession, and foster national prosperity.

These objectives were somewhat tempered by constant opposition attacks on Walpole in an attempt to disgrace him in the eyes of the politically influential general public. If the opposition was to be sustained for long, his policies also had to be attacked. Great caution was required to keep from lapsing into extremist Tory or Stuart Royalist positions. 'Thus, opposition polemics, which appeared with increasing frequency in newspapers, pamphlets, cartoons, ballads, and on the stage, tended to direct their criticism almost exclusively on Walpole himself, and on his appearance, personality, vices, "interested" designs, and "indecorous speech"'.<sup>70</sup>

Walpole had succeeded in harvesting for his class the fruits of revolution by delaying the further descent of the centre of power down the class scale. However, he was conscious that the economic, social, and political situation he had succeeded in stabilizing might be upset by the opposition's polemical appeal to the lower class democratic spirit which was then manifested not in election, but in the theatre where, it was expressed with unrestraint bordering on anarchy.

Walpole's position was further put in jeopardy upon the succession of George II in 1727. He managed to retain his high office only through the intervention of Queen Caroline of Ausbach. It is reported that the new King,

when Prince, had taken offence at some expression used by Walpole and had declared that he would never employ him. But, Queen Caroline reminded him that as George I had recognised, with all his personal faults, Walpole was indeed able to 'convert stones into gold'.<sup>71</sup>

Walpole thus continued in office, and the disaffected Whigs headed by William Pulteney, the Tories led by Sir William Wyndham, and the remnant of Jacobites for whom William Skippen spoke, had no other recourse than to continue their personalised attacks on Walpole: 'Every facet of his life, but especially his appearance and personality, his political aims and methods, and his private and public language, was thereafter, subjected to continuous scrutiny.'<sup>72</sup> That he lived in adultery, and served as pander for his king were notorious facts. Of greater notoriety were the excesses of convivial living at his great palace at Houghton where twice a year it was usual for Walpole to entertain his 'Norfolk Congress'. Lord Townshend, Walpole's brother-in-law and predecessor as leader of the Whigs, referred to the gatherings as 'Bacchanalian orgies'.<sup>73</sup>

In political affairs, Walpole's constant adherence to the maxim, 'quieta non movere' provoked the partisan charge that he was slothful, and loathe to act in response to urgent calls of duty. Lord Hervey acknowledged that what Tacitus had said of the Emperor Tiberius applied well to the Chief Minister: 'Nihil aeque Tiberium auxium habebat quam ne composita turburentur.' ('Tiberius's greatest anxiety was that what was settled should not be

disturbed').<sup>74</sup> In truth, Walpole's self-discipline enabled him to avoid the excessive actions which could place his ministry in jeopardy. Indeed, Pulteney commented: 'Sir Robert was of a temper so calm and equal, and so hard to be provoked that he was very sure he never felt the bitterest invectives against him for half an hour.'<sup>75</sup> Further, Lord Hervey believed that Walpole refused to appoint capable men to high office or prevented those in office from enjoying close relations with the King out of fear that they might undermine his position of power. Jealousy, with regard to power, led him to drive many talented colleagues into opposition, maintaining the belief that on the highest level of governmental administration the association of men of nearly equal talent must inevitably breed disunity and ineffectiveness. John Carteret and Pulteney were pushed aside early in his career; Townshend was forced out in 1730 when Walpole took full command of foreign policy and Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth Earl of Chesterfield, and Viscount Cobham of Stowe were dropped in 1733 allegedly for having taken the wrong side in the Excise controversy.<sup>76</sup>

It has been noted that the Whig opposition to Walpole had to proceed cautiously in attacking his policies, for they were manifestly designed to serve essentially Whig interest. These aims of upholding the Hanoverian Succession and fostering national prosperity could be maintained only on condition that Walpole remained in high office. For that reason opposition Whigs concentrated the main attacks on his continuance in office, representing it

as a usurpation by an individual of the fruits of Whig victory in which all should have shared:

Walpole laboured to create something close to a parliamentary equivalent of a king in order to prevent internal Whig rivalry from disrupting the nation. The cause of the 'outs' could be well served obviously by outcries against the concentration of such monarchic powers in one man. They could contend, not without truth, that in making himself so central a fact of government Walpole had indeed made himself virtually a king and precisely because he had the power without the title, they could more openly attack him. 77

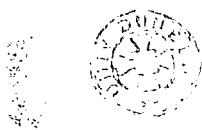
In consideration of policy implementation, Walpole's role as its chief agent enabled the opposition to draw every phase of his ministerial executive activity under its scrutiny. Indeed, there were a number of activities which could be ridiculed if not vehemently attacked. It was well known that Queen Caroline had been the determining influence in Walpole's retention as chief Minister, that he had 'bribed' her with a high jointure, that he took or feigned to take her advice on matters of state, and that he presumably deferred to her judgment in ecclesiastical affairs and patronage. Further, the opposition were not unaware of Walpole's 'Queen-watcher' at the court, Lord Hervey, who had been induced to 'observe the Queen, to confirm the Walpolese predilections of the Queen, to report every incident to Sir Robert.'<sup>78</sup>

The 'outs' represented themselves as especially 'loyal' in criticising Walpole's 'usurpation' of royal prerogatives on patronage, in condemning his manipulations of the vote in the House and in local elections; further, in demanding parliamentary inquiries into suspect past activities and in attempting to limit the number of

patronage offices by the passage of place and pension bills. In essence, they objected to the way he engrossed all patronage, organized it, and drew support from it.

Supported by popular sentiment in the cities where they concentrated their propaganda, opposition leaders sought to show the administration that the populus, especially those of the 'emerging classes' were exasperated by nepotism, favouritism, and bribery in the government. Such public resentment was demonstrated in the theatre where the common man, having no direct means of controlling a corrupt government, could at least jeer at it. The Craftsman, launched by Pulteney in December 1726, had been founded for the purpose of satirizing Walpole. Its object was plainly 'to vilify this minister's name... to arraign his conduct, depreciate his services, blacken his character, and weaken his credit, with his prince and his fellow subjects.'<sup>79</sup> The Craftsman seized every occasion to entertain readers with vilification of Walpole. Sometimes the means were direct, but more often the appointed end was attained by suggestive emphasis in articles on economics, science, medicine, religion and even theatre.

The South Sea Bubble crisis of 1720 presented plentiful 'material' for such an attack. Opposition newspapers attacked Walpole for encouraging by his own example, avarice in the heart of the nation. The Craftsman, dated 17 May, 1729, described how people are 'sunk in the love of wealth... Corruption has introduced luxury ... and how the sole government among them seems to



be money. By this instrument the Ambitious rule,'<sup>80</sup> This crisis was the result of nationwide gambling in the uncontrolled money-market of a wealthy country. Walpole adroitly used the situation to stabilize the political scene in his favour, gaining a grip on government power. It was said that Walpole had drawn up an agreement between the faltering South Sea Company and the Bank of England whereby the former would gain access to the latter's capital. When the bank's directors pulled out of the deal the shares of the South Sea Company plummeted. The controversy over the bank contract was renewed in 1730-31, with opposition innuendoes about shady dealings for private profit, until Walpole in 1735 was forced into undertaking to explain his part in the transaction.

No doubt, the opposition used every weapon in its power to try to discredit Walpole with the people. Bolingbroke and Pulteney, realized the power of public opinion and the power of the press to mould it. Many of their writers both in The Craftsman and independent of it were literary men of ability and reputation. Notable among them was John Gay.

\* \* \*

John Gay, the political satirist:

The Beggar's Opera and Dean Swift's Gulliver's Travels

To determine the effectiveness of Gay's role as political satirist, several important factors must first be scrutinised. Namely, was Gay's objective to create an overtly political work, knowing the possible repercussions which might arise from this? Moreover, how far was The Beggar's Opera harnessed as a political scapegoat by the opposition in its attempt to oust Walpole from power? In any event, how effective was The Beggar's Opera as a tool of political satire?

'It is said that in resentment of a sop callously thrown to him by way of patronage, John Gay retorted with the brilliant political satire of The Beggar's Opera. What the hand had offered was inadequate and Gay had bitten it, but with little viciousness, for he was on all report, too "openhearted, feckless, generous and kind"<sup>81</sup>. An examination then of the political significance of Gay's The Beggar's Opera as discernible in its characters, actions, thoughts and sentiments will go some way towards answering these questions and enable us to gain some understanding of Gay's contribution to political satire of the period. Moreover, Gay's political responses will be considered alongside those of Dean Swift, with particular reference to Gulliver's Travels (published anonymously on 28 October, 1726), so that an attempt can be made to assess the effectiveness of the two art media, ballad opera and literature, in fulfilling a role as tools of



political propaganda.

Whether or not Gay wrote his opera with the intention to satirize Walpole and his government remains a moot question. Correspondence between Gay, Swift and Pope about the opera, before its opening, reveals little that is definitive. Nevertheless, in this extract, taken from Gay's letter to Mrs Howard dated August, 1723, Gay makes some disparaging remarks about statesmen, courtiers and 'great men', including an ironic comment that foreshadows

The Beggar's Opera:

I cannot indeed wonder that the talents requisite for a great statesman are so scarce in the world, since so many of those who possess them are every month cut off in the prime of their age at the Old Bailey. How envious are statesmen! And how jealous are they of rivals! A highwayman never picks up an honest man for a companion, but if such a one accidentally falls in his way; if he cannot burn his heart, he like a wise Statesman discards him. 82

Whilst Gay's political intentions are uncertain there is no doubt on the onehand that Walpole's supporters feared the influence of political interpretations, and that on the otherhand opposition factions saw The Beggar's Opera as a valuable weapon for political satire.

Nevertheless, the body of evidence available makes it extremely difficult to estimate accurately the nature of the initial public response to the politics of Gay's opera in the days after it opened on January 29, 1728. Reviews were scanty. Published correspondence of Gay and his friends, eye witness reports, as well as newspaper reviews offer little insight into the initial political reaction to the work. The earliest significant suggestion that the play might lend itself to political interpretations comes

from a notice which was obviously intended to forestall the actuality of such interpretations. On February 16, 1728, a piece appeared in The Senator, a government newspaper, warning its readers that a review was to appear which would endeavour to find a 'farther meaning than everybody sees in The Beggar's Opera'.<sup>83</sup> This pro-government effort to forestall political interpretation is the first significant instance of an analogy being drawn between opera and contemporary politics, and it is called into being by the anticipated power of a review to be published by an opposition newspaper. This, indeed, appeared on February 17, in the eighty fifth number of The Craftsman,<sup>84</sup> and was the most significant political reaction to the opera, and in turn agitated a spate of political discussions about the work.

The author introduces himself as a guardian of the government against the vituperations of the opposition. His object is to arouse the authorities to take notice of the fact that two of his Majesty's theatres have lately been 'made popular engines for conveying not only Scandal and Scurrility, but even Sedition and Treason through the kingdom.' He enters upon a formal analysis of the play's elements, for the purpose of literary criticism, but primarily to read into it the most vehement kind of political satire. William Coxe has commented that while Gay himself might not have intended his opera as a satire against Walpole, this letter had managed 'with all the virulence of party and great keenness of wit',<sup>85</sup> to make use of it to that effect. Certainly, it played a

considerable part in making the political satire of the opera understood by the people at large, giving it a turn the author little meant and encouraged opposition wits to use their ingenuity to transform a successful entertainment into a vehicle of political abuse.

'Philharmonicus', the author, applies his irony first to an assessment of the political significance of the characters. Everyone, he says, will see in the highwayman hero of the play 'One who makes it his business arbitrarily to levy and collect money on the people for his own use; of which he dreads to give any Account.'

Later, he develops the parallels between Macheath and the Minister charged by the opposition with peculation of public funds. He refers to captain Macheath:

who hath also a goodly presence and hath a tolerable bronze upon his face, is designed for the principal character and drawn to asperse somebody in Authority. He is represented at the Head of a Gang of Robbers who promise to stand by him against all the enquiries and coercive force of the Law. He is often called a Great Man.

'Brazen face' and 'Great Man', were nicknames of Walpole, and his resistance to parliamentary inquiries was notorious.

Several lines from the opera are cited to illustrate his interpretation of the author's 'intent' in delineating the character of Macheath. Macheath's inability to choose between Polly and Lucy in Act II scene 13, as expressed in the lyric 'How happy could I be with either,/ Were t'other dear charmer away!' was widely taken to be an allusion to the triangular relationship between Walpole, his wife and Maria Skerrett, his mistress, and later his second wife. Schultz, in his synthesis, asserts that such evidence in

favour of direct allusions points to a rotating satire in at least three different characters, Robin of Bagshot, Peachum and Macheath:

For this reason it is difficult to locate definite lines in portrayal of the minister and easy to go astray in the search for political parallels in connection with him. The interesting point is that whether Gay meant Walpole or not, the various shoes seem to have fitted him remarkably well. 86

The Craftsman reviewer next turns to consider the action. The highwayman hero, he says, is twice arrested in the play, escapes the first time, is ordered for execution the second, but is spared by a last minute reprieve. The first arrest was 'for a certain slippery prank on the road.' It may be that, with his underlining<sup>87</sup> the satirist means to read into the incident of Macheath's arrest by Peachum, an allusion to Walpole's arrest early in his career (1712), on Tory charges of peculation. The second arrest, which takes him 'in much better plight and apparel' may have been so qualified by the satirists, to suggest an illusion to the threatened end of Walpole's political career upon the death of George I, an end prevented by the intercession of Queen Caroline.

His chief point with regard to the action is reading a political moral into its forced happy ending. Macheath's execution is prevented 'for no other reason, that I can see, than the poet is afraid of offending the critics, by making an opera end with a tragical catastrophe.' Paraphrasing the delightful exchange between Gay's Player and Beggar in Act III scene 16, in which strict 'poetical justice' gives way to 'strict observance

of dramatick rules...' Philharmonicus repeats the 'very good moral' that was thus spoiled 'viz. that the lower people have their vices in a degree as well as the rich, and are punished for them.' The opera's author seems, he says, to be somewhat inconsistent in his moralizing. His Macheath 'whom he had before called a great man', he now ranks 'amongst the lower people'. But this, he concludes, was perhaps 'for a Blind; and then, no doubt, the reprieve was brought in, to inculcate the same moral in a stronger manner; viz, by an example of a great man, and a notorious offender who escapes with impunity.' P. E. Lewis has suggested that this hair breadth escape from death by a last minute reprieve alludes to Walpole's unexpected escape from political extinction after the death of George I and the accession of George II in 1727. Macheath, 'a great Man in distress', survives, just as Walpole, another 'great Man in distress' survived by promising the new King to increase the Civil List fund for the Royal family's expenses.<sup>88</sup>

Other twentieth-century critics have provided comments about the political nature of the opera. Schultz believes that Macheath's efforts to ease conditions for himself in the Newgate prison scene (Act II, scene 7) by bribing Lockit suggests another aspect of corruption in Walpole's England.<sup>89</sup> Again, the South Sea fraud which proved a constant source of embarrassment to Walpole, mentioned in a satirical context, was commonly a means of pointing to his corrupt administration. Take for example the following reference to the Bubble in Act I scene 13,

Air 18:

MACHEATH: The miser thus a shilling sees,  
Which he's obliged to pay,  
With sighs resigns it by degrees,  
And fears 'tis gone for aye.

Further, the action serves as an elaborate allegory of the workings of English government. Again, the scenes showing Peachum working over his large account books and registers, as in the opening scene, suggest an admirably efficient administrative system 'of which high officials, like Walpole were not wholly ignorant'.<sup>90</sup>

Philharmonicus plunges into the satirical strokes upon Ministers, courtiers and great men in general. He proceeds to string together, by paraphrasing and by directly quoting at length, a series of general and particular examples of phrases, lines, and songs that acquire political significance when read from a certain point of view and with suggestive underlining, warning the government of the dangers to law and order and respect for authority that lurk in even the most innocent sounding lines. He notes:

When Miss Polly questions her spouse's constancy, he tells her that you might sooner tear a pension out of the hands of a courtier, than tear him from her.... (Act I scene 13) innuendo, that all courtiers have pensions.

He notes that Gay libels men of all professions with his first song in which Peachum - a character comparable to John Wild<sup>91</sup> - makes the employments of a statesman seem, by innuendo, more despicable than his own dishonest work or as Peachum puts it in song: 'The statesman because he's so great /Thinks his trade as honest as mine' (Act I

scene 1). He considers next the promise of Macheath's gang 'never to betray one another's interest or any other motive'. Matt remarks: "Show me a gang of courtiers, who can say as much" (Act II scene 1) which the writer interprets as suggesting that 'Courtiers have less Honesty than Highwaymen.' He cites specific strokes against arrears of the government, against governmental screening of the culpable directors in the South Sea scandal, and against the chief Minister's alleged callousness in driving talented associates from office.

He next quotes three songs with little commentary, testing the effectiveness of his previously given leads. In the first, the one which Walpole is said to have encored, Lockit cautions Peachum against censuring the age so openly, because many dishonest courtiers who hear the mention of vice or bribery will cry out 'that was levell'd at me' (Act II scene 10). In the second, Lockit notes that when the time comes for him and Peachum to hide from the law, they 'like the great, to secure a retreat /when matters require it, must give up our gang' (Act III scene 11) or they 'like poor pretty rascals might hang'. In the last of the songs Macheath observes that though laws were made for all, not many of the rich hang because 'gold from law can take out the sting' (Act III scene 13). The first song makes implicit reference to the all pervasive nature of Walpole's patronage system, the second to the presumed fact that only the minister's followers and not the minister could do wrong, and the third to Walpole's alleged reputation for buying and selling

justice.

The most obvious literal allusion to Walpole in the opera would seem to be the reference to the name of one of the members of Macheath's gang: 'Robin of Bagshot, alias Bluff Bob, alias Carbuncle, alias Bob Botty' whom Peachum first refers to in Act I scene 3. 'Gorgon' and 'Carbuncle' are straightforward insults. 'Robin of Bagshot ... Bob Botty', Robin's aliases are satirical jibes at Walpole. 'Bluff Bob' suggests Walpole's alleged lack of refinement and good manners, and his outspokenness, but there is a further suggestion that he bluffed his way through political life. 'Bob' itself carries criminal connotations, being the slang term for a shoplifter's assistant. 'Bob Botty' implies the accusation often levelled against Walpole that he was a robber of the public, as does 'Robin of Bagshot'.

What Peachum says about him, that he 'spends his life among women', opposition wits were ever ready to apply to Walpole. Likewise, his remark 'My daughter to men should be, like a court lady to a minister of state, a key to the whole gang' (Act I scene 4) could be interpreted as an allusion to Maria Skerrett's faithful support of and sympathy for Sir Robert. Allusions to Walpole and his brother-in-law, Townshend are also apparent. The ministerial power was shared, just as Peachum and Lockit are 'to go halves in Macheath' and share other matters of mutual concern. Again, the fact that Townshend was Walpole's brother-in-law could well account for the expression of 'Brother' which both Lockit and Peachum



employ. Take for example, this line of Peachum's in Act II scene 10) 'Indeed, indeed, brother, we must punctually pay our spies, or we shall have no information.'

A. E. H. Swaen even offers the suggestion that the allegro part of the overture is an adaptation of a song known as Walpole, or the Happy Clown, thus giving us a political allusion even in the music.<sup>92</sup> IVa & IVb This tune appears again in Air 47 entitled One evening having lost my way. Macheath's song about 'the modes of the court' (Act III scene 4), a satiric comment on hypocritical court friends who make promises but never fulfil them, may have been Gay's personal revenge against a court which offered him no suitable patronage after years of attendance upon it.

In consideration of the dramatic language, Philharmonicus slights the subject. If Walpole is, to any degree satirized in the opera, it would be remarkable were his presence not discernible in the dramatic language. As Parlakian has commented: 'While I do not argue that Gay deliberately modelled the language of the opera after Walpole's diction, I think it is highly likely that those who could associate Macheath, Peachum and Lockit with Walpole, could, as arbitrarily, relate the language of the characters with the Prime Minister's.'<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, it is fruitless to look through the text for precise delineation of a veritable Walpole. This was not the intent of the dramatist. The villains and fools set upon the stage to satirize or condemn the 'great Man' were based not on the man himself, but on the current

stereotype, the product of newspapers, ballads, cartoons, and court and coffee-house gossip.

Hessler, has aptly summarized Gay's usage of satire here as a tool of political propaganda:

In studying the political significance of his work, one must keep in mind the allusiveness, the tendency to metaphor and allegory, and the dependence on the effectiveness of general satire, which characterized many of the attacks of the opposition. One must recall The Craftsman's ironic repudiation of political motive in its allegory, and its protest that it attacked vice in general: if any particular knave took the application to himself, surely it must be because he knew himself guilty. Gay's methods were similar. 94

Gay's stance as a political satirist was somewhat oblique and indirect and never openly declared. Other writers, however, were not afraid to show their hand, although their political satire was often cushioned by allegory. One such writer was Dean Swift. When he came to publish Gulliver's Travels anonymously in 1726, Walpole, as Prime Minister, represented for him the hated party. Changing his conception of the book, which he had probably started as a play, Swift was making it over as political allegory, in part to attack Walpole. Indeed, he had warned the publisher, that some parts of what he had written 'may be thought in one or two places to be a little satirical'.<sup>95</sup>

In appearance Gulliver's Travels is the sole work of Captain Lemuel Gulliver, an educated seafaring man who has set down his memoirs of four voyages to remote countries as a contribution to human knowledge (Part I: A Voyage to Lilliput, Part II: A Voyage to Brobdingnag, Part III: A Voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Glubbdubdrib, Luggnagg, and

Japan, Part IV: A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms).<sup>96</sup> Yet in reality it is the work of Dean Swift, 'an elaborate concoction of political allegory, moral fable, social anatomy, and mock utopias, set within a skilful parody of both travel fiction and journals of scientific exploration.'<sup>97</sup>

The Whig government that had come in with George I was the natural object of Swift's resentment; he held it responsible for his own and Ireland's wrongs. Among the principles which he set down as having been his own during Anne's time, were declarations against arbitrary power and standing armies in time of peace: further, he was in favour of annual parliaments and the superior judgment of the landed classes. He was constantly irritated by these new Whigs, whose 'principles' were 'Wholly degenerate from their predecessors'.<sup>98</sup>

The discussion of Swift's systematic allegory of contemporary political events, will focus on Books I and III of Gulliver's Travels. It has been generally recognized that Flimnap, the Prime Minister of Lilliput was intended to represent Walpole:<sup>99</sup>

Flimnap, the Treasurer, is allowed to cut a caper on the strait rope, at least an inch higher than any other lord in the whole Empire. I have seen him do the summerset several times together upon a trencher fixed on the rope, which is no thicker than a common pack-thread in England. 100

The account of the courtier's acrobatic tricks for the award of the green, red, or blue silk threads, ridicules the presentation of various orders to the King's favourites. Blue is the colour of the Order of the Garter

(bestowed on Walpole in May 1726), red of the Order of the Bath, which was bestowed on Walpole at its revival in 1725, and green of the Order of the Thistle.

The Emperor lays on a table three fine silken threads of six inches long. One is blue, the other red, and the third green. These threads are proposed as prizes for those persons whom the Emperor hath a mind to distinguish by a peculiar mark of his favour. 101

Further 'stabs' at Walpole are discernible. The following episode, also from Book I, has been given a detailed interpretation by some commentators with Firth suggesting that it 'may be an ironical hit at Walpole, whose first wife, Catherine Shorter, was not above suspicion',<sup>102</sup> but its more important function is surely to ridicule the innuendos of court scandal:

I am here obliged to vindicate the reputation of an excellent Lady, who was an innocent sufferer upon my account. The Treasurer took a fancy to be jealous of his wife, from the malice of some evil tongues, who informed him that her grace had taken a violent affection for my person, and the court-scandal ran for some time, that she once came privately to my lodging. 103

The other satire on the Prime Minister is not so personal, but it is more bitter, and more serious. In *Laputa* (Book III) the satire is directed against the state of affairs in the 1720s. The target is the Whig-dominated court of George I. The decay and disintegration of *Balnibarbi*, the British Isles, under the rule of a remote court and new fangled Whig policies (as opposed to traditional conservative prudence), is blended with a detailed allegory of Irish resistance to Walpole's policies.

The court of the Flying Island is easy to identify as

that of George I, for the King was a connoisseur of music and his reign was one in which a variety of sciences were encouraged. The Prince of Wales appears. In Lilliput he had one heel higher than the other because he was inclined to the Tories. In Laputa he is the 'great Lord at court, closely related to the King' who befriends Gulliver and who is sympathetically presented as interested in practical affairs, and well-disposed towards Lord Munodi. Munodi, the former Governor of Lagado, now in disgrace, lives on his country estate, the only part of the realm which is properly run. Munodi is a portrait of Swift's friend, Oxford, who had retired after surviving the Whig's attempt to impeach him.

Bolingbroke makes a brief appearance in chapter six. The passage where 'our brother Tom has just got the piles',<sup>104</sup> is treated as an anagram for 'Resist, a plot is brought home; the tour'. Swift is making a general reference to the belief that Jacobite conspirators corresponded in anagrams, and a specific reference to Bolingbroke who was known in France as Monsieur La Tour.

Swift is fairly blatant in his criticism of Whig policies. The end of chapter three is a thinly disguised warning to Walpole that there is a limit to what the people will endure and that the penalty for bad government is the overthrow of that government:

The King being now determined to reduce this proud people, ordered that the island should descend gently within forty yards of the top of the towers and rock.... This incident broke entirely the King's measures and ... he was forced to give the town their own conditions.

I was assured by a great Minister, that if the island had descended so near the town, as not to be

able to raise itself, the citizens were determined to fix it for ever, to kill the king and all his servants, and entirely change the government. 105

Furthermore, Irish resistance to government policies receives due attention by Swift's pen. Take for example the episode recounted by Gulliver in chapter 3:

About three years before my arrival among them, while the king was in his progress over his dominions, there happened an extraordinary accident which had like to have put a period to the fate of that monarchy, at least as it is now instituted. 106

This is an allegory of the successful resistance of Ireland to Wood's halfpence. In 1722 William Wood had paid the Duchess of Kendal £10,000 for a patent to mint copper halfpence and farthings for Ireland, but when the new coinage began to be distributed an outcry was aroused because of its poor quality and because the Irish were not consulted over its introduction. Swift began to write the Drapier's Letters, the most successful of the many attacks on the coinage and the 'combustible fuel' of the allegory. In August 1725, Wood's patent was withdrawn.

Likewise, behind the story of Gulliver's adventures in Lilliput lies a systematic allegory of political events at the time of the Hanoverian Succession. Take for example this early account in chapter two: 'He (the emperor) desired I would not take it ill, if he gave orders to certain proper officers to search me'.<sup>107</sup>

In 1715 the Whigs formed a committee to investigate the conduct of the previous government and especially of Oxford and Bolingbroke who were suspected of treasonable relationships with France and with the Old Pretender.

Swift's sympathies were with the hard pressed Tories and the search of Gulliver's person is generally thought to satirize the activities of the Whig Committee. Nevertheless, there are rival interpretations of this book: one theory, held by C. Firth (op. cit.) assumes that Gulliver sometimes stands for Swift and sometimes for Oxford and Bolingbroke.<sup>108</sup> Another, that of the critic A. E. Case, assumes that Gulliver is consistently representing Oxford/Bolingbroke up to the moment of his flight to Blefuscu.<sup>109</sup>

Thus, with the former interpretation, the story of the palace fire which Gulliver extinguishes so improperly<sup>110</sup> is assumed to refer to the Queen's prejudice against Swift himself. Her enmity was encouraged by the Earl of Nottingham, who appears in this book as Bolgolam, Admiral of the Realm. Reldresal, in this autobiographical interpretation, is Lord Carteret, Principal Secretary of State in 1721-24, and a friend of Swift. In 1724, Carteret was made Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and had the unpleasant task of offering a reward, for information as to the identity of the author of the Draper's Letters. In Lilliput, Reldresal has to suggest a punishment for Gulliver.

A. E. Case, on the otherhand, argues that the whole of Book I is a consistent allegory of the persecution of Oxford and Bolingbroke by the Whig Ministry so the fire is the war of the Spanish Succession, settled by the Tories in illegal negotiations with France. Bolgolam is Nottingham, identifiable as such by Nottingham's known hostility to Oxford. Reldresal is Viscount Townshend, a

Whig who pretended to befriend Bolingbroke and Oxford. Gulliver's flight to Blefuscu in Chapter eight, is Bolingbroke's flight to France. Case identifies a whole series of minor characters and asserts the total consistency of the allegory, given that Gulliver's experiences combine those of the two Tories, and given that the reigns of Anne and George I are combined in Gulliver's tale by making them Emperor and Empress.

Our examination of both Gay's and Swift's role as political satirist has revealed underlying similarities in subtlety of attack on the political shortcomings of Walpole and the government of the day. However, their chosen methods of representation are strikingly different. Gay, with accurate depiction of topical and topographical London sets his scenes among the lowest classes away from court and government. Swift, on the other hand, using allegory as his main tool, sets king, government and court in imaginary islands, far removed from eighteenth-century London. Nevertheless, both Gay and Swift in their respective genres of ballad opera and literature effectively utilise the arts as a vehicle of political propaganda.



Chapter 4

Contemporary responses of society and critics  
to the Beggar's Opera

In our study of Gay's responses to issues of London life we have discussed his role as social, cultural and political satirist, but in order to assess objectively his contribution to art media we should now consider how eighteenth-century audiences responded to The Beggar's Opera.

An eighteenth-century audience soon made up its mind whether it liked or disliked a play, and tended to express its opinion for or against in no uncertain terms. If such a thing as a 'new reading' occurred to an actor he would hardly dare to introduce it, so conservative were the stern critics of the pit and boxes. The important point in favour of The Beggar's Opera was its considered novelty. The play was largely different from anything which had preceded it. There was thus no chance of comparing The Beggar's Opera with any plays that had gone before. It was 'sui generis', and unprecedented in the responses it aroused in the press for very seldom did the papers of the day contain a notice of a theatrical performance. The Beggar's Opera thus, is an exception, and in The Daily Journal of February 1, 1728 we have the following extract:

On Monday was represented for the first time at the Theatre Royal in Lincoln's Inn Fields, Mr. Gay's new English Opera, written in a manner wholly new and very entertaining, there being introduced instead of Italian airs, about 60 of the most celebrated old

English and Scotch Tunes. There was present there, as well as last Night, a prodigious concourse of Nobility and Gentry, and no theatrical Performance for these many years has met with so much Applause. 111

In this chapter I shall analyse contemporary responses to Gay's The Beggar's Opera, focusing primarily on those of the critics Dean Swift and Dr. Herring, since they demonstrate opposing views on the content of this 'controversial' work. More specifically, the issues of morality, satire, and unconventionality will be considered. Finally, I shall attempt to justify the hypothesis that Gay, in all innocence, was merely reflecting his contemporary world of the 1720s, rather than setting out to make a vehement attack on the establishment; and additionally, to defend Gay against charges of immorality.

Running for sixty two nights in the first season, the record for that time, The Beggar's Opera continued its popularity and was performed more than any other piece during the eighteenth century. It produced in 1728 and after, a flood of occasional literature (pamphlets, sermons, letters,<sup>112</sup> newspapers, verse) hardly equalled in the case of any other contemporary English dramatic production. It was preached against from pulpits and brought forth newspaper criticism that was both antagonistic and complimentary to an extravagant degree. One of the main reasons for so much public interest in the work was its unconventionality. On its opening night (29 January, 1728, at the playhouse in Lincoln's Inn Fields) the sticklers of tradition, for the proprieties and for the unities, and the rest of the cast-iron laws which

bound the drama of the times, were outraged to find that the opera had no Prologue. This was unheard of at the time. True, there was a kind of Prologue in the shape of a dialogue between a Player and Beggar in which the latter gives his reasons for writing the opera, but this did not satisfy the pit and gallery, who thought, as an overture did not usher in the programme, that they were being defrauded of their usual music. There were rumblings of a coming storm, and John Hall, who played Lockit, was sent on to apologise for the innovation and quell the threatened disturbance. He did it in a fashion as unpremeditated as it was unexpected: 'Ladies and gentlemen, we - we - beg you'll not call for first and second music, because you all know there is never any music at all at an opera'.<sup>113</sup> Good-humour was restored, and the work was allowed to proceed.

When Gay handed the first draft of The Beggar's Opera to his literary associates, it was with the expectation that it would be freely criticised and, maybe, condemned. Whatever literary merits the play possessed, it was a new departure in writing for the stage. Indeed, whatever they may have thought of the humour and cleverness of The Beggar's Opera, the coterie were all agreed that success with the town was very doubtful, for Gay's experiment not only went dead against the accepted canons and solemn traditions of the stage, but was contrary to the conventional taste and stilted fashion of the day. As Pope wrote to Swift: 'It will make a great noise, but whether of claps or hisses I know not'.<sup>114</sup> For once, an

author was to prove himself a better judge of what he had contrived than his readers. Nevertheless, it is possible that Gay passively doubted, along with the rest, the success of his new experiment. Pope wrote to Swift, in January, 1728: 'At worst it is in its own nature a thing which he can lose no reputation by, as he lays none upon it.'<sup>115</sup> The motto of the play was, in fact: 'Nos haec novimus esse nihil'.

The following account of the opening night of the opera on January 29th, 1728 at which Pope and the rest of Gay's friends were present demonstrates the trepidation which awaited the audience's response:

We were all at the first night of it, in great uncertainty of the event till we were very much encouraged by hearing the Duke of Argyll, who sat in the next box to us, say: 'It will do - it must do! - I see it in the eyes of them,' he said. This was a good while before the first act was over, and so gave us ease soon; for the Duke (besides his own good taste) has a more particular knack than any one now living, in discovering the taste of the public. He was quite right in this, as usual, the good nature of the audience appeared stronger and stronger every set, and ended in a clamour of applause. <sup>116</sup>

This response triggered off an enthusiastic public reception of The Beggar's Opera evidenced by a spate of advertisements which appeared during the run of the opera. Here are a few of them:

This day is published a Sketch of The Beggar's Opera being a Lively representation of that so-much Admir'd Performance with Suitable Instruments and decorations. 'ex cantare pares et respondere parato'. Virg. Sold by J. E. Sympson, Engraver and Print seller in Bridges Street, Covent Garden.

A New and entertaining fan consisting of 14 of the most favourite songs taken out of The Beggar's Opera, with the Musick in proper Keys within the compass of the flute, curiously engraved on a copper Plate. Sold for the author at Mr. Gay's Head in Tavistock Street, Covent Garden. 117

On a more popular plane, Lavinia Fenton, who played Polly Peachum, attracted a great public following and helped to make the work a 'cause célèbre'. Even the avid followers of the vogue for Italian opera among the more 'genteel' upper classes did not remain untouched by the 'fever'. Mrs. Delany bears testimony to the success of the opera, but doubtless reflects the opinion of the 'genteel' upper classes:

I was at the rehearsal of the new Opera composed by Handel. I like it extremely, but the taste of the town is so depraved that nothing will be approved of but the burlesque. The Beggar's Opera entirely triumphs over the Italian one; I have not yet seen it, but everybody that has seen it says it is very comical and full of humour; the songs will soon be published and I will send them to you. 118

In a letter dated February 29, 1728, she tells Mrs. A. Granville that at a supper 'we were very merry and sung The Beggar's Opera', and a fortnight afterwards returns to the one topic: 'I desire, you will introduce The Beggar's Opera at Gloucester; you must have seen it everywhere but at Church, if you have a mind to be like the polite world.' 119

There is no doubt that The Beggar's Opera eclipsed the fashionable taste for Italian opera but the question as to whether Gay deliberately intended a satire on Italian opera is in dispute as has already been shown. It has been taken for granted that The Beggar's Opera was intended as a burlesque upon the Italian opera, which at that time was in high favour. However, this is more than likely due to a much quoted source, the interpretation expressed by Dr. Johnson in Life of John Gay in which he

refers to The Beggar's Opera thus:

As certainly it was intended by the Author, a satyr on the inconsistencies and unnatural conduct of the Italian Operas, which tho' they charm the eye with gay dresses, and fine Scenes, and delight the ear with Sound, have nothing in them either to reform the manners, or improve the mind, the original institution of the stage. (121

Indeed, Swift, writing in no. 3 of Intelligencer, 1728, expressed the opinion that the Englishman's taste for Italian opera was unnatural and that the genre was wholly unsuited to our northern climate and the genius of our people.<sup>122</sup>

If The Beggar's Opera was not a direct satire on Italian opera, were then political connotations read into it by contemporaries? One of the most interesting contemporary documents relating to satire of the play is Swift's 'A vindication of Mr. Gay and The Beggar's Opera', an article in The Intelligencer, no. III (1728). The Dean first discusses the play as a very agreeable entertainment, original and full of humour. Then, after talking in general of the right to satirize a court or ministry, he says:

My reason for mentioning courts and ministers, (whom I never think on but with the most profound veneration) is, because an Opinion obtains, that in The Beggar's Opera there appears to be some reflection upon courtiers and statesmen, whereof I am by no means a Judge.

It is true indeed, that Mr. Gay, the author of this Piece ... hath failed of Preferement, and upon a very weighty reason. He lay under the suspicion of having a libel, or Lampon against a great M.... 123

More blatantly, Swift in a letter to Gay, expressed firm hopes that Walpole would be affronted by the political slant of the work and that his ministerial

position would be damaged. 'Does Walpole think you intended an affront to him in your opera? Pray god he may, for he has held the longest hand at hazard that ever fell to any sharper's share, and keeps his run when the dice are charged.'<sup>124</sup> Further, on March 28, 1728, Swift wrote to Gay:

We hear a million stories about the opera, of the encore at the song; 'That was levell'd at me', when two great Ministers were in a box together, and all the world staring at them. I am heartily glad your opera has mended your purse, though perhaps it may spoil your court.

Later in the same letter he said, 'To expose vice, and to make people laugh with innocence, does more public service than all the ministers of state from Adam to Walpole...'<sup>125</sup>

Nevertheless, any stab at the Minister was sufficiently cloaked to prevent any direct punitive measures being taken against Gay. Indeed, the entertainment value of the opera was paramount. As Hervey related in his Memoirs, 'The Beggar's Opera ... was so extremely pretty in its kind, that even those who were most glanced at in the satire had prudence enough to disguise their resentment by chiming in with the universal applause with which it was performed.'<sup>126</sup>

It was however, the issue of morality, as depicted in The Beggar's Opera, that aroused the greatest outrage. The fear of evil tendencies in The Beggar's Opera has unusual interest because of its relation to the age of moralizing literature in which Gay's play was produced. Gay, out of the spirit of satire and burlesque, to heighten his scheme of wit and ridicule, brought forth in

The Beggar's Opera a hero highwayman and a comic idealization of low life and character.

The most notable public rebuke of it came in the form of a sermon delivered in March, 1728 by the Reverend Thomas Herring, a court chaplain and preacher at Lincoln's Inn Chapel. Even here, however, such response was tempered by political affiliations. Indeed, this denunciation of Gay's opera may have been made on political grounds, as an echo of the resentment of Walpole which had possibly passed around the whole official circle and reached Herring, zealous for promotion.<sup>127</sup> The denunciation of the immoral tendencies of amusements generally, and of the stage in particular, has always been a pet theme of the clergy, and no doubt Mr. Herring saw his way to advancement by a vigorous onslaught on what the town most enjoyed. His antagonism on the basis of immorality may have served as a cloak for a reply to the Opposition Party. Since it was made from the pulpit, however, it should be considered as a part of the voice raised against the criminal influence of The Beggar's Opera. The sermon which appears not to have been printed, attacked the work for making a hero of a highwayman and leaving him unpunished at the end. It is described in The Preface to Seven Sermons on Public Occasions by the Most Reverend Dr. Thomas Herring, Late Lord archbishop of Canterbury.

The editor says:

Once indeed a great Clamour was raised on account of his alluding to a popular entertainment, then exhibited at the neighbouring theatre, and presuming to condemn it, as of pernicious consequence in regard to the Practice of Morality and christian virtue, he was not



singular in this Opinion; and experience afterwards confirmed the Truth of his Observations, since several thieves and street-robbers confessed in Newgate, that they raised their courage at the Playhouse, by the Songs of their Hero Macheath, before they sallied forth on their desperate nocturnal exploits. 128

A letter in the London Journal of March 30, 1728, under the pseudonym 'Philopropos' takes a similar stand, but to greater lengths. This writer stresses particularly the opinion that public entertainment should be for the 'Encouragement of virtue and the discountenancing of Vice and Immorality'. Further, he considers it shocking that the subject-matter 'for Laughter and Merriment' should be 'a gang of Highwaymen and Pickpockets triumphing in their successful villainies, and braving the ignominious death they so justly deserve'. He saw the proper end of punishment to be the prevention of future crime and considered Gay's standpoint, as he interpreted it, as a danger to the rule of law, 'blunting the Edge of the Civil sword, and opening the Flood-gates (if I may so speak) of the most outrageous enormities.' Pursuing this to the extreme 'Philopropos' felt further damage would be done if the lives of robbers and Night-walkers were described as 'full of Mirth and Jollity'. He concluded with a just observation from Mr. Addison in the 249th Spectator... 'If' (says he) 'the talent of Ridicule were employ'd to laugh men out of vice and Folly it might be of some Use to the world; but instead of this we find that it is generally made use of to laugh Men out of virtue and good sense by attacking everything that is Solemn and serious, decent and praiseworthy in human life.'<sup>129</sup> Maybe

'Philopropos', and doubtless Herring, would have been satisfied if Gay had tacked on a 'moral' and sent Macheath to the gallows whining and repentant.

Defoe likewise in his social tract entitled Augusta Triumphans published in 1728, condemns the work for the fact that 'thieves are set out in so amiable a light in The Beggar's Opera'.<sup>130</sup> A vigorous protest against the immorality of Gay's piece is found in A Satyrical Poem: or The Beggar's Opera Dissected. The following extract aptly sums up the feelings of all who condemned the 'immorality' of The Beggar's Opera:

He has fashion'd Vice, to every taste,  
And made of Matrimony a Jest;  
Calls Murders, Rapines down right Peace,  
And juggles Vice, in virtue's Place.  
Statesmen here, are mighty robbers,  
Private Jugglers, and stock-Jobbers.  
Or what if G- Will write, and pass for Wit,  
'Tis he, and only he, must Answer it.  
Yet who can silent be, in vertue's cause,  
Where Vice triumphant, meets with such applause.

Crime has been encouraged; the old are hardened, and the young are taught 'to act those Vices'; and thus 'the Infection spreads'.

To vertu's precepts they are strangers grown,  
Now Vice gigantic, struts it through the Town.

'Tis hard for th'unexperienc'd to escape,  
Destruction dress'd in such a pleasing Shape.  
It guilds their Ruin, with a spacious bait,  
And shews 'em hot their crime, till 'tis too Late.<sup>131</sup>

In answer to these criticisms, particularly that of Herring, Dean Swift, staunch to his friend Gay, spoke strongly in his defence in the Intelligencer No. 3, 1728. Though naturally biased in favour of his friend, he could by reason of his ecclesiastical position discuss aptly and

sincerely, the question of the morality of The Beggar's Opera. Swift commended it for the excellence of its morality, saying that the work by a 'turn of humour entirely new placed vices of all kinds in the strongest and most odious light'. He considered the play to give a just portrayal of characters, showing a miserable and wretched life. In summary, Swift concluded that in his opinion, 'Nothing but servile attachment to a Party affectation, a singularly lamentable dullness, mistaken zeal or steady Hypocrisy, can have the least reasonable objection against this excellent Moral performance of the celebrated Mr. Gay.'<sup>132</sup>

The impact of the morality question of The Beggar's Opera remained a topic of conversation, in intellectual circles. Dr. Johnson in his Life of Gay put this controversial issue into perspective: 'Both these decisions are surely exaggerated,' he wrote in reference to the opinions expressed by Swift and Dr. Herring.

The play, like many others, was plainly written only to divert, without any moral purpose, and is therefore not likely to do good; nor can it be conceived, without more speculation than life requires or admits, to be productive of much wit. Highwaymen and house-breakers seldom frequent the playhouse or mingle in any elegant diversion; nor is it possible for anyone to imagine that he may rob as safely because he sees Macheath reprieved upon the stage. .133

James Boswell, elsewhere, reports Johnson in 1775 as having said that he did not 'deny it (The Beggar's Opera) may have some influence by making the character of a rogue familiar and in some degree pleasing. There is in it such labefactation of all principles as may be injurious to

morality.<sup>134</sup>

In summary, Gay can not justly be charged with immorality nor did he deliberately set out to make a vehement attack on the establishment. Rather, he was merely mirroring his contemporary world of the 1720s. Performances of the work attracted fashionable audiences, many being political adherents of both political parties. The political satire here and there apparent was mild in character yet nowhere was it sufficiently explicit to cause the suppression of the work. The court and the governing party were widely known to be corrupt, and the generalization of this was nothing to complain of. Courts and governments had been corrupt before, and politicians had robbed the public purse without scruples. Moreover, the common audience found no particular point on which to take up cudgels on behalf of politics. It was the dialogue, the wit, and above all the life-like conception of the whole story which appealed to them to a far greater degree than any stabs at court or government.

Part II

Early eighteenth-century responses in painting  
to social, cultural and political issues

Chapter 1

The artist as social critic:

James Thornhill and William Hogarth

The eighteenth century, an age of latitudinarianism, was also the great age of philanthropy. Cruelty and human misery could not be treated with resignation but required to be eliminated on humane and utilitarian grounds. Thus the philanthropic schemes of the early eighteenth century, which led to the reform of prisons and the establishment of hospitals and orphanages, were initiated in the belief that active man could make important improvements in society, with benefit to the improvers' souls and the wealth of the nation.

During this period, art, too, served a utilitarian function. Art increasingly provided exemplar of human conduct, making it 'useful' in a way that it had never been before. This coincided with an important change in artistic perspective, away from classical grandiloquence towards realistic observation of contemporary morals and mores.

This pedagogical role of painting had been professed by Richard Steele in The Spectator:

I have very often lamented ... that the Art of Painting is made so little use of to the improvement of our manners. But if the virtues and vices ... were given us by the painter in the Characters of real life, and the persons of men and women whose actions have rendered them laudable or infamous, we should not see a good History-piece without receiving an instructive lecture. 135

This suggestion of exemplary and didactic painting

was, to a certain extent realized in the respective works of James Thornhill and William Hogarth: Allegory of London and The Four Cardinal Virtues for the Aldermen's Court Room, Guildhall (1727), A Harlot's Progress (1732) and A Rake's Progress' (1733), which form the focus for this discussion.<sup>136</sup> These works have been chosen since they effectively demonstrate the important transition in painting from the architectural, allegorical style of the Stuart apostles to the 'modern moral subject' using recognisable contemporary types and settings.

This chapter will, by examination of these works, analyse early eighteenth-century responses in painting to sociological issues on contemporary London life. More specifically, the Critic, Ronald Paulson's claim that painting complies with the contemporary maxim that art should entertain as well as instruct, will be attested in the light of Hogarthian talent for satire as a tool of social propaganda: 'Subjects of most consequence are those that most entertain and improve the mind and are of public utility. If this be true, comedy painting stands first as it is most capable of all those perfections.'<sup>137</sup> Finally, an attempt will be made to assess the salutary value of painting in fulfilling the objective as a critic of society.

A study of the artistic output of James Thornhill reveals an almost total neglect of everyday events and 'ordinary people' as legitimate subjects for art. Moreover, this infers apparent disregard for the salutary value of art as an 'instructive lecture' for a

contemporary observer. Indeed, an engraving, published by G. White in 1724 of the notorious criminal Jack Sheppard, drawn by Thornhill, is the only example of Thornhill's artistic interest in low life which has come to light. If he was interested in this kind of work he did not consider it important and the drawing of Jack Sheppard is all that remains of this aspect of his art.

However, one incident in his somewhat less than meteoric parliamentary career may relate to his artistic one. In February 1729 petitions to the Commons were received from distressed insolvent debtors about prison conditions. A parliamentary committee headed by General Oglethorpe was set up to investigate abuses in debtors' prisons. Perhaps it was because of his acquaintance with prison that Thornhill was made a member of this committee. He had already made at least one visit to a prison for his portrait of Sheppard in his cell, dated November 5, 1724, eleven days before he was executed.

Thornhill's own conception of the utility of art must be considered alongside this involvement with philanthropic schemes of the age. Steele's suggestion of didactic painting, was to a certain extent executed, albeit implicitly, in Thornhill's works of classical grandiloquence, although they are seemingly devoid of any realistic observation of contemporary issues. Such examples are his Allegory of London and the Four cardinal Virtues which are the focus of our discussion. The critic Allan Cunningham with reference to this particular artistic style, writes:



A certain kind of painting obtained great reputation in this island during the reigns of the Stuarts, which may be called architectural.... (it) covered walls and ceilings with mobs of the old divinities ... nymphs who represented cities ... and figures ready ticketed and labelled answering to the names of virtues.... The chief apostles of this dark faith were two foreigners and one Englishman ... Verrio, La Guerre and Sir James Thornhill. 138

The following description from a catalogue of the Guildhall of the aforementioned paintings is indicative of Thornhill's apparent infatuation with 'artificiality':

A figure with a mural crown represents London, she is seated on clouds with the city arms on her left hand. Behind her is Pallas, and under her two boys one with the sword on his shoulder the other pointing to the cap of Maintenance, and the Mace lying under her feet. Peace is presenting her with an olive branch; and Plenty with her horn pouring out riches. In four compartments at each end of the oval are the four cardinal virtues, represented like boys, Prudence, Temperance, Justice and Fortitude. The borders of these compartments and of the oval, etc, are embellished with fruit and foliage richly gilt ... over the chimney piece an allegorical panel representing London, Justice, Liberty, Piety, Truth, etc, in chiaroscuro.  
139

Nevertheless, this allegory touches the surface of a number of contemporary sociological issues of great import. Take for example the Cardinal Virtue of Temperance, an inferred reference to the epidemic of spirit drinking, rife among the London slums. Again the figure of Plenty with her horn pouring out riches equally could be an implicit reference to contemporary London, a society radically divided between the extremes of poverty and wealth. Thus, Thornhill's works implicate a didactic role, professing the salutary value of art as a social critic.

Unlike Thornhill, Hogarth, on the other hand, answered the spirit of the age, making everyday events and

'ordinary people' a legitimate subject for art. Moreover, his works were also highly individual, their roots traceable to his own background. Hogarth's father had been confined to the Fleet, the debtors' prison in 1707. Within a year he had been able to buy himself out and live within its rules. From this he was released by an act of general amnesty in 1712. During this formative period Hogarth gained familiarity with the underbelly of urban society, a searing hate of want, deprivation, corruption, injustice and human cruelty and callousness at all levels. This personal insight into contemporary sociological issues in London life is explicitly reflected in his Modern Moral subjects, A Harlot's Progress and A Rake's Progress. As the critic Gowing has pointed out:

Below politics and patronage, underlying the dilemma of the styles, Hogarth's criticism dealt most forcefully with the moral constitution of society itself... English life at a crucial juncture was seen as greedy, merciless, sanctimonious, improvident and treacherous, with the privileged oligarchy presiding in its blindness, at once noble, pathetic and deeply frivolous.

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Thus, it can be assumed as hypothesis that Steele's suggestion in 1711 of exemplary and didactic painting was, to a certain extent, realized in Hogarth's two cycles; further, that they provided more than an 'Instructive lecture' to an observer. M. Dorothy George outlines a challenging basis from which to study such an issue in the cycles when she claims:

The pictorial dramas seem to have an obvious moral: the rake, the harlot ... are faulty, blameworthy creatures, but above all they are victims of their environment, of the follies and cruelties of society. It is against these that Hogarth directs his satire, and his main didactic purpose is to make society aware of them. 141

Thus, in the light of these works an attempt will be made to assess the salutary value of Hogarthian painting in fulfilling the objective as a critic of society; first by considering Hogarth's role as an illustrator of London topography; second, as a delineator of contemporary morals and mores; finally, as a user of satire as a tool of social propaganda. First however, some consideration must be given to the works' structural framework.<sup>142</sup> Hogarth describes the ideas he had formed in his mind as to the plan of composition of his series of moral satires:

The reasons which induced me to adopt this mode of designing were, that I thought both writers and painters had, in the historical style, totally overlooked that intermediate species of subject, which may be placed between the sublime and grotesque. I therefore wished to compose pictures on canvas, similar to representations on the stage, and farther hope, that they will be tried by the same test, and criticized by the same criterion.... Ocular demonstration will carry more conviction to the mind of a sensible man, than all he would find in a thousand volumes; and this has been attempted in the prints I have composed. Let the decision be left to every unprejudiced eye; let the figures in either pictures or prints, be considered as players dressed either for the sublime, - for genteel comedy, or farce, - for high or low life. I have endeavoured to treat my subjects as a dramatic writer; my picture is my stage, and men and women my players, who by means of certain actions and gestures, are to exhibit a dumb show.

143

By organizing pictorial images into series which tell a complete story of contemporary life, Hogarth created a new kind of work of art. Hogarth's Progresses in effect draw together the moral and physical ideas of the 'Progress': the moral journey of the soul towards salvation or perdition, and the geographical progress through London. Hogarth's primary concern was to capture the interest of his contemporaries. He made no claims to

universality except in the strictly moral sense, and the world of reference is confined to London. The reality or otherwise of Hogarth's characters can only be gauged, therefore, by looking at them in a well-defined context of time and place. On the other hand, it must be remembered that the Progresses are as much works of fiction as any play or novel of the period. What is depicted is a representation of real events.

If the Harlot and Rake are fictional this is not to say that they are unrelated to recognisable types of humanity. Nor does Hogarth intend his lawyers or doctors to be merely abstractions which stand for the predominant vices of their profession. They are meant to be convincing as real characters, yet have an universality which will affect the 'observer'. This issue was put succinctly by Henry Fielding in his novel Joseph Andrews of 1742 (Book III Chapter 1):

I question not but several of my readers will know the lawyer in the stage coach the moment they hear his voice... I describe not men, but manners; not an individual, but a species. Perhaps it will be answered, are not the characters then taken from life? To which I answer in the affirmative; nay I believe I might aver that I have writ little more than I have seen. The lawyer is not only alive, but hath been so these four thousand years... 144

Ronald Paulson has commented on the contemporaneity of Hogarth's series, observing in the light of A Harlot's Progress that almost all the elements of the plot were available to Hogarth in the newspapers of the time.<sup>145</sup> Vertue, also noted in his account of the genesis of A Harlot's Progress that Moll or Mary Hackabout was led astray by real people: 'How this Girl came to Town. How

Mother Needham and Col. Charters (Charteris) first deluded her. how a Jew kept her how she liv'd in Drury lane. when she was sent to Bridewell by Sr John Gonson Justice and her salivation (sic) & death.'<sup>146</sup>

Mother Needham, the celebrated bawd, after being pilloried, died on 2 May, 1731, shortly before Hogarth began work on the series. Colonel Charteris, was equally notorious as an outrageous lecher and rapist who was more than once saved from the gallows by his wealth and powerful connections. These two characters appeared frequently in the press and were the target of serious satirists who saw their vices as symptomatic of their age.

Such actuality extends to the works' settings. One of the striking aspects of the Progresses is the precision with which the topography of London is brought into the action. This approach contrasts greatly with Thornhill's Allegory of London and The Four Cardinal Virtues which assert their universality by making the setting as featureless as possible. Like the characters, the settings also partake of fiction and reality, particularly, and the universal. Hogarth creates a London of identifiable buildings which carry with them an implicit sense of moral imperatives. Take for example, the Fleet Prison, which had not only a real existence as a debtors' prison but also a moral existence as the necessary fate of the spendthrift.

In Hogarth's day, London divided itself into the city in the East and Westminster to the West. The way of life

of the two cities, had been codified too in literature, into the contrasting types of merchant and aristocratic fop. Both the Harlot and the Rake begin their careers in the city; the Harlot descends from the York stage in Cheapside, while the Rake sets off on his journey from a house which exhibits miserliness. On the other hand the Rake is able to explore the fleshpots of the polite world to the West. He seeks a position at the Court of St James, while the high point of the Harlot's life was to be the mistress of a Jew, who was likely to be living either in the City or Covent Garden. Covent Garden, where Hogarth himself lived in the early 1730s, represented the meeting point between low life and the dissolute aristocracy. There were to be found the brothels, gambling dens, 'Bagnios' or houses of assignation where masquerades might take place, theatres and shows of all kinds.

The Rake reaches the West End in the second scene of his Progress, and his levée represents the taste of the polite world of fashion, which gravitates around the environs of the court. The Rake reaches his nemesis as he is hauled from his coach in the queue for a grand reception at St James's Palace. He is arrested at this stage. His marriage to the hunchback also gains added meaning from its settings, for it takes place in the church of St Mary-le-Bone, to the North of the West End, the distance from the town suggesting the furtive nature of the proceedings.

The topographical setting of the Rake's end is more clearly defined than that of the Harlot. He progresses

from a gambling den in Covent Garden to those two terrible institutions just outside the walls of the City, the Fleet Prison and Bedlam. She, on the other hand, passes to Bridewell, which could be the original one in Bridewell Palace near the Fleet Prison, or the Bridewell in Tothill Fields, west of Westminster. Her death may take place in Covent Garden but she might equally have descended to one of the infamous lodging-houses in the parish of St Giles-in-the-Fields.

Certainly, "There is a sense, then, in which Hogarth meant the two Progresses to be a real journey as well. The Harlot and the Rake progress towards their latter end, but they also make a metaphorical progress through the streets and institutions of London. Behind Hogarth's titles for the series lie a number of different ideas."<sup>147</sup>

Without a dialogue these works had to be comprehensible to a contemporary audience. In the cycles Hogarth uses gesture and expression to indicate specific actions and orders dress and locale to reflect and point to changes in social status. Indeed, 'Hogarth adds other elements than actors to his scene ... the furniture, animals, streets, houses all play parts; every character and detail is placed socially and economically as well as morally and personally.'<sup>148</sup>

Costume assumes importance for both the Rake and the Harlot as a reflection of economic changes in their lives. How we know Moll has become a mistress is evident through changes in locale and costume. In the first outdoor scene, she wears the fresh innocent outfit of a young

country girl and her eyes are shyly downcast, while in scene II her more elaborate dress, new beauty spot and bared bosom support a facial expression of coy deceit and she entertains in an obviously affluent room. In scene III, here, apparently changed and shabby surroundings are consistently expressed in a less genteel dress, but her bosom is still bare and her expression coy as she dangles what is most likely a stolen watch. In Bridewell her dress appears ostentatious as she stands bewildered, about to beat hemp. In the following scene she expires from venereal disease in a depressing garret. Her clothing consists of blankets that portend her winding sheet in the following scene. The funeral scene with the mourners climaxes the tale of Harlotry. The girl staring into the mirror at Moll's funeral becomes, by means of the questioning reflection in the mirror, an echo of Molly's innocent past when she first arrived in London.

Actuality also extends to changes of locale. Moll Hackabout literally moves from the outdoors of an innyard to a drawing room, to a shabby bedroom and the brick wall of Bridewell, to the stripped and peeling wall of a garret where she dies, to the tiny coffin of her last abode.

Closer examination of individual scenes suggests the importance Hogarth gives to objects and actions to emphasise sociological issues. He often shows objects in the process of overturning or falling. This theatrical technique, in addition to creating suspense graphically, is also used to indicate the theme of Moll's 'fall' from



virtue. Take for example the overturning of a chair and table in plate 5; again, the absence of a door in the Bridewell scene may well emphasise the fact of Moll's imprisonment.

Similar techniques manifest themselves in A Rake's Progress. However, here costume plays a less prominent part. Outside of the instances where Rakewell is wigless (Plates 1, 6, 8) and half-naked (plate 8), his dress is uniformly that of a contemporary young gentleman. Disorder in his dress seems to parallel the growing disorder in his life. In Plate 1, his new wealth, obviously a reversal in his fortunes, proceeds to his initial abuse of that wealth (plate 3) to the reversal on St. James' Street as he is arrested (Plate 4) from his marriage to an unattractive, but rich woman, a seemingly profitable reversal of his fortune (plate 5), he moves from wealth to debt through gambling (plate 6). This reversal is affirmed in Fleet Street Prison (plate 7) and irrevocably fixed in Bedlam (plate 8).

This Progress from good fortune to bad is reflected in changes in locale, facial expression and gestures of the central character. His expression moves from unscrupulous innocence (plate 1), to the heavy eyes of a man about town in his levée (plate 2), to a drunken stupor at the Rose Tavern (plate 3), to utter surprise at the arrest (plate 4), and to the hypocrisy of a hasty marriage with his eyes wandering to the bridesmaid (plate 5). As the curve of his fortunes moves downward, he exhibits despair in the gambling house, bewildered abandon in Fleet

Street Prison, and final madness in Bedlam. Hogarth achieves a certain amount of theatrical immediacy by employing gestures familiar to his contemporary audience such as offering money, getting drunk, getting married in a church ceremony and despairing about money problems.

Additional realism is given in the cycles by the use of 'tag' names for the two principal characters. Firstly, Moll's surname, Hackabout; 'Hack' is a carriage hire; 'About' implies street-walking. There was a prostitute of this surname (with the christian name, Kate), whose name appeared in a list of women taken into custody for disorderly conduct in 1730. Similarly, in A Rake's Progress, Tom Rakewell's name aptly describes his 'raking in' of money from his deceased and miserly father, and a rakish exploitation of women (Sarah and one-eyed wife).

From this reading a number of preliminary observations may be made. In the first place the subjects are relentlessly topical, addressing themselves without inhibition to contemporary life. Further, Hogarth seems to use a double lens, simultaneously exposing problems in society, and the individual as determinants of fate in the cycles.

The prison scene in A Harlot's Progress with its brutal warder and general squalor illustrates a social issue of considerable public discussion in this period, the conditions and administration of the nation's prisons. It was an issue that was of particular significance to Hogarth in view of the prison experience of his

impoverished father. In 1726, an essay was published, highly critical of prison warders, drawing attention to the 'miseries and torments poor Prisoners, for debt, have suffered, as starving, dungeons, chains, whippings, beatings, breaking their limbs...'.<sup>149</sup>

The final plate in A Rake's Progress presents a realistic depiction of Bedlam, or Bethlehem Hospital, the institution where pauper madmen were caged. Here, the Rake's severe mental illness requires him to be manacled to the floor by an attendant. Further, the common delight in visiting Bedlam to see the mad inmates, is reflected in the curious gazes of two London ladies who have come merely to enjoy this popular holiday pastime.

Hogarth's series also offer insight into the contemporary world governed by pimp and bawd. It was the custom of mistresses to meet the wagons which brought country girls to London in order to find and engage servants. It is clear that this must have given great opportunities for what were called 'the delusive snares ... laid daily by the agents of Hell for the ruin of innocence.'<sup>150</sup> The first scene in A Harlot's Progress, denoting the story of an innocent country virgin, Moll Hackabout being debauched and destroyed was one frequently played in real life. We see a pretty country girl appraised with apparent affection by a respectably dressed elderly lady, the notorious bawd, Mother Needham. Yet,

such details as the crumbling plaster alludes to the instability of her situation which at a moral level is easily stated: 'innocent country girls are easy prey to the powerful and unscrupulous and they can expect no guidance or charity in the big city. With this plate innocence takes its leave, and we are left entirely in the world governed by pimp and bawd. In plate 2, Moll is now a Covent Garden street prostitute.

Further insight into this sordid world of harlotry is given in the tavern scene in A Rake's Progress. We see the sordid end to a night of brutal carousing, in which a street fight with the watch has been followed by an early morning visit to a notorious brothel, the Rose Tavern in Covent Garden. The superficial gaiety of the scene is shown to be sordid and ephemeral. The emblematic details are full of disgust, with the chamberpot on the far left disgorging its contents over a dish of roast chicken. The 'posture woman' in the foreground is preparing for an obscene dance on a silver plate which will culminate in her extinguishing her candle in her vagina, and a ballad singer in the doorway holds The Black Joke, a notoriously obscene song. Further, a box of pills on the floor beneath the Rake suggests that he has already caught syphilis. Hogarth makes it clear, then, that the pleasures of the brothel are not deep or lasting.

Walpolian England was an age of gross corruption and materialism. The South Sea Bubble crisis of 1720 reflected this situation. The critic J. Lindsay summarized Hogarth's perceptions about the materialism of his age by

stating that by 1724-5 he had:

already arrived at a mature judgement of his world. The cash nexus was driving out all other relationships; money with its 'magic power' had bewitched people. No one was content with his 'natural self' but wanted to assume a character more imposing, fashionable, glamorous. Life was one long masquerade of lies, falsities, pretences ... the common folk were the victims of the upper classes, who set the tone and moral values; they were fooled by a church that had sold out and become the tool of power and greed; they were ruthlessly held in their place by the state and its law. 151

Lindsay's points can be borne out by the recurrence of these themes in Hogarth's Progresses. Take for example, Moll's aping of courtesan manners in A Harlot's Progress in the dressing-up of the low-bred harlot (plate 2) and her presence in prison, still in all her aristocratic finery, among ragged fellow inmates (plate 4). Again, in the second scene of A Rake's Progress Hogarth uses the device, familiar from dramatic comedy, of a morning levée, to draw together all the providers of costly and unnecessary services who encourage the Rake to ape the manners of the aristocracy. The Rake is besieged by a splendid group of grotesques, and it is assumed that he falls for all their offers. This process of destruction begins with the miserliness of the Rake's merchant father, whose diligent raking in of cash is seen as the primary cause of the Rake's spendthrift nature.

However, the real target lies in the panorama of the foolish extravagances of the 'haut monde'; Rakewell by aspiring to them reveals their essential emptiness. The purveyors of false aristocratic culture are also satirized: foreign musicians are represented by the Handelian

composer playing the music from his new opera The Rape of the Sabines. In the engraving a print on the floor alludes to the singer Farinelli, who attracted expensive gifts from the cognoscenti, including here Rakewell himself; French dancing masters, and indeed foreigners of every kind are butts of Hogarth's wit. The ravishers in the opera, in the cast-list added to the musicians' keyboard in the print, are all sung by well-known Italian eunuchs.

Plumb has aptly stated that all Hogarth's characters are 'victims of a society in which money was replacing status'.<sup>152</sup> Take for example the ruination of Rakewell, by gambling. The tragic shift in the Rake's personality is set against a spectrum of the miseries induced by gambling, the common denominator of which is total obsession, leaving the gamblers in plate 6, unaware of the fire breaking out in the wainscoting. Gambling, of course, cannot pay in a work of morality and in the penultimate painting the Rake's mind has become wholly detached from reality and he is now in the debtors' prison. Yet, even here, actuality of prison life is represented by the turnkey demanding 'garnish' money, and a boy demanding money for beer.

Corruption among the professional classes is alluded to on several occasions in the series. Take for example the opening picture of A Rake's Progress. Here, the legal profession is thoroughly anatomized, for the lawyer stealing the change is presumably also the author of all the legal documents which litter the floor.

Heartless commercialism in the funeral scene in A Harlot's Progress is depicted comically in the action of one of the female mourners who covers her left eye with a handkerchief in a gesture of grief but whose right eye eagerly watches the valuable mourning ring being put on her finger; another whore picks the undertaker's pocket whilst allowing him to seduce her.

Another contemporary issue of great import is manifested in A Harlot's Progress, the concern with the suffering of the commoner at the hands of the great, in a nation divided into the powerful rich and the helpless poor, or, as The Craftsman (29/4/1732) puts it, 'excessive riches in private coffers, and extreme poverty amongst the generality of the people.'<sup>153</sup> The confrontation in plate 1 between the powerful Lancaster landlord Charteris<sup>154</sup> and the defenceless York maiden (the wagon's inscription, 'York', tells of her Yorkshire origins) provides a historical context of strife, the War of the Roses: most prominent on Moll's breast is a white rose of York. In that struggle between the nobility it was the common people who suffered extensive destruction, some hundred thousand common soldiers dying in the prolonged conflict.

Thus, not only are Tom Rakewell and Moll Hackabout victims of their own follies and lusts, but at times they are also victimised by social institutions and customs. Hogarthian satire lays bare the hypocrisies and self-delusions of both society and the individual. Furthermore, Hogarth's satire is so directed at both individuals and society that in his world, both character and social

forces determine fate. This fate seems to be death or agony for the central figures.

Ronald Paulson, in his discussion on satire observes:

final death scenes in satire represent the truth about a sinning protagonist, a truth that is otherwise not apparent. Closing portraits of characters in hell or Bedlam thus demonstrate the sin consuming the sinner and, to carry the idea still further, the image of punishment shows that the manner of dying 'defines the man'. 155

Such is clearly the case in the two cycles, where, in the first or penultimate scene the protagonists die in a way that identifies or reflects the misdirected and deluded course of their lives. Thus, the Harlot is a victim of venereal disease. The Rake ends his life in insanity, an emblem of disorder, implying an inability to cope with, or to order new wealth.

Hogarth's didacticism seems to show that he shared to a certain extent a belief in the 'therapeutic' sense of ridicule.<sup>156</sup> Indeed, it is clearly apparent from our reading of the two cycles that Hogarth made effective usage of satire as a tool of social propaganda.

In summary, our examination of these works of Thornhill and Hogarth has revealed significant responses in painting to contemporary sociological issues in London life. More importantly, these works, to a greater or lesser degree, demonstrate the didactic role of the artist as a social critic.



Chapter 2

William Hogarth, the political satirist:

A Harlot's Progress and A Rake's Progress

At the time of Hogarth's Progresses the tendency of satire, verbal and pictorial was over-whelmingly anti-Walpolian. Satire grew by giant strides in the years following 1725. David Hume writing in 1742 commented that Walpole was 'the subject of above half the paper that has been blotted in the nation within these twenty years'.<sup>157</sup> During this period there was renewed anxiety about the betrayal of trust, the misuse of power and about corruption in high places, such a mood emerging from the contemplation of Walpole's activities as Prime Minister.

Such was the vogue for attacking Walpole that any work which criticized the morality of the nation was interpreted by contemporaries as criticizing Walpole: the reception of Swift's Gulliver's Travels and Gay's The Beggar's Opera as anti-Walpole satire is proof of this eagerness to find political meaning everywhere (irrespective of the intentions of the authors).

The difficulties over how to interpret Hogarth are further compounded when we seek to reveal political nuances in his works. Ronald Paulson sees a dramatic change in Hogarth's political output from 1728. According to Paulson, Prints of the 1720s like Royalty, Episcopacy, and Law and Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn are the last tangible evidence of Hogarth's reactions to politics until

the mid-1750s.<sup>158</sup>

This chapter will attempt, nevertheless, to speculate on the political references in Hogarth's Progresses: A Harlot's Progress (1732) and A Rake's Progress (1733), bearing in mind J. H. Plumb's assertion that Hogarth's work is open to a variety of simultaneous interpretations:

Hogarth's engravings spoke to audiences at different levels, from the sophisticated to the naive: for the former there was a complicated moral message made intriguing by obvious clues that those with inside knowledge could read, and for the latter a single truth, obvious to all, that the wages of sin are death. (159)

Furthermore, an assessment will be made of the effectiveness of the art medium, painting, in fulfilling the role as a tool of political propaganda.

In our discussion of Hogarth's role as social critic, the conventional reading of A Harlot's Progress as humorous moral satire was made. Conversely, a deeper understanding of the period, alongside its characters (in this case Colonel Charteris and others), and actions, reveals the extensive political aspects of A Harlot's Progress series. All the main types or characters present in, or mentioned satirically (Colonel Charteris - Plate 1; Bishop Gibson - Plates 1 and 3; Thomas Woolston - plate 2; The Jew - Plate 2; Sir John Gonson, Plate 3; the Prison Warder - Plate 4; the Quack - Plate 5) were connected to Walpole in various ways; either they were in his pay, or else their villainies were seen by contemporaries as being representative of Walpole's own immortality, or else, in the case of Thomas Woolston, the reference is to the opposition to Walpole's administration.

One of the ways of attacking Walpole and circumventing the libel laws was by satirizing a villain, mythical or historical, ancient or modern, whose immorality was made to serve as an analogue to Walpole's. By the time of A Harlot's Progress, this satirical convention was so firmly established that one Grub-Street Production remarked: "If the character of a rogue should be drawn in 'Lapland', and brought to our town, 'Bob' immediately starts up, and swears it can mean no Body but himself."<sup>160</sup>

Similarly, "Hogarth, had, perhaps, opened the door to political innuendo in the 'Harlot' by the introduction of Walpole's 'Friend' Charteris".<sup>161</sup> The recollection that Charteris, when questioned in Parliament in 1711, was then merely reprimanded by the Speaker for his crimes would have intensified Hogarth's disillusion with the political system administered by 'Great Men' and would have made Charteris appear even more symbolic of political corruption. Further, Walpolian symbolism can be attached to Charteris in terms of the latter's employment of pimps who lingered at inns to spy out prospective country virgins arriving in London. Hogarth's plate 1 shows one of these spies, John Gourlay; Walpole had attracted notoreity over his network of secret service political spies. These were frequently described as his 'pimps'. It should be noted that the story of innocent country virgins being debauched and destroyed, was being applied to Walpole's corrupt government. Indeed, in The Craftsman of January 10, 1730, such an image is used in a discussion of his practice of bribery at elections: 'A bribed Corporation

is like a woman debauch'd, and must expect to be turn'd off and left to shift for herself, when the corrupter hath serv'd his turn.'<sup>167</sup>

In real life Walpole was noted for his appetite for female company, for feasting and bacchanalia. Like Colonel Charteris and the Jew in Plate 2, (both keepers of Moll) Walpole kept a mistress, this illicit relationship being frequently alluded to in anti-Walpole satire.

Political satire extends in plate 2 to Walpole's religious attitudes. Hogarth's Jew is perhaps more than a sexual symbol, his significance extending into the world of contemporary politics. Walpole, in spite of the support received from the established church, had no personal religious animosity towards Dissenters, and he was sometimes criticized for his seeming overtolerance of religious differences. His attitude to Jews was also one of tolerance and formed yet another focal point for Opposition satire, the issue of Jewish naturalization.

In plate 3, there is an ironic allusion to the iconography of the adoration of the shepherds, implying that Gonson's adoration of Moll is of a sexual nature. Hogarth hints that judge and victim are equally sinful. However, the former is shielded from prosecution through his social position while he damns the latter, the poorer, defenceless, Moll for the same crime. The anti-Walpole theme of the 'great' versus the 'small' is revealed. Hogarth implies that it is the 'great' who provide sordid precedents for the poor. Moll in plates 2 and 3 is clearly imitating the vices and habits of aristocratic

ladies, though it is the latter who end up in jail. By depicting Moll's whoring and thieving he is really pointing to the immorality of her social peers, of Walpole and Walpolian villains. In picking on the London Magistrate, Gonson, Hogarth may be exploiting the fact that he was seen by contemporaries as one of Walpole's creatures. Gonson was knighted at the beginning of Walpole's ministry, in 1721, and remained a loyal supporter of his administration.

This theme of 'great' versus the 'common people' is again apparent in plate 3 with the juxtaposition of the portraits of Dr. Sacheverell and Gay's Captain Macheath on the wall of Moll's dwelling, amounting to an equation between the Statesman-bishop and the common thief, such an equation also having political resonance in view of the literary structure established by The Beggar's Opera, of comparing Walpole and his men to a gang of common thieves.

The prison scene, of A Harlot's Progress (plate 4), with its brutal warder and general squalor illustrates an issue of considerable import in this period, the conditions and administration of the nation's prison. The seeming unfairness of the various legal judgements whereby the 'great' and wealthy escaped punishment whilst the poorer sort of the politically dangerous people were fined, imprisoned, transported or hanged, was put down to corruption under Walpole's rule.

The Craftsman of May 10, 1729, carries a satirical account of Bambridge (Warder of Fleet prison) in which his character and actions are seen to be analogous to

Walpole's. He is described as 'this great Minister'.<sup>163</sup> Bambridge's creation of an armed force, left in his own pay, within the Fleet Prison, is compared to Walpole's standing army, both being used to terrorise the people and to extort money from them. Other points of similarity between the two men lie in Bambridge's 'great Name and titles': 'Guardianus, Sive Custos Prisonae de la Flete; Solicitor of Solicitors; Councillor of Councillors, Founder of Dungeons and nobel Manufacturer of Iron Bolts and Manacles'. Walpole's titles and decorations are being parodied, a common opposition ploy, hence the jibes at 'Sir Blue String' and 'Sir Blue Ribbon'.

The tyranny, arbitrary power and maladministration of the prison warder are made to reflect upon the condition of Britain ruled by Walpole, the exposure of which 'is by no means to be called Libbelling the state, but, on the contrary, ought to be look'd on, as the genuine Issue of a public spirit.'<sup>164</sup> The Craftsman declares, with obvious reference to Walpole's practice of snuffing out criticism by applying the laws of libel.

In view of the connections made by contemporary satirists between Walpole and villains like Charteris and Bambridge in terms of the facility granted to them to commit crimes against the people with impunity, it is reasonable to conclude that this prison scene, depicting the suffering of the common sort at the hands of a merciless warder (an analogue of Bambridge) whilst the greater villains, Charteris and the Jew, are absent, invites political interpretations. Hogarth's picture

reveals the inhumane commercialism of the prison system.

Moll is about to be stripped of the fine clothes given to her by her former Jewish keeper, most of which will end up in the possession of her new keeper, the prison warder. There is a financial stimulus too, in the use of the rod on Moll, for the hemp she beats will be sold to merchants for the making of rope and sailcloth, the money accruing to the prison warder. Again, the slogans in plate 4: 'Better to work than stand thus' and 'The wages of Idleness' inscribed on the whipping post and stocks add to the environment of ugly commercialism depicted throughout the series, and carry an anti-Walpole slant.

Sexual-economic exploitation of Moll continues at the hands of doctors in plate 5, who take money from her on the pretence of being able to cure her of venereal disease. The quack, (a traditional symbol of deceit) had become in political satire exclusively evocative of Walpole. Thus, Hogarth's print, opens itself to political interpretation. Its depiction of the enrichment of the doctors through the destruction of Moll (the mercury given to her kills her) recalls the widespread accusation made against Walpole, that he raised himself and accumulated wealth by the despoliation of the country and its people: he 'preys upon human gore, and fattens himself upon the vitals of his Country'.<sup>165</sup>

A Harlot's Progress then, through the presence of Walpole's 'creatures' and through its actions invites political innuendo. In addition, even objects in the

series may have anti-Walpole connotations. Paul Langford, writing about political expression in Walpole's age, tells of how people interpreted political meaning in the most innocuous word or emblem:

Codes, cryptograms, symbols, took on additional meaning, and occasionally nature seemed positively to imitate art.... Anagrams and acrostics abounded and absurdly everyday phrases turned out to have important political meanings. (166)

Take for example the forage being devoured by the horse, in plate 1 of this series. The detail of the starved horse ridden by a political clergyman may convey meaning outside the immediate narrative context, amounting to a swipe at Walpole. In 1712, Walpole, previously Secretary of War, had been imprisoned for the mismanagement of a Scottish forage contract and alleged embezzlement of funds relating to the contract. It was his job to ensure the supply of forage to army horses quartered in Scotland and the contract was given to the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, Scottish army officers like Colonel Douglas having a financial share in the undertaking.

The presence of the Scottish villain, Colonel Charteris, in conjunction with the detail of the starved horse and hay, would have triggered off the memory of the forage contract. He, too, had made money out of Scottish military affairs, in his enrollment of debtors and bankrupts for a fee into his company and pocketing of government money from false wage claims. He, likewise had been investigated, and was reprimanded by the Speaker, in February 1711. In plate 1, there is in addition, much



evocation and play on the word 'Forage': in the hay, in the horse raiding (or 'foraging'), in Charteris' hands 'foraging' through his pockets for the money to pay Moll; in Mother Needham and John Gourlay who 'forage' for virgins at the London inns, or in the case of the clergyman, for a pension or place at court. Such a term carried anti-Walpole connotations, for satirists kept reminding the public of Walpole's involvement in the forage scandal.

Thus, Hogarth, in his series, gives an appearance of generality to his satire by working current political references into a moralistic framework. Yet, such discretion in his handling of political matters is not due to any dramatic shift in his attitude to politics<sup>167</sup> but, rather, to the increasing need to be subtle, the satirist having to rely heavily on the interpretative ability of his reader. Firstly, Hogarth could not financially afford to shut the gate of patronage by outspoken and explicit criticism of Walpole and his associates, for there were few in the opposition of equivalent status as potential patrons. Secondly, political satire in the 1730s was necessarily oblique and generalized, working by suggestion and innuendo. This was in response to the increasing frequency of legal prosecutions for libel brought by Walpole against his attackers. Certainly, Hogarth's profound fear of imprisonment (as evidenced by his obsessive depiction of prison situations), a fear no doubt originating from his father's imprisonment in the Fleet, would have acted to temper his satire in A Harlot's

Progress. An additional reason for the seeming lack of political references in his later works is his abandonment of engraving as his primary medium. This had been a natural vehicle for pictorial political commentary. Yet, Hogarth, being ambitious, desired the status of a serious painter. He would have to delineate character, therefore, as opposed to dealing with caricature. Further, to endure through time, works would have to deal with universal themes, not limiting themselves exclusively to particular political incidents.

References to contemporary politics are detectable in Hogarth's next satirical series, A Rake's Progress. Throughout the 1720s and 1730s, in prints, and literature, the South Sea fraud was employed as a keen weapon in the barrage of satire directed against Walpole and his administration. It is not surprising, therefore that the two Progresses, dealing with money and its corruptive effects, should contain matter reminiscent of South Sea satire. This is evident from the prison scene (plate 7 of A Rake's Progress). In the details of the scrolls falling from the pocket of one inmate, one of them marked 'debts', the other, 'Being a New scheme for paying ye debts of ye nation' they constitute a memory of the South Sea Company, recalling the lunatic schemes, hatched by desperate debtors. Rakewell has become a Projector or Bubbler, writing a play in the hope of attracting subscriptions and patronage.

More specific analogies to Walpole are detectable in Rakewell's character and habits. Like Walpole, Rakewell

is associated with Oxford. In plate 1 Hogarth indicates that Rakewell is an Oxford student by the inscription on a love letter from Rakewell to Sarah Young, held in the apron of her mother: 'To Mrs Sarah Young in Oxford'.

A major series of anti-Walpole prints published c. 1733 entitled, R-b-n's Progress in eight scenes; from His first coming up from Oxford to London to his present situation started with Walpole being blessed by fortune, just as Plate 1 shows Rakewell's inheritance of a fortune. Rakewell's rise to aristocratic status from humble middle-class beginnings (plate 2) has potential political innuendo, bearing in mind that throughout the 1730s Walpole was being derided as a social upstart, his lowly origin frequently alluded to in satirical literature. As H. M. Atherton comments:

Walpole's rise from relatively modest circumstances to the very pinnacle of power made his 'progress' so remarkable and - for those who hated him - so unbearable. Constant reminders of his origin added sting to the appellation of 'great man' and made the comparisons to common criminals more amusing. 168

Rakewell, like Walpole, is now a 'Great Man', and he holds a levée; Walpole's levées, notorious for their affectations, were leading targets for attack in anti-Walpole satire. Plate 3 reveals another aspect of the luxurious life-style of Rakewell, his squandering of money on food, drink, tobacco and sex. By the 1730s luxury and pleasure-seeking were seen as the representative features of a country, that had become grossly materialistic under Walpole's administration and his personal example. Thus, this picture of the lavish Rakewell indulging in the

pleasures of the flesh has inevitable political ramifications. On a personal level Walpole had gained notoreity for the bacchanalian feasts. He had gained, too, a reputation for sexual debauchery. In his physical and sexual appetites Rakewell is evocative of the libertine Walpole. The contemporary poem The Rake's Progress, or, The Humours of Drury Lane,<sup>169</sup> describes plate 3's feasting and gathering of prostitutes as a 'Congress', a political term used in opposition satire to describe Walpole's bacchanalian parties. Take for example, the ballad entitled: The Norfolk Congress; or a Full Account of their Hunting, Feasting and Merry-making (1728).

Further, Rakewell in his lifestyle imitates the Roman emperors ('Great men') like Nero, whose portraits adorn the tavern walls; it was common to compare Walpole to Roman tyrants and Walpole's Britain in its moral collapse to the decadence and decline of the Roman empire. Again, Hogarth's political swipe is in line with satirical trends in anti-Walpole literature.

Plate 4 contains more specific political references, for example, the boy engrossed in an anti-Walpole newspaper, The farthing Post. The boy's political interest reflects mockingly on Rakewell's situation. He is now a place-seeker and is on his way to St. James Palace to a levée held to celebrate Queen Caroline's birthday. Caroline was Walpole's main supporter at court. The poem The Rake's Progress; or, the Humour of Drury Lane comments on Rakewell's appearance in plate 4 describing him as a creature of Walpole:

At Court he sets up for a place,  
To C(hels)ea makes his frequent jaunts,  
And constantly the levée haunts.

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A Journal now and then he'd write,  
On a 'Free-Briton' cou'd indite. 170

Chelsea was where Walpole resided and 'The Free Briton' was a political journal devoted to Walpole.

There is also a specific reference to Walpole's unpopular Excise Bill, the defeat of which was the main political event of 1733. The excise scheme was Walpole's attempt to gain extra revenue from imported tobacco and spirits by converting custom duties on these goods into an inland excise. It evoked widespread popular and parliamentary hostility. Many prints and poems represented Walpole as a tyrant.

In Hogarth's picture the paper attached to one little boy's hat, with the inscription 'Your vote interest - Libertys' refers to such opposition. In 1733 'liberty' was a key political term being constantly evoked by the opposition in decrying Walpole's attempt to extend his powers. They claimed that in fighting the excise scheme they were fighting his attempt to eradicate liberty and enslave the nation to his corrupt will. The details of the tobacco pipe, being smoked by the boy, and the spirit glass and tankard laying next to him also alludes to the scheme.

The political import of Rakewell's arrest is analagous to Walpole's state in 1733. He, too, is a 'great man' in the moment of decline. Many anti-Excise prints showed the

decline and fall of the 'great man'; B. M. Satires No. 1937, depicts the overturning of his coach by a mob armed with staves and spears.

Thus, references to the world of contemporary politics are included in A Rake's Progress. More specifically, Rakewell's character is Walpolian in manner, aspects of his life and action exemplifying the moral decadence of Walpole's Britain. Nevertheless, Hogarth was sufficiently subtle in his attack on Walpole to retain the Prime Minister's favour. Hogarth was to receive lucrative commissions to paint some of Walpole's family, friends and ardent political supporters. Along with James Thornhill, he had painted Walpole in 1730 in a scene set in the House of Commons. Furthermore, in 1734 two members of the Walpole family were among the House of Commons Committee investigating Hogarth's petition for securing the copyright of artists. The petition was successful, and the Copyright Act was passed soon after.

In summary, our examination of the two Progresses has revealed anti-Walpole sentiments. However, Hogarth was ingenious enough to disguise the political elements in his satire, or at least to make them secondary to the moral narrative. Whilst expressing his disgust at the materialist ethos of Walpole's Britain he nevertheless refrained from any direct mention of Walpole enabling him to obtain the patronage of Walpole and his wealthy associates.

Part III

The effectiveness of the artists as social critics  
in their different media

Chapter 1

Philosophy of the arts

Consideration of the relationship between society and culture, and, conversely, society's conception of the artist in all media, is an essential prerequisite for evaluating the responses of the differing art media already studied, to contemporary issues. Remarkable changes were witnessed in the artistic climate as in economics, and politics during the first half of the eighteenth century. The transition from the ethos of the previous century, chiefly known through the aristocratic, court-centred taste, to a much more broadly-based bourgeois culture, put a growing emphasis on individual character and the value of human life.

Shaftesbury, whose views became public in 1712, was one of the important commentators on aesthetics of his age. He attempted to put forward some coherent view of the relationship between society and culture. Art, for Shaftesbury, was the product of economic, social, climatic and political forces and took different forms in different historical periods. A society whose moving spirit was a search for liberty and truth was one in which good government, true religion, good morals and good taste were to be found:

When the free spirit of a Nation turns itself this way, Judgments are formed; critics arise; the Public eye and ear improve; a right Taste prevails, and in a manner forces its way.



For

Nothing is so improving, nothing so natural, so congenial to the Liberal arts, as that reigning liberty and high spirit of a People, which from the Habit of judging in the highest Matters for themselves, makes them freely judge other Subjects, and enter thoroughly into the Characters as well of Men and Manners as of the Products or works of Men, in Art and Science. .171

Thus, the artist was conditioned by society's attitudes and tastes. In the early eighteenth century, success in the arts became a sure way by which to mount the social ladder, and the successful artist, whatever his origins, could be accepted socially among the highest. A famous literary household at this time was that of the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry at Ham House, where Congreve, Swift, Prior, Pope, Henry, Viscount Cornbury and Bolingbroke often gathered. Moreover, the artist was expected to conform to conventional morals and mores, and to share contemporary social aspirations. Certainly, 'As a thinking and feeling man the artist in any period inherits the same structures of consciousness as the rest of his society.' Yet, 'Art is not to be seen as no more than an expression of the integrated consciousness of the period in which it was created, for art does not merely reflect society. It orders experience; it imposes some kind of pattern on the constant flux of reality; it is a search for meaning, a way of making sense of things.'<sup>172</sup> Thus, art embodies, in a relatively coherent system and style some of the pressures and problems which a particular society is experiencing in everyday life. Queen Anne's England was in artistic terms a provincial

backwater of Europe, where no native school of painting had developed. This was largely due to the long-standing absence of patronage either by the court and the church, or by powerful civic bodies and a wealthy middle class. Britain's leading artists until well into the eighteenth century were foreign. By the 1720s, however, the Protestant Hanoverian Succession had been firmly established, and with political stability and expanding trade came the rapid rise of a middle class with money to spend on leisure and art. Its taste, however, was different from that of the princely style of the old aristocracy. Its interests lay in comfort rather than grandeur, amusement rather than ceremony and, steeped as it was in the puritan Protestant tradition, it was more receptive to straightforward moral exhortation than to classical grandiloquence. This brought about an important change in artistic perspective, with a move away from artificiality towards a more realistic observation of society.

In art the chief exponent of this period was William Hogarth, the engraver, whose main achievement lay in the 'modern moral subjects', the kind of narrative work that could entertain and at the same time comment with savagely biting realism on the follies of human nature, using recognisable contemporary types and settings. Moreover, through his engravings, which could be multiplied without difficulty, Hogarth reached a wider audience.

As in painting, where a progressive independence from foreign influence was discernible so, in the field of

dramatic art a similar development occurred. This change reflected contemporary tastes and preferences for realistic and English content. The Italian opera which dominated the London scene during the early decades of the eighteenth century, was becoming increasingly unsatisfactory in fulfilling the criteria of contemporary English aesthetics. Leading critics voiced strong opinions against this 'shallow' entertainment.

Richard Steele, on hearing that Scarlatti's Pirro e Demetrio had been performed with great success at the Haymarket, complained in The Tatler that

this intelligence is not very acceptable to us friends of the Theatre; for the stage being an Entertainment of the Reason, and all the faculties, this way of being pleased with the suspense of them for three Hours together, and being given up to the Shallow satisfaction of Eyes and Ears only, seems rather to arise from the degeneracy of our understanding than an improvement of our Diversions. 173

This belief that the stage would provide fertile ground for exemplary conduct and behaviour was voiced by Richard Steele again, in The Spectator, where he explains that the stage is important as a vehicle of manners and customs, a corrective to universal self-deception:

It is, with me, a matter of the highest consideration what parts are well or ill performed, what passions or sentiments are indulged or cultivated, and consequently which manners and customs are transfused from the stage to the world which reciprocally imitate each other. 174.

Indeed, The Beggar's Opera was the prototype of the new way of proceeding: its topicality was modern and it was moral in both senses - it dealt with both morality and mores. Thus, art in the eighteenth century was seen as a vehicle of both instruction and entertainment.

At a more fundamental level, it was acknowledged that the arts were an effective means of political propaganda. Not only did they function as a tool for forming the political habits of the mind of a court aristocracy, but, the general public in turbulent eighteenth-century London was also subjected to relentless propaganda through spectacle. During the first half of the eighteenth century, drama served as a platform for disseminating Whig party propaganda. As has remarked Allardyce Nichol: 'Literary historians generally accept the idea that the English stage of the first half of the eighteenth century presents us with a drama 'shot through and through with politics'.<sup>175</sup> By the close of the third decade, political attention of the dramatists turned increasingly to the antagonism between the Walpole government and the opposition, the coalition of disaffected Whigs and Tories.

Art, as a tool of political propaganda was encouraged all the more by Walpole's attitude of obvious indifference toward the more or less talented dramatists who represented, or alluded to his vices on the stage. Though he might easily have done so, Walpole made little effort to win the sympathies of writers, least of all dramatists, through patronage. Since he enjoyed the favour of a King who was indifferent to literary talent and who rarely went to the theatre, Walpole, it is suggested, indulged himself in a similar indifference. He only had a very practical regard for the art of writing generally. He was ready enough to hire writers, but would not, out of deference to talent, burden his government with an entourage of wits who took

their public charges for sinecures, expecting, 'to be allowed to bite with impunity the hand that fed them'.<sup>176</sup> Deprived of Walpolian patronage the playwrights vented their resentment through their plays. Many joined the ranks of Walpole's enemies, entering the literary coterie around Bolingbroke at Dawley Farm.

By the 1730s, political satire had become necessarily oblique and generalised, as Walpole began increasingly to bring legal prosecutions for libel against his attackers. Many issues of The Craftsman, were devoted to discussing the strategy of satire, whether it ought to be generalized or particularized, such discussion revealing the opposition's anxieties over prosecution. Indeed, Nicholas Amhurst, the leading journalist for the paper, writing in 1732, explained the indirect approach that was necessary for the sake of safety: 'As long as I confine myself to General expressions, or wrap up my Invectives against Vice in dreams, fables, parallels, and allegories, I must insist on it that I keep within the proper bounds of a satirist.'<sup>177</sup> Thus, the artist directed his audience's attention to everyday social and moral issues, instructing as well as entertaining, using satire as an effective tool for propaganda.

Chapter 2

Limitations of operatic and literary media

Having now examined the responses of the different art media to issues in early eighteenth-century London, and placed these in the context of contemporary art philosophy, it is now time to assess their parallels and differences. This cannot be done without considering the limitations inherent in each of these media. In this chapter I shall be concentrating on drama and literature. The subsequent chapter will focus on painting.

Unlike literature where one can return more readily to the text and where the writer does not rely on a performer's or director's interpretation, theatre is far more vulnerable: indeed,

The theatre does not operate with durable materials, it must form its public night after night. The poet and the composer can address an imaginary, future public, but over the theatre the judge is Today, and there is no court of Appeal; a theatre not understood is nonexistent. The theatre is entirely dependent on the age, and on its disposition. 178

Certainly theatre is restricted by the necessity to reflect the tastes of its audience if it is to be successful.

Drama in the theatre attempts to depict 'life' and to conjure up in a small space (the stage), in a short time, with a limited number of characters, the illusion of the world outside. Of necessity, a play demands a certain logical construction and everything depicted on stage must have more consequence than in life, itself. The whole construction rests on a chain of cause and effect. Whilst

it can be said to be a truism that a dramatic artist forms his characters from life, the dramatist particularly has to solve the problem of theatrical tradition. Indeed, it could even be said that the dramatist forms his characters not so much from life but from tradition, from the culture he has inherited. As quoted by Lang, W. H. Auden maintained that 'drama is not suited to the analysis of character, which is the province of the novel. Dramatic characters are simplified, easily recognizable and over life-size.'<sup>179</sup> Again, the limitations of time, and dialogue impose this. This is carried even further in opera, as we shall see.

If the spoken theatre has its limitations, these apply even more so to its traditional lyric counterpart, Italian opera. In fact opera can be said to be a paradox. Opera cannot express the fullness and richness of life in the manner of the spoken theatre. More specifically, its expressive possibilities are not so realistic, but rather, stylized abbreviations of it. As a consequence of the limitations of its dialogue, the completeness of its content is replaced by formal completeness, since the decisive element is the musical framework, and its expressive power. Music dissolves feelings and thoughts into melodies and rhythms, harmonies and counterpoints, which in themselves have no conceptual meaning. Indeed, in opera, objective situations may well become purely subjective expressions. The very paradoxical nature of opera gives it a capacity for paradoxical effect. Opera can express purely sensuously, the most profound

abstractions, and the musical drama is obviously more primitive as drama than the spoken theatre. It must render conflict and character in immediate symbols.

Superficially, everything in an opera appears the same as in the ordinary theatre: dramatic characters appear, act, and give the illusion of life except that they present virtually all their lines in song. This is the chief paradox of opera, for living, spontaneously acting people do not normally sing. Yet here music represents and conveys life and it is the music that is charged with the creation of the illusion of life. In an opera, character and action can be disparate. The sketching of character in a spoken drama demands time, whilst in opera, it is almost instantaneous. Furthermore, the action in a play requires a certain movement whilst in opera action is constantly suspended. Again, in drama, plot and action can be detailed and extensive; opera aims at comprehensive summary.

Moreover, baroque opera was almost entirely determined by its musical material and not by the logic of its text. The requirements of its musical form determined its extent and progression. If the text in these operas was too short for the form dictated by musical logic, individual lines or even words will be repeated arbitrarily. Indeed, it could be said of baroque libretti that they were not 'bona fide' dramas but, rather, literary texts that provided the composer with the opportunity for lyric effusion. They were literary in the sense that they were correctly written, if somewhat unfeeling and often



stereotyped poetry. We have already seen evidence of this in our discussion of the prison scenes from Handel's Floridante.

The simplification and over-life-sized depiction of characters in drama was carried to greater extremes in baroque opera. In an opera, a character may represent no more than jealousy or innocence, a single quality, detached and intensified, and the character is made complete only by the music. In fact this often can be even less realistic than this implies, for a single mood may be expressed, not only in one character, but in a large part of an opera. For this reason, ordinary methods of telling a story can be neglected in an opera while the attention of the audience is still held.

To summarize, it could be said, that limitations imposed by opera are inherent in its very nature. It is a compromise between two or more competing arts, among them, drama, music, spectacle and dance. Moreover, it is restricted by conventions so that realism in anything but a comparative sense is wholly foreign to it. This very compromise and the restriction of convention was reflected in the behaviour of the audiences, as we have seen already, the energy of whose individual sense was divided.

How far, do the limitations of the theatrical media, both spoken theatre and Italian opera, apply to ballad opera? As I have discussed earlier in the thesis, The Beggar's Opera is a ballad-opera, thus not restricted by the musical form of the Italian opera. Any musical formal restrictions introduced into Gay's work were done so for

deliberate effect with a particular purpose in mind. Furthermore, the very fact that the text was in vernacular English rather than poetical Italian, immediately made it more accessible to the audience, and 'per se' gave the language greater verisimilitude. Again, the ballad tunes, already familiar with the audience, with simpler melodies, were easier to recall than the complex arias of Italian opera. Moreover, the use of a greater amount of spoken as opposed to sung dialogue brings The Beggar's Opera nearer to spoken theatre. Additionally, the setting, the characters and the plot are all far less 'artificial' than those of Italian opera. They are topographical and topical, and 'representative' of contemporary life.

However, all the limitations of theatrical drama already discussed, equally apply to ballad opera. Moreover, it could be said that the lack of merveilleux and spectacular setting, features of Italian opera, could have detracted from the entertainment value. The very fact that representation was more mundane and realistic in portrayal might have led the audience to overlook some of the moral and social issues Gay was intending to highlight.

Literature, on the other hand, has none of the restrictions of time and place imposed by the theatre. Once it is published it can not be changed except through the interpretation differing ages or cultures bring to its message. Moreover, there is more space for character development and story telling. Throughout there is ample opportunity for the reader to check and revise and reread. The story in Swift's Gulliver's Travels with its hidden

allegorical meanings is both good entertainment, and also a powerful means of drawing attention to contemporary issues.

Yet, the entire force of a literary work is in the written word which must evoke plot, setting, action, character and emotion. It is thus left to the imagination and the interpretation of the individual reader. On this, alone, a literary work succeeds or fails. Thus, each of these art media in responding in either a direct or indirect manner to contemporary issues, is inhibited to a greater, or lesser degree by inherent limitations. We shall see similar impositions when we consider the medium of painting.

Chapter 3

Permanence and transience in the arts:

William Hogarth's *The Beggar's Opera* Scenes and

John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*

Hogarth's record of the full entertainment world in his visual medium is relevant to literature and literary history not only as an all-embracing satire on the social life of the time, but also as it suggests the important cultural role played by eighteenth-century drama and theatre in contemporary life. 168

This observation will be considered in the context of Hogarth's treatment of Act III scene 11 from Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, which demonstrates his concern with theatrical fashion as an integral part of artistic taste. Since Hogarth considered himself a 'dramatist' my study will begin with an examination of his self image as a dramatic author. This examination should also elucidate and evaluate contemporary concerns with taste, morality and manners appearing in the different media already studied. The assumption that these concerns are common to the pictorial mode of the artist and the stage dramas can only point to a generous reliance by Hogarth on the themes treated dramatically on the stage. The discussion also poses a number of hypothetical questions: first, as to whether gesture and expression on the stage and on the canvas are congruous; second, the extent to which literary and theatrical criteria may be applied to a pictorial mode. Finally I shall attempt to investigate, in the light of *The Beggar's Opera* Scenes, the 'credible' claim made by Jonathan Richardson that painting is superior to

the stage, on the basis of art's permanence versus the transient, 'moving, speaking pictures' of the stage.<sup>180</sup>

Although the association of Hogarth's art with drama has sometimes been noted by critics, the specific relationship has not been closely examined, nor have parallels between his art and themes and dramatic forms been extensively investigated. Furthermore, nor has the visual documentation of the London stage and its people, exhibited in Hogarth's prints, been studied with this relationship clearly in mind. Ample evidence exists that Hogarth evaluated himself artistically as an author of pictorial dramas. Indeed, his own statements appearing in the manuscripts of his incomplete draft autobiography, explicitly claim such a dramatic conception of his art. Additionally, Hogarth demonstrates here how he used drama conceptually, and its vocabulary, to explain his choice of subjects for painting. Here, he proclaims that he considers subjects as 'writers do'... and evidently he has dramatic writers in mind:

I have endeavoured to treat my subjects as a dramatic writer: my picture is my stage, and men and women my players, who by means of certain actions and gestures, are to exhibit a dumb show. 181

Moreover, in an earlier fragmentary passage, Hogarth suggests how he intended to fuse the 'dumb' art with 'living' drama.

The figure is the actor  
The attitudes and his actions together (with which)  
The face work/s/ an expression and  
the words that must speak  
to the eye and the scene  
intelligible. 182

Thus, Hogarth's conception of his art as drama is not only verbal mixing of media. It includes such essential dramatic dynamics as representational spectacle ('show' and 'to the eye'), setting ('my stage' and 'scene'), speech ('words that must speak'), expression ('the face works'), acting ('attitudes') and action itself.

Comparing paintings or 'pictures' with 'stage compositions' fascinated Hogarth. In this passage he draws an analogy between 'subjects for pictures' and 'stage compositions', implying that 'actors' in pictures suggest something dramatic to the spectator, thereby indicating his desire that art subjects be judged in terms of drama:

Hence hath arisen the different kinds of subjects I have attempted. In what light they may be considered I, with respect to other subject/s/ in general must be left to the reader/s/. After I have endeavoured to weaken some of the prejudices belonging to the judging of subjects for pictures, by comparing these with stage compositions, the actors in one suggesting whats to the spectator. 183

Thus, the artist conceived of himself as an author of pictorial dramas, forging new subject matter for his medium and linking his art with drama in claiming a validity exists in comparisons of visual and dramatic media.

Consideration will now be given to Hogarth's portrayal of the theatrical world which so fascinated him, through the medium of painting. This will not only demonstrate his visual documentation of the eighteenth-century stage, but will also offer the necessary prerequisite for an indepth discussion of his Beggar's Opera

Scenes.

The extent to which Hogarth's portrayals of eighteenth-century drama and theatre represent actual events and places has not been fully investigated. Richard Southern, writing in Hogarth: Prints of Scenes, Theatre Notebook, 8 sets forth the problem when he asks:

Do Hogarth's illustrations of stage incidents show a representation, close or distant, or actual scenery in their backgrounds? And this raises the still larger and still more puzzling question ... in how far do the hundreds of engraved plates of plays of the eighteenth century show representations of stage scenery behind the characters, and how far are the backgrounds wholly fanciful? 184

There is a distinction therefore, between an artist's illustrating the story of a play and depicting the play itself in performance. Seventeenth-century illustrators had been content to provide a fairly literal view of what was seen on the stage. However, from the eighteenth century the attitude changed, attributable partly to seventeenth-century prints being done on a horizontal format coinciding with the proscenium shape, which were then folded into books. In the next century, this type of etching vanished, to be replaced by the ordinary upright format of book illustrations, which made it difficult to represent accurately a proscenium. Thus, the artists began illustrating the story of the play, as they might illustrate a novel, instead of depicting the play itself in performance. Bamber Gascoigne dismisses most eighteenth-century theatrical frontispieces as being 'virtually useless as serious theatrical evidence, except for occasional details of costume or stance.'<sup>185</sup>

It was Hogarth's concern with theatrical fashion as an integral part of artistic taste, which prompted him to represent actual scenes from plays, the first of his theatre pictures being taken from the production of Henry IV Part II in the Autumn of 1727. Not only were Hogarth's portrayals of actors conceived 'as psychological studies', but they were, in addition 'an important innovation, both in quantity and in quality; for hitherto only a few rather schematic likenesses of actors had been done' in England. Moreover, he was the first to portray pit spectators at a play, and to represent one of the intimate private theatre, often used by amateur actors.<sup>186</sup>

Hogarth's series of Beggar's Opera Scenes (1728-1731) are indicative of this new found interest in contemporary theatrical life. More importantly, his choice of John Gay's The Beggar's Opera (Act III scene 11)<sup>187</sup> set in London's Newgate Prison, responds to the spirit of the age, making everyday events, and 'ordinary people' a legitimate subject for painting. Indeed, 'It was the prototype of the new way of proceeding; its topicality was modern and it was moral in both senses - it dealt with both morality and mores .<sup>188</sup> Further, on a more personal level, Hogarth's choice of setting, is traceable to his own background, to the period of his father's imprisonment in the Fleet. This directly affected his choice of subject-matter, with prisons, debtors, and jailors being repeatedly introduced both literally and metaphorically into his paintings.

The painting of The Beggar's Opera is sketched



directly from the stage. Indeed, it retains the stage and a visible audience. The play's popularity contributing, this interplay of actors-stage-audience proved popular, and he made at least five other paintings on the subject,<sup>189</sup> as follows:

A scene from The Beggar's Opera (1): 'A study for the scene III.xi with the figures at the back omitted. Probably painted in 1728.'

The Beggar's Opera (2): 'Another study ... with figures at the back, but with the Royal Arms omitted. Probably painted in 1728.'

The Beggar's Opera (3): 'as produced by John Rich at his theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields early in 1728. The players are: Mrs Eggleton as Lucy: Mr. Hall as Lockit; Mr. Walker as Macheath, Miss Lavinia Fenton (later Duchess of Bolton) as Polly; Mr. Hippisley as Peachum; 1728?'

The Beggar's Opera (5) similar to (6) ... the spectators are said to include: on the left, Lady Jane Cook, Anthony Henley, Sir Thomas Robinson, Lord Gage, Sir Conyers D'Arcy; on the right, John Gay, John Rich, Christopher Cock, Sir Robert Fagg, Major Paunceford, the Duke of Bolton. Probably painted in 1728 or 1729 - engraved by William Blake, 1790.'

The Beggar's Opera (6): 'Ordered by Sir Archibald Grant on 5th Nov. 1729, but still unfinished on 1st January, 1731.'

As he was painting this 'theme and variations', the House of Commons undertook an investigation of the evils of the Fleet Prison, which drew him back to the grim

prison of his youth, and to painting another version of The Beggar's Opera. This time the spectators are the Committee, witnessing the confrontation of the warden and his wretched prisoners.

It has been suggested that Hogarth must have attended the performance regularly to paint the scene as he did.<sup>190</sup> Hogarth shows actors and stage spectators at a performance of Gay's ballad opera in Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre. The painting depicts Act III scene 11 as Polly and Lucy appeal to their fathers Peachum and Lockit to free the chained Macheath.<sup>191</sup> In their pleas, the women sing Airs 54 (I am a poor shepherd undone) and 55 successively (Ianthe the lovely).<sup>X</sup> Hogarth is probably depicting Polly's appeal to her father before she sings. She says to him: 'A father sure will be more compassionate. Dear, dear sir, sink the material evidence, and bring him off at his trial - Polly upon her knees begs it of you.' (Air 54 follows) then Lucy turns to her father, Lockit:

If Peachum's heart is hardened; sure you, sir,  
will have more compassion on a daughter. I  
know the evidence is in your power: how  
then can you be a tyrant to me? (Kneeling)  
(Air 55 follows.)

The picture is not only notable as a representation of opera, but as a collection of portraits not merely of the leading characters, but of the noble occupants of the privileged seats on the stage. To begin with the players: Macheath in his fetters (as represented in the person of Walker; Macheath has anything but a graceful figure: Mr. J. Nichols, indeed refers to him as 'a slouching

bully)<sup>192</sup> occupies the centre of the picture, but it is Polly kneeling to Peachum (Hall), to whom one's eyes naturally turn. Lavinia Fenton's singing performance as Polly supposedly resulted in her marriage to a stage spectator, the Duke of Bolton. The painting thus gossips, in a sense, about the social life of the contemporary stage world. Beckett says the young and relatively inexperienced actress became the major attraction in the play. The Duke of Bolton came night after night 'to one of the side-boxes on the stage to hear her sing' and was 'particularly captivated at the moment when she knelt down' before his stage box to plead with her stage-father for Macheath's life'.<sup>193</sup> (She last appeared on the stage on July 6, 1728, and afterwards she and the Duke went off together, eventually to be married.) '... This picture', Ireland comments, 'affords a good example of the dress and what was then called the dignified manner of the old school.'<sup>194</sup> Macklin described Polly's dress as 'very like the simplicity of a modern Quaker'.<sup>195</sup> Whether by accident or design, no dress could have furnished a more effective contrast to the spirit of the play. It was a stroke of art to suggest innocence in the midst of vice and immorality.

Of the other figures on the stage, Lucy, who is kneeling to Lockit (Hippisley) with her back to the spectator, is Mrs. Egleton, of whom contemporary critics have little or nothing to say. She was completely outshone by the glory of Polly. Peachum (Jack Hall) is made by no means bad-looking; Polly of course is appealing

to him. In the background, with his arm extended, is Filch (Nat Clark).

In the seats on the stage to the right we have the Duke of Bolton seated, his enraptured gaze unmistakably fixed on the lady who has won his heart. His Grace of Bolton is comely, dignified - an unmistakable gentleman. 'He had the nobleman look', Spence records Pope saying of the Duke: 'that look which a nobleman should have, rather than what they have generally now'.<sup>196</sup> Next comes Major Pouncefoot, of whom nothing is known; then Sir Robert Fagg, the horse-racing Baronet from Kent, one of Polly's most ardent admirers, whose name was coupled with hers in the many lampoons which were written about the 'toast' of the town. His gaze is not less intent than that of his ducal rival. The name of the lady whose eyes are turned upward is not given either by Ireland or Nicholls. Beyond her is Manager Rich, who is whispering to Cock, the picture dealer and auctioneer, of Poland Street. Half hidden by Rich, stands Gay himself. Mr. Nicholls describes the poet as 'saturated by public approbation' and paying 'no greater regard to the performance than the manager'.<sup>197</sup>

On the other side we have two ladies, of whom one is Lady Jane Cook. The name of the other Nicholls does not give. Then comes Anthony Henley, bending forward, his elbow resting on the ledge of the box and apparently holding something in his hand. Lord Gage is standing behind Henley, and next to the latter at the end of the row is Sir Conyers D'Arcy. Forming the apex of the

pyramidal group is Sir Thomas Robinson, nicknamed 'Long Sir Thomas'. He was just the man to be lavish in his patronage of the stage. Owing to his extravagance he was called 'the Petronius of the present age', and his taste for the fashionable amusements of the day led to his being appointed a director of the entertainments at Ranelagh Gardens.

Hogarth's picture of this scene towards the end of the third act has stamped the opera with an actuality without which we should have a very poor idea of the theatre in the early part of the eighteenth century. Pictorial evidence of stage boxes for aristocratic patrons clearly shows the unique intimacy between actor and audience that existed in such seating arrangements. Portions of the stage were used for spectators when, 'a very popular play like The Beggar's Opera held the boards'.<sup>198</sup> Moreover, a few spectators 'also delighted in standing in the wings or behind the scenes' and such people are visible in Hogarth's portrayal. Professor Avery notes that the sensational run of the opera revealed not only the 'probable capacity' of the theatre, but also 'flexibility of theatrical accommodations' achieved by increasing the number admitted onto the stage'. For instance, on one evening of the first twenty nights of the ballad opera's run, '81 persons' had places on stage, while '10 to 25' were the 'normal figures'.<sup>199</sup> Hogarth's paintings reveal other aspects of stage decor valuable to the theatre historian. Here, Hogarth gives valuable evidence that 'veluti in speculum' was the motto below the

arms of George I' at Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre in 1728. The curtain on which the motto appears is pulled up into festoons, and serves as a border to the painting, as it actually served to border the stage itself.

Lighting, proscenium statuary, perspective scenery and costumes comprise other theatrical elements in the painting. Ascertaining how the stage is lit presents some problems. The main sources of stage light were chandeliers of candles that hung over the stage. However, no sources of light are visible in Hogarth's painting. Nor does Hogarth show the end of the forestage in the auditorium. Another element missing in the painting is a proscenium arch. But the stage curtain falls upon and seems to surround what appear to be statues of satyrs on either side of the stage. It is known that proscenium statues were a 'characteristic feature' of 'certain' early eighteenth-century English theatres which were usually associated with the proscenium area rather than with the backscene. However, no evidence seems to exist of what, if any, statuary on the Lincoln's Inn Fields stage looked like. It has been suggested by Professor Antal that the sculpture in the painting was 'probably taken from the actual stage decor',<sup>200</sup> but we lack pictorial evidence with which to compare Hogarth's portrayal and to test this claim.

The scenery in the painting is of interest, since it appears not to conform to accepted descriptions of contemporary English stage scenery as wings, shutters and backscene. No wings are visible. Possibly Hogarth

portrays a perspective backscene of Newgate Prison. If so, such a representation would accord with a trend at the playhouses in the 1720s which used newly designed scenes to depict 'specific places'.<sup>201</sup> One would have to question, however, the use of a seemingly incongruous rug on which Polly kneels in a prison. One possibility is that it covers a trap door on the stage floor. The costumes are like the clothing worn at the time, as the striking similarity between Lucy's headpiece and that of one of the ladies seated in the left stage box shows. As a result, less distinction appears between actress and spectator on the stage itself than might be expected.

Further and more detailed study of the different versions of Hogarth's portrayal of 'The Beggar's Opera' Scene might reveal more information about the stage. But, doubtless, the artist has depicted what is probably an actual dramatic and stage event. Nevertheless, "The Beggar's Opera cannot be considered a record of the performance; it portrays only some contemporary dramatic and theatrical elements realistically. To conclude more than this hazards accuracy since limitations exist in both the lack of comparative evidence and in the artist's own selection of scene and event."<sup>202</sup>

The most singular feature of The Beggar's Opera paintings, from the earliest versions, is that they include an audience. The success of the play of The Beggar's Opera was remarkably fortuitous for Hogarth, for in both sentiment and form it provided a model for a kind of art suited to his gifts. The play was a work of satire,

humour and pathos. The essential idea, conceived by the Scriblerians, was that Gay should write a Newgate Pastoral, in which the artificiality of the genre, an opera with music and songs, should be contrasted with the essential 'lowness' of the action. All expectations are reversed for satirical effect: the highwayman Macheath is a noble and romantic hero and the thieves a loyal band of brothers, while the lawyers and gaolers are shown as deep-eyed rogues. The satirical point is made at the end by the Beggar author:

Through the whole piece you may observe such a similitude of manners in high and low life, that it is difficult to determine whether (in the fashionable vices) the fine gentlemen imitate the gentlemen of the road, or the gentlemen of the road the fine gentlemen. Had the play remained, as I at first intended, it would have carried a most excellent moral. 'Twould have shown that the lower sort of people have their vices in a degree as well as the rich: and that they are punished for them.

Hogarth grasped from the start that the audience themselves were being satirized and were implicitly part of the drama. In the earlier versions of the painting the actors dominate the scene and are represented as real people, or, to use Hogarth's later terminology, as 'characters', while the audience are shown as caricatures, for the most part pointedly ignoring the action. From this 'aperçu' all other ironies follow and the development of the composition shows Hogarth consolidating and building upon it. In the scene chosen by Hogarth, Act III scene 11, the dignity and pathos of the 'low character', the highwayman Macheath, is contrasted at this point with the implacable heartlessness of the gaoler and lawyer, who



want to see Macheath despatched as soon as possible. At the same time there is another irony which also comes to the fore: if Macheath is released then we have the dramatically impossible situation of the hero having to make a choice between two equally worthy women. Thus, the scene also introduces the final irony of the play, which is, as the Beggar puts it, 'To make the piece perfect, I was for doing strict poetical justice. Macheath is to be hanged.' Whereupon the Player replies: 'Why then, friend, this is a downright deep tragedy. The catastrophe is manifestly wrong, for an opera must end happily.... All this we must do, to comply with the taste of the town.'

In the latter version of the scene, Hogarth altered the whole scale of the work. Now there is a relative equality in position of actors and audience: the latter are no longer subordinate but are themselves actors in a drama. The irony of 'real' actors and caricatured audience is replaced by the irony of the audience responding to the actors as real people. In the age of Walpole any satire was understood to have a specific political force and the notorious affair between the leading lady and a Duke spanned the gap between the stage and the real world. The Beggar's Opera was in fact a model of the application of imagery to life which became characteristic of Hogarth's work.

The significance of satire in his time showed that the commentary, indeed the comedy of art might have a salutary value.<sup>203</sup> In the earliest versions of the painting

a curtain with the royal arms and the motto 'Utile dulce' hangs over the proceedings, emphasising the charms of moral usefulness. The motto itself comes from a passage in Horace's Ars Poetica which might almost be taken to sum up Hogarth's double aim: 'But he that joins instruction with delight,/ Profit'. Above the elaborate final form of The Beggar's Opera subject, which equates the play with its audience, roguery with aristocracy, art with life, another inscription is added: 'veluti in speculum', ('even as in a mirror'). The prominent figure of a satyr, which frames the stage, as if raising the curtains on the show, has a double meaning; it personifies both the idea of satire lifting the curtain on the follies and vices of the world, and the desires of the Duke of Bolton in the audience below it.

Thus, Hogarth, in the context of The Beggar's Opera Scenes reflects contemporary taste, culture, and manners, in a theatrical way, and shows a close affinity in his treatment of morality and satire with that of Gay. He achieved through his painting an impact as forceful as that of Gay and successfully applied theatrical criteria to his pictorial mode: 'Ocular demonstration will convince sooner than ten thousand volumes and the decision is left to every unprejudiced eye. Let figures be considered as actors dressed for the sublime genteel comedy...',<sup>204</sup>

Just how far, though, can literary and theatrical criteria really be applied to a pictorial mode? Moreover, are gesture and expression on the stage and on the canvas

congruous? In this study I have attempted to draw analogies between Hogarth's art and Gay's opera, that is, to make comparisons and transfer literary terms to his graphic art. Nevertheless, limitations become apparent, the most obvious being the fact that a painter creates a basically static, permanent art. This art thus leaves to the imagination of the 'spectator' the evocation of the sense of immediacy inherent in an actual theatrical production. Friedrich Duerrenmatt discusses this immediacy, noting that 'a piece written for the theatre becomes living theatre when it is played, when it can be seen, heard, felt and thus experienced immediately. This immediacy is one of the most essential aspects of the theatre.' He goes on to say that 'a play is an event, is something that happens', and the 'immediacy sought by every play, the spectacle into which it would be transformed presupposes an audience, a theatre, a stage.'<sup>205</sup> In this very important sense, Hogarth's work can not be dramatic. We see, but do not hear and feel the characters in dramatic tensions simply because the medium is non-verbal. Other criteria must be found for the problem of genres. Susanne Langer comments: 'It has been said repeatedly that the theatre creates a perpetual present moment, but it is only a present filled with its own future that is really dramatic.' She elaborates on the particular elements in the dramatic tension: 'This tension between past and future, the theatrical 'present moment', is what gives to acts, situations, and even such constituent elements as gestures and attitudes and tone,

the peculiar intensity known as 'dramatic quality.' 'The dramatic sense of destiny' according to Miss Langer, is one which 'arises only in unusual moments under peculiar emotional stress', and thus 'we do not usually have any idea of the future as a total experience which is coming because of our past and present acts'. She points out that 'in drama' this 'sense of destiny is paramount'. 'It is what makes the present action seem like an integral part of the future, howbeit that future has not unfolded yet. The reason is that on the stage, every thought expressed in conversation, every feeling betrayed by voice or look, is determined by the total action of which it is a part ... even before one has any idea of what the conflict is to be ... one feels the tension developing.'<sup>206</sup>

Hogarth employs details as visual indicators, emblematic of the action and its ironies as well as bodily gestures and facial expression of his characters. Yet, in the sense that The Beggar's Opera prints lack palpable actors and the sound of speech, they are not dramas. These limitations of medium, however, are relieved by Hogarth's use of such dramatic conventions as concentration and selection of characters and action and the abridgement of time in scene. Certainly, his pictures do suggest their immediately theatrical background in such things as the deliberately 'stage' posture and arrangement of their tableaux.

In spite of the many limitations of the pictorial mode Hogarth does have the advantage over Gay of presenting to his audience a seemingly subjective portrayal of

contemporary society, since surely his painting is the definitive, finite say on these issues. Although open to different interpretation, the force of the artist's portrayal can not be altered. Gay's opera, on the other hand, can be highlighted in differing ways depending on the choice of the director's production of the work and the ability of the performers.

It could be suggested that the pictorial mode is less effective than theatrical drama in fulfilling art's objective as a model of moralistic criticism of society. Maybe this accounts for there being less vehement reaction from 'victims' of Hogarth's satire. Words and music are more forcefully retained by an audience than images in the mind's eye, thereby enabling them to be more lastingly thought-provoking than a series of inanimate images which only come to life when looked upon by an 'observer'. Even further, Gay's choice of settings to well-known tunes, was more effective in highlighting his criticisms of contemporary social and political issues. By associating the words of Gay's text with words of the original songs, Gay's works appeared a more reactionary response to contemporary issues.

In summary, contemporary concerns with taste, morality and manners appear in the different media already discussed in the thesis; theatre, painting, poetry and prose. That these concerns are common to the pictorial mode of the artist and the stage dramas as seen in the context of this chapter can only point to a generous reliance by Hogarth on the themes treated dramatically on

the stage. Indeed,

It is true that Gay employs the scenes, actions, and conversations of low life, all refined for his purpose, but the realism of his play only reflects the coarseness of the age, without the conventional veneering. In that respect The Beggar's Opera is very true to life, as true as the pictures of Hogarth. (207)

Chapter 4

Conclusion

In this thesis we have discussed early eighteenth-century responses in the arts to cultural, sociological and political issues in London life, taking Gay's The Beggar's Opera as our focal point. Additionally, the move away from the tight strictures of classicism towards a more naturalistic portrayal of contemporary society with greater reliance on topography and political events has been noted.

In consequence, contemporary artists increasingly felt an obligation to concern themselves with social and moral issues transcending all strata of society. By the use of overt portrayal and indirect satire artists in all media drew attention not only to these issues but also to the politics of the day. Indeed, the arts became increasingly harnessed as an effective vehicle for political propaganda during the Walpolian era.

In our study of these selected works we have remarked upon underlying similarities of subject-matter but noted the strikingly different methods of representation imposed by the inherent limitations of each art media. All artists set out to comply with the contemporary maxim that art should entertain as well as instruct. Nevertheless, for the greater part of the audience it was more the wit of the dialogue or narrative, and the life-like conception of the subject-matter which appealed rather than any

underlying 'moral' interpretation.

I leave the reader now to contemplate the following thought as a commentary on this thesis: 'Naturalism with its marvellous analyses does present human documents - but this is not necessarily art; the copying of life can be a criticism of life, but not necessarily the solution of its problems.'<sup>208</sup>



Notes

1. R. Fiske, English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century (London, O.U.P., 1973) p. 95.
2. South Sea Bubble: The South Sea Company's Scheme in 1719 which aimed to redistribute the National Debt while offering better terms to the national Exchequer led to the Company's potential being boosted beyond competing investment possibilities. A mania for speculation in all sorts of worthless enterprises developed. In June 1720 when confidence failed and the 'bubble' burst the consequences were catastrophic, with financial disaster for many.
3. J. H. Plumb, Sir Robert Walpole, the King's Minister, 2 (London, 1960) p. 175.
4. R. Barnes, 'A Note on John Gay's Life', The Beggar's Opera by John Gay. A Faithful Reproduction of the 1729 Edition Which Includes the Words and Music of All the Airs, as Well as The Score for The Overture With Commentaries by Louis Kronenberger and Max Goberman on The Literary and Musical Background and With the Original Words of all the Airs that John Gay Adapted for This Work (Argonaut Books, New York, 1961) p. xxi.
5. J. Gay, The Mohawks (1712), quoted in Williams, 'The Author of The Beggar's Opera', p. 166.
6. J. Gay, Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London (1716), quoted in Fiske, op. cit., pp. 94-95.
7. J. Gay, op. cit., in ibid. p. 95.
8. Lord Hervey, Lord Hervey's Memoirs, ed. Romney Sedgwick (London, 1952) p. 52.
9. J. Gay, Poetry and Prose, 1, eds. V. A. Dearing & C. E. Beckwith (1974), quoted in John Gay. The Beggar's Opera, eds. B. Loughrey & T. O. Treadwell, p. 31.
10. W. Petty, A Treatise of Taxes and Contribution (1662), quoted in ibid. p. 13.
11. M. D. George, London Life in the Eighteenth Century (London, 1951) p. 41.
12. M. D. George, ibid., p. 42.
13. M. D. George, ibid., p. 83.

14. J. Gay, John Gay. The Beggar's Opera, eds. B. Loughrey & T. O. Treadwell (Hammondsworth, Penguin, 1986), p. 15.
15. C. E. Pearce, Polly Peachum Being the Story of Lavinia Fenton (Duchess of Bolton) and The Beggar's Opera (London, Stanley Paul, 1913), p. 74.
16. D. Defoe, Moll Flanders (1722), quoted in A. Davies, The Map of London from 1746 to the Present Day, p. 46.
17. The British Journal (May 18, 1728), quoted in C. E. Pearce, op. cit., p. 156.
18. A. P. Herbert, 'The London of The Beggar's Opera. Court Reports of 1733', The London Mercury, 5 (December 1921), p. 160.
19. The Daily Post (March 26, 1724), quoted in E. M. Gagey, Ballad Operas, p. 16.
20. The Daily Journal (May 2, 1727), quoted in Pearce, p. 157.
21. The Daily Journal (May 25, 1727), quoted in op. cit., p. 76.
22. P. E. Lewis, John Gay: The Beggar's Opera (London, Edward Arnold, 1976), p. 7.
23. Dean Swift, The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams, (1963-65), quoted in Gay, op. cit., p. 24.
24. J. Gay, Poetry and Prose, 1 (1974), quoted in ibid., p. 26.
25. All textual extracts from Gay's The Beggar's Opera are taken from John Gay. The Beggar's Opera, eds. B. Loughrey and T. O. Treadwell (Hammondsworth, Penguin, 1986).
26. A. Smith, Memoirs of Jonathan Wild (1727), quoted in W. E. Schultz, Gay's Beggar's Opera. Its Content, History and Influence (New Haven: The Yale U.P., 1923) p. 174.
27. The Daily Journal (November 17, 1725), quoted in C. E. Pearce, op. cit., p. 20.
28. Rev. Villette, The Annals of Newgate, 4 vols., (1776), quoted in W. E. Schultz, op. cit., p. 175.
29. J. Gay, Correspondence to Dean Swift (October 22, 1727), quoted in ibid., p. 177.

30. W. E. Schultz, op. cit., p. 277.
31. 'Customers': Mrs. Trapes's 'customers' are prostitutes.
32. 'bilking of': cheating.
33. 'Now down under the surgeon's hands': i.e. with venereal disease.
34. S. M. Armens, John Gay, Social Critic (King's Crown Press, Columbia University, 1954), p. 72.
35. J. Ralph, The Touchstone (1728), quoted in G. Tufts, 'Ballad Operas; A List and Some Notes', Musical Antiquary, 4 (1913), p. 64.
36. J. Fuller ed., John Gay. Dramatic Works, 1 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 2.
37. J. Gay, Trivia (1716), quoted in ibid., p. 49.
38. J. Gay, The Shepherd's Week (1713), quoted in E. M. Gagey, op. cit., p. 27.
39. Bailey, Dictionary, 4th edition (1728), quoted in ibid., p. 4.
40. T. D'Urfey, Wit and Mirth: Or Pills to Purge Melancholy, 3 (1719), quoted in A. E. H. Swaen, 'The Airs and Tunes of John Gay's The Beggar's Opera', Anglia, 43 (1919), p. 155.
41. S. Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, ed. G. Birkbeck Hill, 3 vols. (1905), quoted in John Gay. The Beggar's Opera, ed. B. Loughrey and T. O. Treadwell, p. 8.
42. G. F. Handel, Rinaldo (1711), (Gregg Press Inc., New Jersey, U.S.A., 1965).
43. J. Gay, The Letters of John Gay, ed. C. F. Burgess (1966), quoted in J. Gay, op. cit., pp. 10-11.
44. P. E. Lewis, John Gay: The Beggar's Opera (London, Edward Arnold, 1976), p. 7.
45. See Appendix II: texts.
46. P. E. Lewis, ibid., p. 23.
47. See Appendix II: texts.
48. See Appendix II: texts.
49. Lord Cobham, in Letter from Gay to Swift (15 February, 1728), quoted in ibid., p. 7.

50. P. E. Lewis, ibid., p. 14.
51. J. Gay, Preface to Polly (1728), quoted in John Gay. Dramatic Works, 2, ed. J. Fuller (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1983).
52. P. E. Lewis, op. cit., p. 60.
53. H. More, Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Hannah More, ed. W. Roberts, (1835), quoted in W. E. Schultz, Gay's Beggar's Opera. Its Content, History and Influence (New Haven: The Yale U.P., 1923), p. 200.
54. G. F. Handel, Floridante (1719), (Gregg Press Inc., New Jersey, U.S.A., 1965).
55. B. H. Bronson, The Beggar's Opera (University of California Publications in English, 8, 1941) p. 206.
56. N. Parlakian, The Image of Sir Robert Walpole in English Drama, 1728-1742 (Unpublished Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1967), p. 76.
57. 'Brimmer': a glass filled to the brim.
58. 'Busses': kisses.
59. T. D'Urfey, Wit and Mirth: Or Pills to Purge Melancholy, 6, quoted in A. E. H. Swaen, 'The Airs and Tunes of John Gay's The Beggar's Opera', Anglia, 43 (1919) p. 190.
60. T. D'Urfey, ibid, 4, quoted in H. Moss, Ballad-Opera Songs: A Record of the Ideas set to Music, 1728-1733 (Unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1970).
61. T. D'Urfey, ibid., quoted in Swaen, op. cit., pp. 189-190.
62. T. D'Urfey, ibid., 3, quoted in Moss, op. cit.
63. T. D'Urfey, ibid., quoted in ibid.
64. See Appendix II for full synopsis of the plot of Handel's Floridante.
65. Collected Authors, Schirmer History of Music (London, Collier Macmillan, 1982), p. 413.
66. Petition of Right: Drawn up by Parliament in 1628, this asked the King for 'recognition of a claim that every subject of the Crown had been wronged in certain specific matters, and that, in future, the law should be observed'. This was the basis for the later Bill of Rights.

67. Bill of Rights: 1688 - This deprived the monarch of power to suspend the law of the land and the right to maintain a standing army in time of peace. It condemned the use of the dispensing power and asserted that parliaments be called frequently. It safeguarded the Protestant Succession.
68. Toleration Act: 1689 - This freed dissenters from penalties for failing to go to Church.
69. Glorious Revolution: The term applied to the accession to the throne of William and Mary in 1688 and the accompanying Acts which safeguarded the Protestant Succession and laid the foundation of modern constitutional monarchy.
70. J. H. Plumb, Sir Robert Walpole, the King's Minister, 2 (London, 1960), p. 332.
71. N. Parlakian, The Image of Sir Robert Walpole in English Drama, 1728-1742 (1967), p. 8.
72. N. Parlakian, ibid., p. 9.
73. W. Coxe, Memoirs of the Life and Administration of Sir Robert Walpole, 3 (1800), quoted in ibid., pp. 351-2.
74. Lord J. Hervey, Some Materials Towards Memoirs of the Reign of King George II, ed. R. Sedgwick, 3 vols. (1931), quoted in ibid., p. 12.
75. J. Hawkins, Life of Samuel Johnson, ed. B. H. Davis (1961), quoted in ibid., p. 14.
76. Excise controversy: This referred to the Excise Bill, 1733, drawn up by Walpole to transfer taxes on tobacco and wine from the customs to excise. It never became law.
77. N. Parlakian, op. cit., p. 22.
78. W. Bagehot, Works, 1, ed. F. Morgan (1889), quoted in ibid., p. 27.
79. Observations of the Writings of The Craftsman (1730), quoted in ibid., p. 63.
80. The Craftsman, (17 May, 1729), quoted in D. Dabydeen, Hogarth, Walpole and Commercial Britain (Hansib Publishing, 1987), p. 88.
81. J. H. Plumb, Sir Robert Walpole, The King's Minister, 2, (London, 1960), p. 175.
82. J. Gay, Letter to Mrs. Howard (August 1723), quoted in P. E. Lewis, p. 17.

83. The Senator (16 February, 1728), quoted in Parlakian, p. 62.
84. The Craftsman (1731), collected edn, 2, quoted in Parlakian, pp. 65-75.
85. W. Coxe, ed. J. Gay's Fables (1796), quoted in W. E. Schultz, p. 370.
86. W. E. Schultz, ibid., p. 197.
87. Lord J. Hervey, Observations on the Writings of The Craftsman (1730), quoted in Parlakian, p. 70. Hervey explains how by using underlining (italics) Craftsman writers gave apparently innocent writing a political significance.
88. P. E. Lewis, ed. John Gay: The Beggar's Opera, (1976), p. 16.
89. W. E. Schultz, op. cit., p. 195.
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Appendix I

Synopses

Handel's Floridante

The argument in the printed libretto sets the scene. Orontes, a Persian General raised an army, and having killed Ninus the King, made himself King of Persia. The day of the victory he found a female infant, the only remainder of the royal family, all the rest being now extinct, and because a daughter of his, the same age, died that very day, to compensate his loss, and out of compassion, he brought it up instead of his own, and gave it the same name of Elmira. Floridante, Prince of Thrace, afterwards fell in love with Elmira, and obtained from Orontes a promise of marriage, when he returned victorious from the naval war, waged by him against the King of Tyre; there had been formerly a treaty of marriage between Timante, the Prince Royal of Tyre and Rossane, the only daughter of Orontes; but these difficulties had put a stop to it. Orontes in the meantime fell in love with Elmira, and breaks his word to Floridante, which gives occasion to this drama.

Act I

Begins in a wood, where Elmira and Rossane enter in hunting attire in order to be near Floridante, who has just won a naval victory over Tyre. Rossane recognizes Floridante at the head of his army, turning Elmira's hopes to fulfilled happiness. Rossane envies her friend: she loves the defeated Timante, though she has never seen him. Something tells her that one day she will be happy. In

'a country near Tyre' with the Persian army: Floridante is welcomed home by Elmira and Rossane.

Among the Prisoners is Timante under the feigned name of 'Glicone'. Coralbo, a satrap, brings Floridante a letter from Oronte ordering him to hand over his command to Coralbo and leave the country, without giving a reason. Rossane goes off to protest to her father, confident of dispelling any baseless slander, accompanied by Timante, Coralbo and the army. Floridante and Elmira, distressed at the prospect of separation, proclaim their undying constancy. In a Royal Apartment Rossane pleads with Oronte for Floridante, who has not only won a victory but been promised Elmira's hand. Oronte agrees to receive him, but says he has changed his mind about the marriage for reasons of state. Rosanne asks Glicone if Timante was in the battle, receiving the reply that he escaped but expressed his ardent love for her and bitter resentment that their father's quarrel hindered the children's marriage. She departs with a sad aria; he expresses his delight that capture has brought such unexpected happiness and likens himself to a mariner in calm weather after a storm. In a royal hall with a chair, Floridante reports to Oronte (sitting) that he has laid down his command, but asks what he has done wrong. Oronte refuses to tell him. Elmira adds her pleas, and both point out that he is breaking his royal word. Oronte merely says that a ship is waiting to deport Floridante and goes out. The Act ends with a duet in which the lovers say they will die of grief if separated.

Act II

In an apartment of Rossane's she tells Glicone that Timante must have perished, as he was not in the ships that escaped. He replies that on the contrary he is in Persia in hiding and has sent his portrait as a token. He gives it to her and leaves. She is delighted to recognize the likeness of the prisoner. The set changes to an unspecified place. Floridante, disguised as a Moorish slave captured with Timante, plans to escape with Elmira and the other pair of lovers. Timante identifies himself. Floridante welcomes him and suggests they wait for nightfall. As he sings a love song, Timante is called by a damsel, with a message that Oronte wished to speak to Elmira. He goes out from the scene at this time, and after, returns again at the end of the air. Elmira prepares to dissemble as the other couple leave. Oronte tells her she has a more worthy lover than Floridante in himself. To her exclamation of horror he replies that she is not his daughter but the only survivor of Nino's royal house. She rejects him as an usurper and a monster and bids him kill her. He is content to wait for her anger to cool. Rossane tells Timante to go with Floridante and meet her later at a secret passage where the guards are bribed. In a duet they look forward to living like doves rescued from a predator's talons. The set changes to 'The scene darken'd on both sides'. Elmira, waiting for Floridante, thinks she heard footsteps and imagines him cautiously approaching, but the footsteps die away. Presently, he does enter, soon followed by Oronte bent on



indecent assault. Floridante springs to Elmira's defences. The guards come with torches and part them. Floridante is arrested, still in disguise; he claims to be a slave sent by Floridante to escort his bride. Oronte promises him chains and a cruel death, and after his defiant departure orders Elmira to choose between death and a throne. She is convinced that fate has beaten her and she can only die.

### Act III

No location is given. Hearing from Timante of Floridante's arrest, Rossane sends him in search of Elmira, but he feels nothing can be done. Elmira enters guarded by Coralbo and explains bitterly that she is Elisa, 'the only remains of the noble but extinct race of Ninus'. Rossane says that makes no difference to her love. Coralbo, hitherto unaware of Elmira's true identity assures her that she may still be a queen, since Persians loved her dynasty. He retires on one side when Oronte comes in and tells Elmira he has just seen the moor die. She swoons away in a chair. He orders Floridante to be fetched in chains, and tells him that if he can persuade Elmira to accept him (Oronte) he shall return in freedom to Thrace; if not, both must die a painful death. Oronte retires to listen. Elmira, recovering, is astonished to see Floridante alive, and still more to hear him plead Oronte's cause. He does this to save her life, but she refuses such a price; let them both die. The set changes (again the location is unspecified). Rossane, learning

from Timante that he has many armed supporters in the city, tells him to release Floridante while she looks after Elmira; her hand shall be the reward of his valour.

In a prison Floridante is chained to a pillar, tortured more by love than by fetters. Elmira comes in guarded, with a cup of poison in her hand. Oronte has ordered her to give it to Floridante, but she prepares to drink it herself; he cannot reach her on account of his chains. Enter Oronte, who takes the cup from her and orders her to be confined separately while Floridante drinks it. Coralbo and Timante break in with armed men, snatch cup from Floridante, arrest Oronte, and proclaim Elmira Queen of Elisa. She looks forward to crowning Floridante at her side. Oronte, left alone, curses first Coralbo, then himself; refusing comfort, he remains a prey to impotent fury. The set changes to a royal hall with a throne. Elmira and Floridante upon the throne. She thanks everyone for restoring her to the seat of her ancestors; he promises fidelity to her and just government for the people. They descend the throne, Elmira meets Rossane, and Floridante, Timante. At Rossane's request Floridante pardons Oronte. Rossane and Timante shall marry and reign in Tyre. Floridante declares himself happier as lover than as King, and Elmira orders the day to be kept as a festival.

Swift's Gulliver's Travels

Book I: A Voyage to Lilliput

In his first voyage, to Lilliput, Gulliver is shipwrecked on an unknown island near Sumatra and wakes to find himself the captive of a race of people six inches tall. As he describes the history and customs of these people they seem remarkably similar, at times, to the English. In the satirical pattern of the work, Book I presents a detailed political allegory of the reigns of Queen Anne and George I of England. Not for a moment does Gulliver cease to be Gulliver, yet his services to the state and his near impeachment for treason bear a curious resemblance to the experiences of the Earl of Oxford and Viscount Bolingbroke.

Book II: A Voyage to Brobdingnag

Gulliver is accidentally abandoned by his shipmates in an unmapped region of North America where the inhabitants are twelve times his size. Here Gulliver is adopted as a pet, and exhibited as a freak of nature. Both scale and plot are reversed. Brobdingnag, unlike Lilliput, bears little resemblance to England, but the political theme is continued with Gulliver as a representative eighteenth-century Englishman attempting to justify the human race under the gentle interrogation of a benevolent giant king.

Book III: A Voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Glubbdubdrib, Luggnagg, and Japan

Book III opens with Gulliver captured by pirates and abandoned to his fate near some small islands in the vicinity of Japan. He is taken aboard the flying island of Laputa, inhabited by people who are obsessed by abstract sciences and speculations, yet are able, by their superior position, to tyrannise the land of Balnibarbi beneath them. That we are back in the ill-governed Britain of George I is soon apparent, for Book III is full of contemporary detail. But the satire is less political than intellectual, examining man's claims to be a rational creature by showing us numerous examples of how man abuses his reasoning powers, and how absurd, irrelevant, and dangerously irresponsible an intelligentsia can be. From Balnibarbi Gulliver makes an excursion to Glubbdubdrib, the island of Sorcerers, where his host allows him to hold conversations with the moral giants of ancient history, the 'immortals' of our culture. But if he is under any illusion that real immortality would improve humankind his next excursion, to Luggnagg, disillusiones him. Here he meets the race of Struldbrugs, fated to everlasting senility, the most mortifying sight he ever beheld.

Book IV: A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms

Book IV completes the satirical argument by creating a Utopia of pure reason and measuring man against this impossible standard. On his first voyage as Captain he is the victim of a mutiny. Abandoned on shore he encounters

a noble race of horses, the Houyhnhnms, and their 'cattle', the Yahoos. Despite their human shape Gulliver finds the Yahoos the most 'disagreeable animal' he had encountered in all his travels. By contrast the Houyhnhnms appear to be 'the perfection of nature' and Gulliver comes to love their way of life. The grace and dignity of the philosopher-horses is all the more effective for being preceded in the travels by a succession of humanoid races, the absurd and spiteful Lilliputians, the grotesque Brobdingnagians, and the intellectual freaks of Book III. But the Houyhnhnms regard Gulliver as a kind of Yahoo, a view which he is forced to share. Exiled from the land of these 'inimitable' beings, Gulliver returns unwillingly to England, where he divides his time between talking to his horses and attempting to 'reform the Yahoo race in this kingdom'.

So Gulliver, it appears in retrospect, is not simply the amiable companion we first took him for. He is a man who has seen a vision of perfection: a man with a mission. That mission is to prepare us step by step to recognise ourselves, in the final book, as 'Yahoos in shape and disposition.'

Source: R. Gravil, York Notes. Notes on Gulliver's Travels. Jonathan Swift. (Longman York Press, 1985), pp. 18-19.

Hogarth's A Harlot's Progress

Plate I

In the first plate we see a pretty but gawky country girl appraised with apparent affection by a respectably dressed elderly lady, whom some contemporaries, including Vertue, recognized as the notorious bawd Mother Needham. The girl has just alighted from the York stage outside the Bell Inn in the City of London, and she is bound for her cousin, for whom she has brought a goose, which has round its neck a semi-literate message: 'For my Lofing Cosen in Tems Street in London'. The elderly gentleman in the doorway observing the scene was identified by Vertue as Colonel Charteris, a Don Juan whose powerful friends, according to general repute, saved him from hanging. In the background a country clergyman with a letter to the Bishop of London seeking preferment is oblivious to the moral danger faced by the country girl and the others still in the coach, and to the fact that his horse is toppling over a huge pile of pots and pans. This mishap introduces a note of impending catastrophe and may also refer to the danger to the girl's virginity. The goose she has brought her cousin may be an apt comment on her personality, and such details as the crumbling plaster also make comments on the instability of her situation, which at a moral level are easily stated: innocent country girls are easy prey to the powerful and unscrupulous and they can expect no guidance or charity in the big city. But Hogarth's attention is focused more fully on the vicious

than on the innocent. The most powerful and intriguing figure is not the country girl but the magnificent figure of the bawd, whose Junoesque respectability is belied by the pock-marks on her face; yet something in the stance and gesture of both figures suggests a recognition by the bawd of her own youthful innocence. Indeed the whole work is full of such contrasts: between the youth and age of the two central figures; the respectability of the bawd's garments and her face; the gentlemanly bearing of Charteris and his lascivious leer. With this plate innocence takes its leave, and we are left entirely in the world governed by pimp and bawd.

#### Plate II

Mary or Moll Hackabout (Hogarth only tells us she is M. Hackabout) is about to lose her position as the mistress of a wealthy Jew. Her progress to the eminence of a kept woman is not indicated by Hogarth, but was frequently charted without his authority in pornographic detail by later plagiarists, who reconstructed her path through employment and rape by Colonel Charteris, his rejection of her, her setting up with the Jew in fine surroundings, until boredom was rapidly followed by infidelity. She is seen making her lover's exit possible by snapping her fingers at her protector and upsetting the tea-table. The lover meanwhile, not quite dressed, slips out past an astonished maid. The setting reveals her character as a kept woman to be very different from the innocent country girl, and it also hints at her future

fate. Her pretensions to wealth and gentility are shown by the keeping of a black houseboy and a pet monkey, and the elegance with which tea is served. She apes the manners of a courtesan, but her protector is not a courtier and her position, like the cups on the table, is fragile. Her love of dalliance and taste for masquerades, evinced by the mask on her dressing table, has overcome her prudence, and the breaking of the crockery, as in the previous plate, is a harbinger of further catastrophe.

### Plate III

Moll is still cheerful and feckless, but now lower on the social scale, as a Covent Garden street prostitute. The previous plate can be seen as expressing the shattering of her fantasy life, but up to that moment it had some substance, for she was wealthy and had a young lover. Now the gap has widened and her life is revealed as one of extreme squalor, balanced by the romance of an affair with the dashing but doomed highwayman, James Dalton, whose wig box rests on top of her bed, and the image of the fictional Macheath whose print she has next to her bed. Instead of a black houseboy in a turban she is attended by a hideously poxed bunter, and her deceitful nature has descended to the open theft of a watch. Evidence of revelry in the form of a chipped punchbowl, mugs and pipes lies in the corner. The scene is also a point of transition for, squalid though her life is, she has at least some independence, which she is on the point of losing to the infamous Sir John Gonson, the scourge of



harlots, who leads the heavily armed watch to take her away. Sir John as he enters appears to hesitate as if caught by lust at the sight of the Harlot's seductive presence, for it was an old saw that such moralizing zeal was essentially prurient. The Harlot is also seen as a religious dabbler, admiring the contentious divine Dr. Sacheverell and hanging near his portrait a eucharistic wafer. She wraps her butter in a pastoral letter from the Bishop of London, which perhaps implies that religious controversy is a danger to simple minds.

Plate IV

She is now in Bridewell, the house of correction, where, dressed in the finery of her former days, she is forced under threat of dire punishment to beat hemp alongside the other inhabitants who are all prostitutes, except for the pathetic gambler who has also lost all his worldly possessions to his vice. Hemp was beaten to make rope, and its most sinister function is referred to in a childish caricature on the back wall, of a hanging man representing Sir John Gonson. The Harlot is still attractive and well-dressed, but her future is represented by the hideous harlot behind who fingers her garments and grins. The bunter ties up stockings which are elegant but holed, exemplifying the decay of cloth and flesh equally.

Plate V

We leap straight to the Harlot's death in her own premises. In a horrific scene she dies attended by her bunter, who looks in shock at the doctors, identifiable as

the infamous doctors Rock and Misaubin, quarrelling over the efficacy of their pills while their patient draws her last breath. Nowhere in Hogarth are comedy and tragedy so closely interwoven. The Harlot's gullibility about religion alluded to in Plate III is extended here to embrace quackery; the floor and surfaces are littered with evidence of her addiction to popular remedies for venereal disease. She has just had her teeth pulled by Dr Rock as part of a cure, but another woman has already prejudged the outcome by sorting out grave-clothes from a chest, which contains only masquerade garments. A new element is the introduction of a child who makes, somewhat belatedly, his first appearance. He is baffled by a piece of meat cooking on the fire, upon which a pot spills over and catches light. This sad episode alludes perhaps to his lack of upbringing, and the transmission of the sins and neglect of the parent.

#### Plate VI

The final scene is one of mourning over the coffin of Hackabout, who according to the plate on her coffin died on 2 September 1731 at the age of 23. None of the mourners, except possibly one, is showing any sympathetic concern with the deceased, and we are presented with a spectrum of selfishness in the face of death. The parson is so preoccupied with surreptitiously feeling his willing companion that he spills his drink. The bunter to his left, the only person in the scene to have acted with human sympathy, looks on in disgust. Opposite them an elderly

bawd, who may be Mother Needham lamenting the loss of revenue, wrings her hands in an exaggeratedly fervent manner, like a figure from a baroque altarpiece. The only one who might be saved is the harlot who looks at the face of Hackabout in the coffin; the gesture of her hand suggests that she has realized from the corpse her own ultimate fate. The child in full mourning robes sits playing with a top before the coffin, not heeding the occasion or being heeded by anyone else. In this ghastly parody of a Lamentation group the only serious emotion is provoked by brandy ('Nants') and tears are shed not over death but over a cut finger.

Hogarth's A Rake's Progress

Plate I

The tragedy of the Rake follows from the fact that he is the son of a miser: in the world of poetry and drama miserliness begets its contrary. This bond between miser and spendthrift is affirmed by the name they share, Rakewell, for the father is seen in the painting above the mantelpiece raking in gold. There is an irony in the way in which the slow accumulation of wealth is contrasted with its speedy disbursement by the son, whose instinct is to buy his way in and out of every situation. The first picture defines amply the characters of father and son and sows the seeds of future disaster; at the same time the legal profession is thoroughly anatomized, for the lawyer stealing the change is presumably also the author of all the legal documents which litter the floor, and which contributed to the miser's and his own wealth.

Plate II

The Rake is now established in London, and Hogarth uses the device, familiar from dramatic comedy, of a morning levée to draw together all the providers of costly and unnecessary services who encourage the Rake to ape the manners of the aristocracy. The Rake is besieged by a splendid group of grotesques, and we can assume that he falls for all their offers. The scene confirms his gullibility, but the real target lies in the panorama of the foolish extravagances of the haut monde; Rakewell by

aspiring to them reveals their essential emptiness. The purveyors of false aristocratic culture are also satirized: foreign musicians are represented by the Handelian composer playing the music from his new opera The Rape of the Sabines. In the engraving a print on the floor alludes to the famous singer Farinelli, whose intoxicating style led a lady in the audience to cry out 'One God one Farinelli' and who attracted expensive gifts from the cognoscenti, including here Rakewell himself; French dancing masters, and indeed foreigners of every kind, are butts of Hogarth's wit. Some of the jokes are wonderfully schoolboyish: the ravishers in The Rape of the Sabines, in the cast-list added to the musician's keyboard in the print, are all sung by well-known Italian eunuchs. The Rake's gullibility shows him to be more fool than knave, but such foolishness leads quickly to knavery.

### Plate III

In the Tavern Scene we see the sordid end to a night of brutal carousing, in which a street fight with the watch has been followed by an early morning visit to a notorious brothel, the Rose Tavern in Covent Garden. The air of ribaldry is so compelling, and the actuality of such incidents as the prostitute spitting across the table is so palpable, that one might feel that Hogarth is encouraging us to share the fun, but it would be wrong to suggest that we are really meant to sympathize with the Rake. The superficial gaiety is all shown to be sordid and ephemeral. The emblematic details are full of disgust,

from the chamberpot on the far left disgorging its contents over a dish of roast chicken, to the row of portraits of Roman emperors in which only Nero is not defaced. The 'posture woman' in the foreground is preparing for an obscene dance on a silver plate which will culminate in her extinguishing the candle in her vagina, and a ballad singer in the doorway holds The Black Joke, a notoriously obscene song. Hogarth makes it clear that the pleasures of the Brothel are not deep or lasting.

A box of pills on the floor beneath the Rake suggests that he has already caught syphilis, but nonetheless he has had more opportunity than the Harlot to explore the world of pleasure. For the Rake illusion only gives way in the fourth scene.

#### Plate IV

On the way to seek preferment at the Court of St James, as he reaches towards the prize of being a courtier, the reality of his true financial position catches up with him: he is arrested for debt, and is just saved from prison by the ever loyal Sarah Young, who pays off his creditors though only a poor seamstress. He will now be forced to make money by whatever desperate expedient comes to hand. The gap between reality and fantasy can only widen and reach its logical end in madness, unless he renounces his foolishness and returns to his natural place by redeeming his former fiancée. But he again chooses money rather than love and marries a one-eyed elderly hunchback in order to retrieve his fortune.

Plate V

The point of the Marriage Scene in the church of St Mary-le-Bone lies in the implied alternative, which is repentance and a happy ending in the arms of Sarah Young, who is seen in the background with her mother and baby attempting to force her way into the church. (The resemblance to her of the bridesmaid being ogled by the husband is accidental.) The clergy are no help, for the church, despite recent 'beautification', is visibly decaying and there is a significant crack through the Ten Commandments on the wall behind the parson. The poorbox with cobwebs over it, on the far right, evinces the lack of charity and the parson himself is a lascivious grotesque.

Plate VI

The marriage of convenience confirms rather than cures Rakewell's spendthrift nature, leaving gambling as the only way to recoup his fortunes. The Rake's imprecation to the Deity in the sixth painting achieves its power through the unmistakable signs of madness in his physiognomy, noticed only by the boy bringing a drink to a miserable highwayman. The tragic shift in the Rake's personality is set against a spectrum of the miseries induced by gambling, the common denominator of which is total obsession, leaving the gamblers unaware of the fire breaking out in the wainscoting. Gambling, of course, cannot pay in a work of morality, and in the penultimate painting the Rake's mind has become wholly

detached from reality and he is now in the debtors' prison.

Plate VII

He is beyond either comfort or entreaty now, and his condition has caused the still loyal Sarah Young to collapse in a faint. Reality is represented by his haranguing wife, the turnkey demanding 'garnish money', a boy demanding money for beer, and a terse rejection of a play the Rake has written from John Rich. But he is completely unaware of them and his mind dwells in fantasy, represented by the wings on the top of the four-poster bed, the alchemical experiments in the background, the telescope pointing to the heavens through the bars of his cell, and a 'philosophical' book on the shelf next to some mortars. He is rapidly approaching the pathetic condition of his cellmate, whose disordered mind has given birth to the ultimate lunacy: a 'New Scheme for paying ye Debts of ye Nation'.

Plate VIII

With madness firmly established there can be no other destination than Bedlam: the final plate shows the Rake firmly in the grip of Melancholy Madness, and we can, in the words of the verse text beneath the engraved version, 'Behold Death grappling with Despair'. This death scene is one of unequalled poignancy; Sarah Young mourns the Rake like Mary Magdalen and the guard releases his chains as if freeing him from the rack of this cruel world. On the other hand the setting is as richly comic as the Rake's



death is tragic. The forms of madness are treated essentially as comments on the follies of the world, an idea strengthened when Hogarth returned to the plate in 1763 and placed a medallion of a demented Britannia on the wall. On the left of the print religious enthusiasm is represented by a madman striking the attitude of a hermit saint with prints of Clement, Athanasius and St Lawrence on the wall of his cell; a naked madman with a crown on his head, carrying a stick as a sceptre and urinating, is perhaps a blow against the Divine Right of kings; and the madman drawing elaborate trajectories in order to determine the longitude may be a reference to Nathanael Lee, a playwright who ended in Bedlam. Also within the confines of a madhouse are a well-dressed lady visitor and her maid; in the painting and the first state of the engraving the lady looks on in amusement at the man urinating, hypocritically shielding herself with a fan while the maid points gleefully. The Rake's last moments are of little interest to a world pursuing folly.

Source: D. Bindman, Hogarth (Thames and Hudson, London 1987), pp. 56-71).

Appendix II

Texts

Gay's The Beggar's Opera:

Act III scene 13 (The condemned hold)

MACHEATH, in a melancholy posture

Air 58 Happy groves

O cruel, cruel, cruel case!  
Must I suffer this disgrace?

Air 59 Of all the girls that are so smart

Of all the friends in time of grief,  
When threat'ning death looks grimmer,  
Not one so sure can bring relief,  
As this best friend, a brimmer. (Drinks.)

Air 60 Britons strike home

Since I must swing, - I scorn, I scorn to wince or whine.  
(Rises.)

Air 61 Chevy chase

But now again my spirits sink;  
I'll raise them high with wine.  
(Drinks a glass of wine.)

Air 62 To old Sir Simon the King

But valour the stronger grows,  
The stronger liquor we're drinking.  
And how can we fell our woes,  
When we've lost the trouble of thinking?  
(Drinks.)

Air 63 Joy to great Caesar

If thus - A man can die  
Much bolder with brandy.  
(Pours out a bumper of brandy.)

Air 64 There was an old woman

So I drink off this bumper. And now I can stand the test.  
And my comrades shall see, that I die as brave as the best.  
(Drinks.)

Air 65 Did you ever hear of a gallant sailor

But can I leave my pretty hussies,  
Without one tear, or tender sigh?

Air 66 Why are mine eyes still flowing

Their eyes, their lips, their busses  
Recall my love. Ah must I die!

Air 67 Green sleeves

Since laws were made for every degree,  
To curb vice in others, as well as me,  
I wonder we han't better company,  
Upon Tyburn Tree!  
But gold from law can take out the sting;  
And if rich men like us were to swing,  
'Twould thin the land, such numbers to string  
Upon Tyburn Tree!

JAILOR: some friends of yours, Captain, desire to be  
admitted. I leave you together.

Scene 14

MACHEATH, BEN BUDGE, MATT OF THE MINT.

MACHEATH: For my having broke prison, you see, gentlemen,  
I am ordered immediate execution. The Sheriff's Officers,  
I believe, are now at the door. That Jemmy Twitcher should  
peach me, I own surprised me! 'Tis a plain proof that the  
world is all alike, and that even our gang can no more  
trust one another than other people. Therefore, I beg  
you, gentlemen, look well to yourselves, for in all  
probability you may live some months longer.

MATT OF THE MINT: We are heartily sorry, Captain, for  
your misfortune. But 'tis what we must all come to.

MACHEATH: Peachum and Lockit, you know, are infamous  
scoundrels. Their lives are as much in your power, as  
yours are in theirs. Remember your dying friend! 'Tis  
my last request. Bring those villains to the gallows  
before you, and I am satisfied.

MATT OF THE MINT: We'll do't.

JAILOR: Miss Polly and Miss Lucy entreat a word with you.

MACHEATH: Gentlemen, adieu.

Scene 15

LUCY, MACHEATH, POLLY

MACHEATH: My dear Lucy. My dear Polly. Whatsoever hath passed between us is now at an end. If you are fond of marrying again, the best advice I can give you, is to ship yourselves off for the West Indies, where you'll have a fair chance of getting a husband apiece; or by good luck, two or three, as you like best.

POLLY: How can I support this sight!

LUCY: There is nothing moves one so much as a great man in distress.

Air 68 All you that must take a leap

LUCY: Would I might be hanged!

POLLY: And I would so too!

LUCY: To be hanged with you.

POLLY: My dear, with you.

MACHEATH: O leave me to thought! I fear! I doubt!

I tremble! I droop! See, my courage is out.

(Turns up the empty bottle.)

POLLY: No token of love?

MACHEATH: See, my courage is out.

(Turns up the empty pot.)

LUCY: No token of love?

POLLY: Adieu.

LUCY: Farewell.

MACHEATH: But hark! I hear the toll of the bell.

CHORUS: Tol de rol lol, etc.

JAILOR: Four women more, Captain, with a child apiece! See, here they come.

(Enter women and children.)

MACHEATH: What - four wives more! This is too much. Here - tell the Sheriff's Officers I am ready.

(Exit MACHEATH guarded.)

Handel's Floridante:

Act III scene 6 (Original)

FLORIDANTE: Questi ceppi,  
e quest' orrore non mi fanno già spavento:  
mio tormento è il caro bene,  
  
Se avrà quella amica sorte,  
benchè lacci sian di morte, mi fian care

Act III scene 7

ELMIRA: Misera, amato Prence!  
oh di non mai più intesa tiranna crudeltà!  
vuol l'empio Oronte,  
ch'io stessa, io stessa a te,  
cor del cor mio,  
porti la morte in questo nappo.

FLORIDANTE: Oh cara soave morte!  
oh troppo a te crudele,  
troppo pietoso a me,  
fiero tiranno!  
candida man,  
lascia ch'io stempri in baci su te il cor mio!  
tu dolce puoi far morte.

ELMIRA: Sì vieni, sì t'appressa,  
e mira, oh caro, l'ultima prova d'un amor  
fedele!

FLORIDANTE: Quì m'arrestano il piè l'aspre ritorte;  
deh! vieni, oh morte cara!

ELMIRA: A me vien morte, contenta inanzi a tuoi  
pietosi sguardi.

FLORIDANTE: Oh Dei! che pensi far?

ELMIRA: Lieta, mio bene, da tuoi  
cari sospiri accompagnata....

FLORIDANTE: Ah per pietà,  
spezzatevi,  
tenaci mie catene!

ELMIRA: Prima di te vogl'io...

FLORIDANTE: Ah Numi! ah nò!

ELMIRA: bever la morte;  
addio!

Act III scene 6 .(English translation)

FLORIDANTE: These shackles,  
and this horror cause no fear in my breast,  
my torment is welcome to me.  
If she will have this friendly fate,  
Although they be death snares they will be  
dear to me.

Act III scene 7

ELMIRA: Woe is me, beloved prince!  
Oh, unspeakable tyrannous cruelty!  
The impious Oronte, wants that none other  
than myself should bring to you,  
Heart of my heart,  
Death in this goblet.

FLORIDANTE: Oh dear gentle death!  
Oh too cruel to you,  
Too merciful to me  
Proud tyrant!  
O pale hand,  
Let me melt my heart in kisses on you!  
You can make death sweet.

ELMIRA: Yes, yes come closer  
And see my dear the ultimate proof of a  
faithful love.

FLORIDANTE: Here my feet are restrained with chains,  
Ah come, oh dear death!

ELMIRA: Death comes to me, joyful before your pitying  
eyes.

FLORIDANTE: Oh god! What are you thinking of doing?

ELMIRA: I am happy my love.  
Accompanied by your dear sighs...

FLORIDANTE: O for pity's sake  
Snap my tenacious chains!

ELMIRA: Before you, I want...

FLORIDANTE: Ah, Gods, ah no...

ELMIRA: I want to drink death, farewell.





POLLY: But if his own misfortunes have made him insensible to mine, a father sure will be more compassionate. Dear, dear sir, sink the material evidence, and bring him off at his trial - Polly upon her knees begs it of you.

Air 54 I am a poor shepherd undone

When my hero in court appears,  
And stands arraigned for his life;  
Then think of poor Polly's tears;  
For ah! Poor Polly's his wife.  
Like the sailor he holds up his hand,  
Distressed on the dashing wave.  
To die a dry death at land,  
Is as bad as a wat'ry grave.  
And alas, poor Polly!  
Alack, and well-a-day!  
Before I was in love,  
O! every month was May.

LUCY: If Peachum's heart is hardened; sure you, sir, will have more compassion on a daughter. I know the evidence is in your power: how then can you be a tyrant to me?  
(Kneeling.)

Air 55 Ianthe the lovely

When he holds up his hand arraigned for his life,  
O think of your daughter, and think I'm his wife!  
What are cannons, or bombs, or clashing of swords?  
For death is more certain by witnesses words.  
Then nail up their lips; that dread thunder allay;  
And each month of my life will hereafter be May.

LOCKIT: Macheath's time is come, Lucy. We know our own affairs, therefore let us have no more whimpering or whinking.

Air 56 A cobbler there was

Ourselves, like the great, to secure a retreat,  
When matters require it, must give up our gang:  
    And good reason why,  
    Or, instead of the fry,  
    Even Peachum and I,  
Like poor petty rascals, might hang, hang;  
Like poor petty rascals, might hang.

PEACHUM: Set your heart at rest, Polly. Your husband is to die today. Therefore, if you are not already provided, 'tis high time to look about for another. There's comfort for you, you slut.

LOCKIT: We are ready, sir, to conduct you to the Old Bailey.

Air 57 Bonny Dundee

MACHEATH: The charge is prepared; the lawyers are met,  
The judges all ranged (a terrible show!)  
I go, undismayed. For death is a debt,  
A debt on demand. So, take what I owe.  
Then farewell my love - dear charmers, adieu.  
Contented I die - 'tis the better for you.  
Here ends all dispute the rest of our lives.  
For this way at once I please all my wives.

Now, gentlemen, I am ready to attend you.

Gay's The Beggar's Opera:

Introduction

BEGGAR, PLAYER.

BEGGAR: If poverty be a title to poetry, I am sure nobody can dispute mine. I own myself of the Company of Beggars; and I make one at their weekly festivals at St. Giles's. I have a small yearly salary for my catches, and am welcome to a dinner there whenever I please, which is more than most poets can say.

PLAYER: As we live by the Muses, 'tis but gratitude in us to encourage poetical merit wherever we find it. The Muses, contrary to all other ladies, pay no distinction to dress, and never partially mistake the pertness of embroidery for wit, nor the modesty of want for dullness. Be the author who he will, we push his play as far as it will go. So (though you are in want) I wish you success heartily.

BEGGAR: This piece I own was originally writ for the celebrating the marriage of James Chanter and Moll Lay, two most excellent ballad singers. I have introduced the similes that are in all your celebrated operas: the swallow, the moth, the bee, the ship, the flower, etc. Besides, I have a prison scene which the ladies always reckon charmingly pathetic. As to the parts, I have observed such a nice impartiality to our two ladies, that it is impossible for either of them to take offence. I hope I may be forgiven, that I have not made my opera throughout unnatural, like those in vogue; for I have no recitative: excepting this, as I have consented to have neither prologue nor epilogue, it must be allowed an opera in all its forms. The piece indeed hath been heretofore frequently represented by ourselves in our great room at St. Giles's, so that I cannot too often acknowledge your charity in bringing it now on the stage.

PLAYER: But I see 'tis time for us to withdraw; the actors are preparing to begin. Play away the overture.

(Exeunt.)

Gay's The Beggar's Opera

Act III scene 16

To them, enter PLAYER and BEGGAR.

PLAYER: But, honest friend, I hope you don't intend that Macheath shall be really executed.

BEGGAR: Most certainly, sir. To make the piece perfect, I was for doing strict poetical justice. Macheath is to be hanged; and for the other personages of the drama, the audience must have supposed they were all either hanged or transported.

PLAYER: Why then, friend, this is a downright deep tragedy. The catastrophe is manifestly wrong, for an opera must end happily.

BEGGAR: Your objection, sir, is very just; and is easily removed. For you must allow, that in this kind of drama, 'tis no matter how absurdly things are brought about. So - you rabble there - run and cry a reprieve - let the prisoner be brought back to his wives in triumph.

PLAYER: All this we must do, to comply with the taste of the town.

BEGGAR: Through the whole piece you may observe such a similitude of manners in high and low life, that it is difficult to determine whether (in the fashionable vices) the fine gentlemen imitate the gentlemen of the road, or the gentlemen of the road the fine gentlemen. Had the play remained, as I at first intended, it would have carried a most excellent moral. 'Twould have shown that the lower sort of people have their vices in a degree as well as the rich: and that they are punished for them.

Appendix III

Musical examples

Musical Extracts taken from John Gay's The Beggar's Opera  
(T.B.O.) and George Frederic Handel's Floridante (H.F.)

AIR XLIII. *Packington's Pound.*

*Thus Gamesters united in friendship are found, Though they know that their  
industry all is a cheat; They flock to their prey at the Dice box's sound, and  
join to promote one another's deceit. But if by mishap They fail of a chap; To  
keep in their hands, they each other entrap. Like Pikes, lank with humor, who  
miss of their ends. They bite their companions, and prey on their friends.*

Extract I Act III scene 2: Air 43 (T.B.O.)

AIR XXXIII. London Ladies.

*If you at sea offend, to live your due, And would not have matters any*

*direct: You may question the Clerk with the perquisites too, To*

*do what his duty direct: Or would you the firms of a*

*lady prevent, She too has this palpable failing, The*

*perquisite joins her into consent: that reason with all is prevailing.*

Extract II Act II scene 12: Air 33 (T.B.O.)



A C T III.

AIR XLI. IF Love's a sweet passion &c.

When you're at the bar you first tempt me to love, and bid me be sure of my

legs, and no more; I was kiss'd by the Baron, the Squire, and the Son: When the

guest was departed, the kiss was forgot. But his kiss was so sweet and so

close by he says that I languish'd and pined till I granted the rest.

Extract III Act III scene 1: Air 41 (T.B.O.)





# OUVERTURE in SCORE

Compos'd by D<sup>r</sup> *PEPUSCH*.

Obc. 1

Obc. 2

Vio. 1

Vio. 2

Teno

Bass

The first system of the score contains six staves. From top to bottom, they are labeled: Obc. 1, Obc. 2, Vio. 1, Vio. 2, Teno (Tenor), and Bass. Each staff contains musical notation in a common time signature, with various note values and rests.

The second system of the score contains six staves, continuing the musical notation from the first system. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings such as 'tr' (trill) and 'f' (forte).

A

Handwritten musical score for the first system, consisting of five staves. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings such as *f* and *p*. The system concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

*the Repeat fin.*

Handwritten musical score for the second system, consisting of five staves. This system features several trills, indicated by the *tr* marking above notes. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings such as *f* and *p*. The system concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

The first system of the musical score consists of five staves. The top four staves are in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music is in 12/8 time. The first staff has a dynamic marking 'h' above the first measure. The second staff has a dynamic marking '7r' above the first measure. The tempo instruction 'Allegro' is written below the second and fourth staves. The score includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

The second system of the musical score consists of five staves. The top four staves are in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music continues in 12/8 time. The first staff has a dynamic marking 'f' above the first measure. The second staff has a dynamic marking '7r' above the first measure. The score includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. A fermata is placed over the first measure of the third staff.

The first system of the handwritten musical score consists of six staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. It contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, containing a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The third staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, containing a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The fourth staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, containing a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The fifth staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, containing a bass line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The sixth staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, containing a bass line with eighth and sixteenth notes.

The second system of the handwritten musical score consists of six staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. It contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, containing a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The third staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, containing a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The fourth staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, containing a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The fifth staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, containing a bass line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The sixth staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, containing a bass line with eighth and sixteenth notes.



Handwritten musical score system 1, consisting of five staves. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings such as *f* and *p*. The system is enclosed in a large left-facing brace.



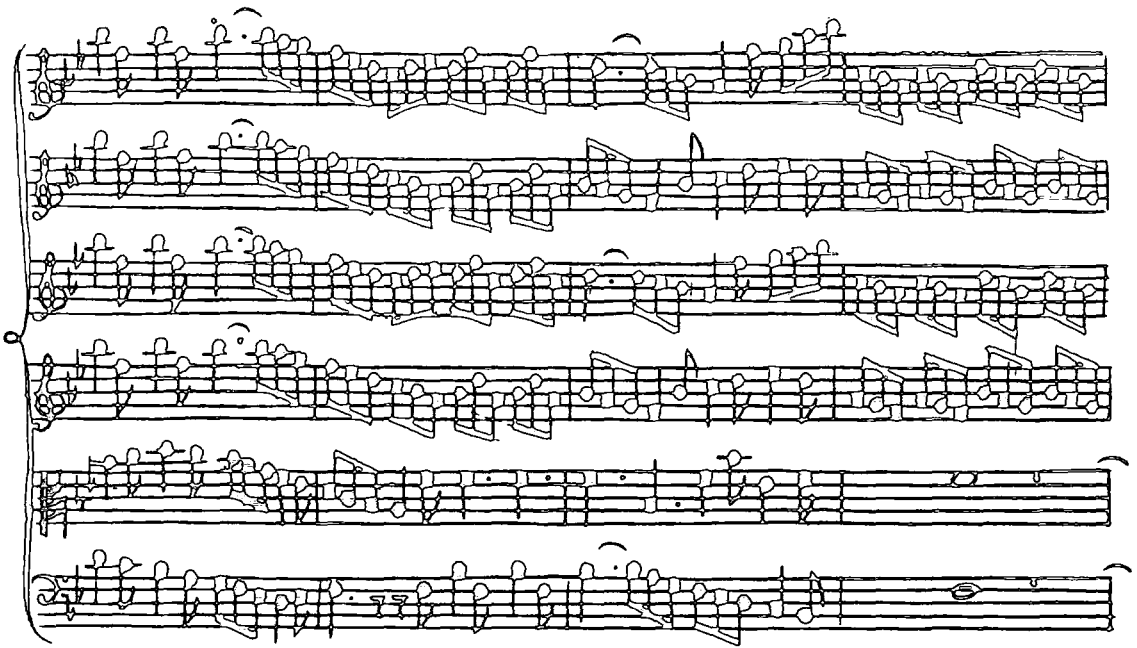
Handwritten musical score system 2, consisting of five staves. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings such as *f* and *p*. The system is enclosed in a large left-facing brace.

The first system of the musical score consists of six staves. The top two staves are treble clefs, and the bottom four staves are bass clefs. The music is written in a complex, flowing style with many slurs and dynamic markings. The notation includes various note values, rests, and articulation marks.

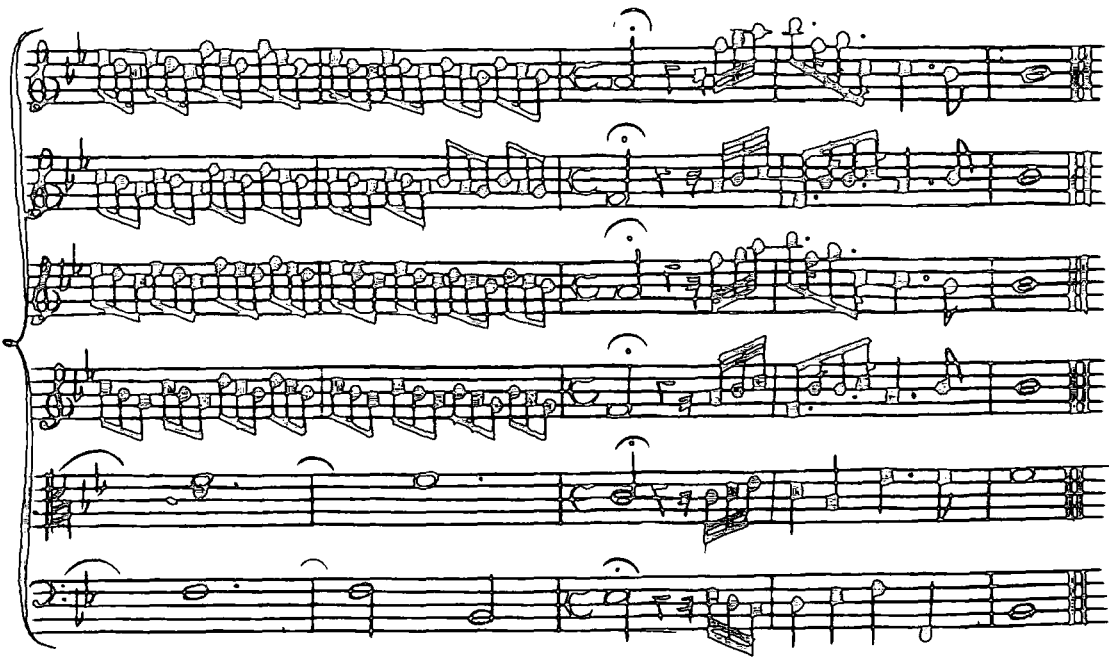
The second system of the musical score consists of six staves. The top two staves are treble clefs, and the bottom four staves are bass clefs. The music is written in a complex, flowing style with many slurs and dynamic markings. The notation includes various note values, rests, and articulation marks. The dynamic markings *piano* and *forte* are clearly visible on several staves, indicating changes in volume. The *piano* markings are located on the first, second, third, and fifth staves, while the *forte* markings are on the second, third, fourth, and sixth staves.

First system of musical notation. It consists of six staves. The top two staves are vocal lines, with the word *Solo* written below the second staff. The bottom four staves are piano accompaniment, with the word *Piano* written below the fourth staff. The music is in a minor key and features complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes.

Second system of musical notation. It consists of six staves. The top two staves are vocal lines, with the word *tutti* written below the second staff. The bottom four staves are piano accompaniment, with the word *forte* written below the third staff. The music continues with similar rhythmic complexity and includes dynamic markings such as *forte* and *p.* (piano).



The first system of the musical score consists of six staves. The top five staves are grouped by a brace on the left and contain complex melodic lines with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, often beamed together. The sixth staff at the bottom of the system is a bass line with fewer notes, including some rests and longer note values. The system concludes with a double bar line.



The second system of the musical score also consists of six staves. Similar to the first system, the top five staves are grouped by a brace and feature intricate melodic passages with rapid sixteenth-note runs. The bottom staff provides a bass accompaniment. The system ends with a double bar line.

Extract IV a) Overture (T.B.O.)



The image shows three systems of musical notation. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

System 1:  
Vocal: *corn. While thus I lye rolling and tossing all night, that Polly lyes*  
Piano: Accompaniment for the first system.

System 2:  
Vocal: *Sporting on Seas of Delight; Revenge, revenge, revenge, shall ap...*  
Piano: Accompaniment for the second system.

System 3:  
Vocal: *pearls my restless spirit.*  
Piano: Accompaniment for the third system.

Extract IV b) Act III scene 7: Air 47 (taken from latter half of the air) (T.B.O.)

AIR XXXVIII. Good morrow, Gossip Tom.

Why how now, Madam Flirt, If . . . . you dids must chatter;  
And arr, for Angina Dir = = = = = t, Let's  
try who best can spat = = ter; Madam Flirt. Why how now, Saucy  
Gads! here the Witch is Tyseey. How can you see me made =  
= = = = = The self of such a Gyp = jey? Banca Sudo!

Extract V Act II scene 13: Air 38 (T.B.O.)

AIR XXXV. Have you heard of a frolicksome ditty.

*thin: happy could I be with either, Were t' other dear charmer away! (But*  
*while you thus tease me together, So neither a word will I say; But col d'è rol, &c.*

Extract VI Act II scene 13: Air 35 (T.B.O.)

AIR LXVII. All you that must take a leap, &c.

*Would I might be hang'd! And I would so too! To be hang'd with*  
*you. My dear, with you. O leave me to thought! I fear! I doubt! I tremble! I*  
*drop! See, my courage is out. No token of love? See my courage is out. No token of*  
*love? Adieu! Farewell. No token of love? Adieu: Farewell, But hark! I*  
*hear - - the Toll of the Bell.*

Extract VII Act III scene 15: Air 68 (T.B.O.)

AIR LVIII. Happy Groves.

*O cruel, cruel, cruel case! Must I suffer this disgrace?*

AIR LIX. Of all the girls that are so smart.

*Of all the friends in time of grief, When threatening death looks grimmer;*

*Not one so sure can bring relief, As this best friend a brimmer.*

AIR LX. Britons Strike Home.

*Since I must swing, -- I scorn, I scorn to wince or whine.*

AIR LXI. Chevy Chase.

*But now again my spirits sink, I'll raise them high with wine.*

AIR LXII. To old Sir Simon the King.

*But valour the stronger grows, The stronger liquor we're drinking. And*

*how can we feel our woes, When we've left the trouble of thinking?*

AIR LXIII. Joy to great Caesar.

*If thus a man can die Much bolder with brandy.*

AIR LXIV. There was an old woman, &c.

*So I drink off this bumper And now I can stand the test: And my*

*Comrades shall see, that I die as brave as the best.*

AIR LXV. Did you ever hear of a gallant sailor.

*But can I leave my pretty kuffies, without one tear, or tender Sigh?*

AIR LXVI. Why are mine eyes still flowing.

*Their eyes, their lips, their Bus = = = ses recall my love. Ah*

*must I die!*

AIR LXVII. Green sleeves.

Since laws were made for ev'ry deuce, To subvice in others, as

well as me, I wonder we han't better company, Upon Ty - - burn Tree!

But Gold from law can take out the strings, And if rich men like us were to

swing 'Twould thin the Land, such Numbers to string upon Ty - - - burn Tree!

AIR LXVIII. All you that must take a leap, &c.

Would I might be hang'd! And I would, so too! To be hang'd with

you. My dear, with you. O leave me to thought! I fear! I doubt! I tremble! I

droop! See, my courage is out. No token of love? See my courage is out. No token of



*... - dieit. Farewell. No token of love? Adieu: Farewell, But hark! I*  
*hear - - the Toll of the Bell.*

Extract VIII Act III scenes 13-15: Airs 58-68 (T.B.O.)

AIR LVIII. Happy Groves.



*O cruel, cruel, cruel wife! Must I suffer this disgrace?*

Extract VIII a) Act III scene 12: Air 58 (T.B.O.)

AIR LXII. To old Sir Simon the King.



*But valour the stronger grows, The stronger liquor we're drinking. And*

Extract VIII b) Act III scene 13: Air 62 (T.B.O.)

AIR LXVII. Green sleeves.

Since laws were made for ev'ry degree, To curb vice in others, as  
well as me, I wonder we han't better company, Upon *Ty - - burn Tree!*

But Gold from law can take out the sting, And if rich men like us were to  
swing 'Twould thin the Land, such Numbers to string upon *Ty - - - burn Tree!*

Extract VIII c) Act III scene 13: Air 67 (T.B.O.)



AIR LXVI. Why are mine eyes still flowing.

*Their eyes, their lips, their Bus = = = ses recall my love. Ah*

*must I die!*

Extract VIII d) Act III scene 13: Air 66 (T.B.O.)

AIR LXI. Chevy Chase.

*But now again my spirits sink, I'll raise them high with wine.*

Extract VIII e) Act III scene 13: Air 61 (T.B.O.)

SCENA VI.

Prigione.

FLORIDANTE incatenato ad un pilastro.

(Violino I.)  
(Violino II.)  
(Viola)  
FLORIDANTE  
Bassi.

Que-sti ceppi, e quest' or-ro-re non mi

fan-no già spa-ven-to: mio tor-men-to è il ca-ro be-re, mio tor-

-men-to è il ca-ro be-re; que-sti ceppi, e quest' or-ro-re non mi fan-no già spa-ven-to: mio tor-

-men-to, mio tor-men-to è il ca-ro be-re.

Se a-vrà quella a-mi-ca sor-te, benchè la-cer-sion di mor-te, mi fan ca-re

SCENA VII.

ELMIRA frà guardia, con un  
coppo di veleno in mano.

Elmira.

Mi se. ra a . ma. to Prence! oh di non mai più in. te. so ti . ran. na cru. dol . tò! vuol l'em. pio O

. ron. te. chio stem. ba. io stem. ba a te, cor del cor mi . o, par. ti lo cor. te in que. sto

Floridante.

nappo. Oh ca. ra so. la. ve morte! oh troppo a te cru. de. le, troppo pie. to. so o cae. fie. ro ti .

. ran. no! con. di. da man. la. scia chio stem. pri in ba. ci su te il cor mi. a! tu dol. ce puoi far .

Elmira.

Floridante.

morte. Si vien, si t'op. presso, e mi. ra, oh ca. ro, l'ul. ti. ma prova d'un amor te. de. le! Qui mor. re. stan. o il

Elmira.

pie' l'a. pre. ri. . tor. te, deh! ve. ni, oh cor. te ca. ro! A me vien cor. te, con. ten. ta in .

Floridante.

Elmira.

. an. zi a tuoi pie. to. si sguardi Oh De. i! che pen. si far! Lie. ta, mio be. ne, da tuoi

mi sian ca. re le co. te. ne: ne a. vrò quel. la a. mi. ca cor. te, ben. chò lac. ci sian di cor. te, mi sian

co. re, ca. re le co. te. ne, mi sian ca. re, mi sian ca. re le co. te. ne. Da Capo.

Floridante.

ca - ri sospi - ri oc - cun - po - qua - ta... Ah per pie - tà, spes - zo - te - vi, te - no - ci mie ca - te - ne!

Elmira. Floridante. Elmira.

Pri - ma di te so - gli - o... Ah Nu - mi! ah no! be - ver lo cur - te, ad - di - o!

Extract IX Act III scenes 6-7 (H.F.)

bo - o. f. p. bo - o. Que - sti ce - pi, e quest' or - ro - re non mi

fan - no già spa - ven - to: mio tor - men - to è il ca - ro be - ne, mio tor -

- mento è il ca - ro be - ne; que - sti ce - pi, e quest' or - ro - re non mi fan - no già spa - ven - to: mio tor -

- mento, mio tor - men - to è il ca - ro be - ne.

Se a - vra quella o - mi - ca cor - te, benchè lac - ri - sion di mor - te, mi fian ca - re

M 13 05

Extract IX a) Act III scene 6: mm 10-36 (H.F.)

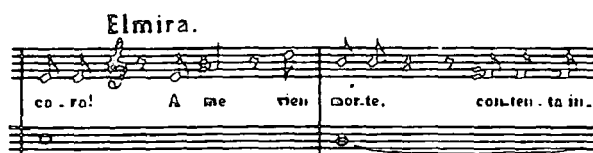
Elmira. Floridante.



Pri.ma di te vo.gli. o... Ah Nu.mi! ah tuò!

Extract IX b) Act III scene 7: m. 32 (H.F.)

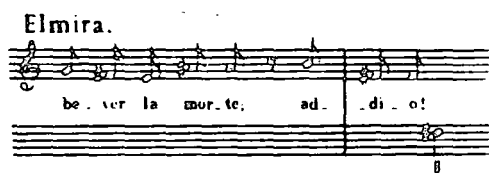
Elmira.



co.ro! A me vien mor.te. con.ten.ta in.

Extract IX c) Act III scene 7: m. 23, and

Elmira.



be.ver la mor.te; ad. di.o!

m. 33 (H.F.)

AIR IIIV. I am a poor Shepherd undone.

*When my here in court appears, And stands arraign'd for his love; Then*

*think of poor Polly's tears; For ah! Poor Polly's his wife. Like the Sailer he*

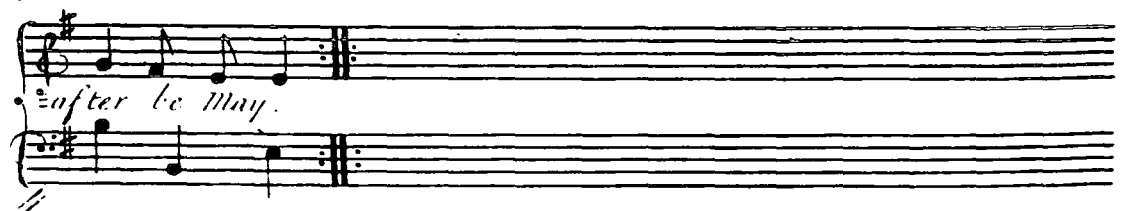
*holds up his hand, Distrest on the dashing wave. To die a dry death at land, Is as*

*bad as a watry grave. And alas, poor Polly! Alack, and well-a-day! Before I*

Extract X Act III scene 11: Airs 54 and 55 (T.B.O.)



AIR LV. *Lanthe the lovely, &c.*



Extract X Act III scene 11: Airs 54 and 55 (T.B.O.)

Sources: J. Gay, The Beggar's Opera by John Gay (New York, Argonaut Books, 1961).

G. F. Handel, Floridante (New Jersey, U.S.A., Gregg Press Inc., 1965).

Appendix IV

Illustrations



JAMES THORNHILL

Figures 1 - 5 Decorations for the Ceiling of the  
Aldermen's Court Room, Guildhall 1725-7

Source: Collected authors, Manners and Morals. Hogarth  
and British Painting 1700-1760 (Tate Gallery  
Publications, 1987)



Figure 1 Allegory of London: London, Pallas Athene,  
Peace and Plenty



Figure 2 The Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence  
(Putto holding a mirror)



Figure 3 The Four Cardinal Virtues: Justice  
(Putto holding a sword)



Figure 4 The Four Cardinal virtues: Temperance  
(Putto holding a bowl and jug of water)



Figure 5 The Four Cardinal Virtues: Fortitude  
(Putto leaning against the base of a column)

WILLIAM HOGARTH

A Harlot's Progress (1732)

(in 6 plates)

Source: D. Bindman, Hogarth (London, Thames and Hudson,  
1987);



Figure 6 Plate 1



Figure 7 Plate 2



Figure 8 Plate 3



Figure 9 Plate 4



Figure 10 Plate 5



Figure 11 Plate 6



WILLIAM HOGARTH

A Rake's Progress (1733)

(in 8 plates)

Source: D. Bindman, Hogarth (London, Thames and Hudson,  
1987)



Figure 12 Plate 1

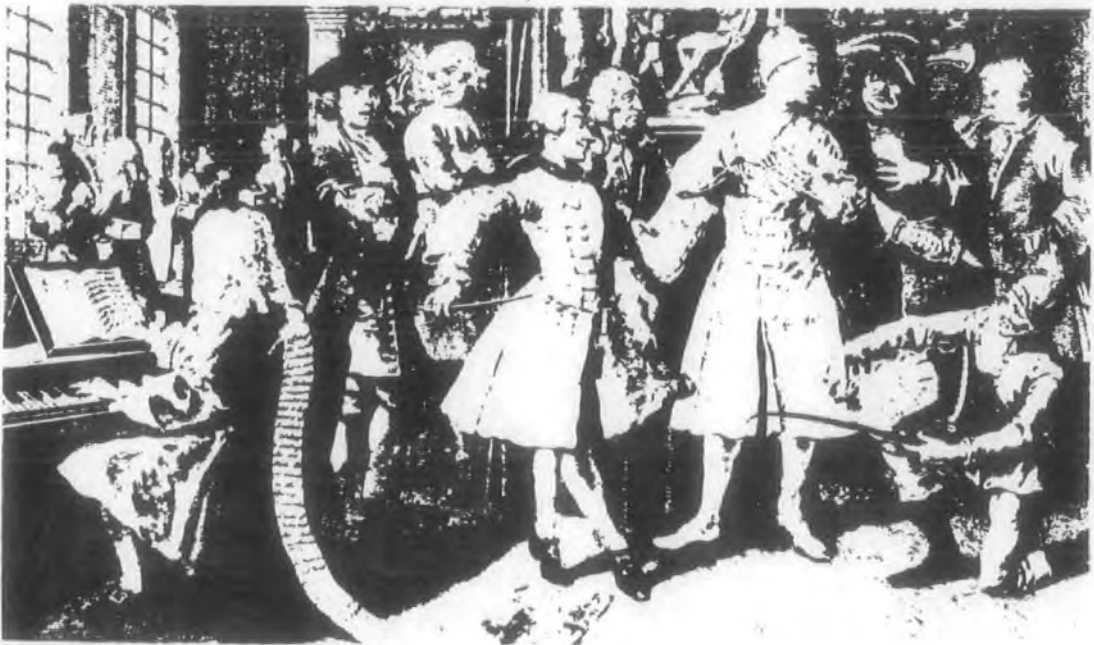


Figure 13 Plate 2



Figure 14 Plate 3



Figure 15 Plate 4



Figure 16 Plate 5



Figure 17 Plate 6



Figure 18 Plate 7



Figure 19 Plate 8



Figure 20 The Enraged Musician

Pietro Castrucci, the leader and first violin at the Italian Opera is in the window. A playbill of The Beggar's Opera is pasted on the wall and a ballad-singer is chanting (the ballad) 'The Ladies Fall'.

Painting by William Hogarth  
engraved by Thomas Clerk

Source: G. Handley-Taylor and F. Granville Barker, Ninth Music Book. John Gay and the Ballad Opera (The Beggar's Opera), (London, Hinrichsen edition, 1956)



Figure 21 The Beggar's Opera Burlesqued

Painting by WILLIAM HOGARTH

In the background the gallows, on the wall on the left ballad-sheets, so popular at that time, in front the orchestra, consisting of a dulcimer, a hum-thrum - a bladder on a bowstring, a bagpipe, a salt-box and other instruments. "Harmony" is flying from the scene (perhaps after having heard the music of the animals on the stage).

Source: Ibid.

WILLIAM HOGARTH

The Beggar's Opera Scenes





Figure 22 Variation 1 (1728)

Source: D.Dabydeen, Hogarth, Walpole and Commercial Britain (1987)



Figure 23 Variation 5, engraving by William Blake (1790)

Source: G. Handley-Taylor and F. Granville Barker, op. cit.

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