William Hogarth and the Doctors

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HOGARTH'S knowledge of and association with the doctors of his day reveals the fact that he made a clear distinction between the proper medical men and the multitude of quacks. In 1736 after he had become widely known for his *Harlot's Progress* and his *Rake's Progress,* he painted two large pictures for the staircase of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, the *Good Samaritan* and the *Pool of Bethesda.* These pictures he presented to the hospital and in return was made a member of the Board of Governors. Although both of these pictures were not considered good in their own day, and have not grown in reputation since, they are sympathetic in their attitude toward the art of healing. His friendship with Captain Thomas Coram led to his being included as a Governor and Guardian of the Foundling Hospital when the Royal Charter was granted in 1739 for the establishment of that institution; and until he died he was active in its management. Through his connection with these hospitals Hogarth doubtless knew many of the regular practitioners of his time and was cognizant of current events in the medical world.

Because of this background and knowledge Hogarth's attacks on the quack-doctors of his day take on added significance. Fortunately his position as the scourger of the incompetent cannot be imputed to the fact that he was flattered by election to these boards, for his first satire was painted in 1731, five years before his pictures for St. Bartholomew's Hospital; his election merely confirmed his position.

The six pictures which constitute *A Harlot's Progress* were painted by September 1731 and engraved and published by him in 1732. Their immediate success gave rise to a number of pirated editions which reduced the profits from the sale of the prints but aided in making Hogarth the most widely known artist in London. The pictures depict the arrival of the country girl, Mary Hackabout, in London and her capture by a procuress; her period of affluence as the mistress of a wealthy man; her decline to the rank of a common prostitute and companion of highwaymen; her term in Bridewell to which she had been sent by the reforming magistrate, Sir John Gonson; her death in poverty; and her funeral. Of these plates the fifth, "The Death of the Harlot," (See Fig. 1) is of importance here, for in it are two contemporary physicians.

FIG. 1. The Death of the Harlot.

In the back of the room two doctors are arguing over the efficacy of their medicines and the proper treatment of the sick woman. A part of the satire is to be found in the fact that their argument is in vain, for the woman has just died. The tall, thin man, who is pointing to his box of pills, is Dr. Jean Misaubin, a Frenchman, who, although on his arrival in London in 1719 he was admitted as a licentiate of the College of Physicians, had by his arrogance and methods of practice come to be classed with the quacks of the day. In *Tom Jones* Fielding states that Misaubin "used to say that the proper direction to him was to Dr. Misaubin 'in the world,' intimating that there were few people in it to whom his great reputation was not known."[1] He placed great reliance upon certain pills of his own devising.

The other doctor is designated in the commentaries as Dr. Rock or Dr. Ward. I believe the latter can be definitely ruled out. Dr. Ward did not arrive in London until 1733, which was after the paintings were

known and the engravings were in circulation; and his face was disfigured by a birthmark which is not on the face of this person. Moreover, the history of the plate indicates that Hogarth intended the figure to be that of Dr. Rock. In his pictures the artist used various devices to introduce the names of the characters. In this instance the likeness of Misaubin was so striking that he was recognized by all but apparently Hogarth was questioned as to the identity of his second doctor, for in the second state of the plate he added "Dr. Rock" to a piece of paper on the closestool in the lower right hand corner of the picture. Other than the general statement that he was a notorious quack, facts about Dr. Rock are hard to obtain. According to the *Annual Register* he died in November 1777 at the age of eighty-seven; his span of life, therefore, would be from 1690 to 1777, which would make him a practitioner in his early forties when this picture was published. In 1738 Hogarth put Dr. Rock in "Morning," Plate I of *The Four Times of the Day,* in which according to his custom he is standing in Covent Garden market beside his sign-board to sell his medicines to such as would buy. That he was still busy and notorious in 1760 is evidenced by the description of him which Oliver Goldsmith wrote in *The Citizen of the World:*

> The first upon the list of glory is Doctor Richard Rock, F.U.N. This great man, short of stature, is fat, and waddles as he walks. He always wears a white three-tailed wig nicely combed, and frizzed upon each cheek; sometimes he carries a cane, but an hat never. It is indeed very remarkable, that this extraordinary personage should never wear an hat; but so it is, he never wears an hat. He is usually drawn at the top of his own bills, sitting in his armchair, holding a little bottle between his finger and thumb, and surrounded with rotten teeth, nippers, pills, packets, and gallipots. No man can promise fairer nor better than he; for, as he observes, "Be your disorder never so far gone, be under no uneasiness, make yourself quite easy: I can cure you."[2]

Such were the two quacks who attended the dying harlot and from whom she obtained no help. Being quacks they were more interested in their own reputations and medicines than they were in their patients. But to the harlot it made no difference; even without their medicines she died.

The next plate in which Hogarth portrayed doctors was *The Company of Undertakers* or, as it is often titled *A Consultation of Physicians* (See Fig. 2), which was published on March 3, 1736. In view of the fact that many of the persons depicted were alive and known, one wonders what moved the artist to make this curious coat of arms. Because no data have come to us, I make the conjecture that the plate was issued as part of the political opposition to the King and Sir Robert Walpole, a conjecture which is based upon the identification of the three figures at the top. The traditional identification has been that the figure on the left with one eye partly closed is Chevalier John Taylor, oculist; that on

FIG. 2. The Company of Undertakers.

the right, Joshua (Spot) Ward; and the one in the center, Mrs. Sally Mapp. There is no difficulty over Taylor and Ward, but although much has been written about her in the commentaries, the central figure is not in my estimation Mrs. Mapp, the notorious bonesetter. The date, "Publish'd by W. Hogarth March the 3rd 1736," rules her out, for she did not become known in London until July of that year. "But the Attention of the Publick has been a little taken off from the Wonder-working Mr. *Ward,* to a strolling woman, now at *Epsom,* who calls her self *Crazy Sally;* and had perform'd Cures in Bone-setting to Admiration, and occasion'd so great a Resort, that the Town offer'd her 100 Guineas to continue there a Year."[3] Throughout the rest of the year there are

frequent references to her, verses which link her with Taylor and Ward, and an account of a visit by the three of them to the playhouse in Lincoln Inn Fields in October. By that time, in her chariot with four horses, she was visiting London once a week to perform her cures at the Grecian Coffee-house. But all of this, including the association of the three, occurred after the plate was published.

The identification of this person as Mrs. Mapp ignores two statements. In 1791 John Ireland, after attributing the figure to Mrs. Mapp, added a footnote: "I have heard it suggested that this harlequin figure, received as *Mrs. Mapp,* was really intended for *Sir Hans Sloane.*"[4] In the descriptive matter preceding the reproduction of Hogarth's plates in 1822, John Nicholas, F.S.A., having described Mrs. Mapp, stated: "It may be proper, however, to add that this Harlequin figure has been supposed to be intended for Sir Hans Sloane."[5] These suggestions merit investigation. Moreover, in the heraldic description which he engraved below the so-called coat of arms, Hogarth used the masculine gender in describing this figure.

> Beareth Sable, an Urinal proper, between 12 Quack-Heads of the Second & 12 Cane Heads OR, Consultant. On a Chief Nebulae, Erimine, One Compleat Doctor issuant, checkie sustaining in his Right Hand a Baton of the Second. On his Dexter & Sinister sides two Demi-Doctors, issuant of the Second, & two Cane Heads issuant of the third; The first having One Eye conchant, towards the Dexter Side of the Escocheon; the second Faced per pale proper & Gules, Guardent. With this Motto—
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> Et Plurima Mortis Imago.[6]

Commentators have tried to surmount this evident masculine attribution by stressing the tradition that Mrs. Mapp was a masculine type of woman who was able to accomplish her cures because of her strength. In view of the fact that throughout his works Hogarth makes very evident just who the person is whom he is satirizing, it seems to me hardly likely that he would have tried to cover his portrayal of Mrs. Mapp by using the masculine gender. A comparison between the portrait of Sir Hans Sloane painted by Stephen Slaughter in 1736,[7] now in the national Portrait Gallery, and Hogarth's caricature is uncertain evidence, for because of the caricature one is likely to see resemblances to fit his own interpretation.

The question that remains to be answered is, why should Hogarth attack so viciously a physician of the standing of Sir Hans Sloane? I believe the answer is to be found in the politics of the day. The scanty lives of Hogarth are of little help here but much can be drawn by inference from his well known close association with Henry Fielding. The political situation was that of the King and Walpole under continual attack by the Opposition or Country Party, who used the Prince

of Wales as their figurehead. Fielding was in the ranks of the Opposition. In *Don Quixote in England* (1734) he had attacked the ruling party and two days after the publication of Hogarth's print, he resumed his attack in his highly successful *Pasquin. A Dramatic Satire of the Times.* One month later Hogarth drew the benefit ticket for James Roberts who took the part of Trapwit in *Pasquin.* On the basis of this association with Fielding I believe I am safe in stating that Hogarth's politics were those of the Opposition.

This belief is borne out by the three figures at the top of the plate. In 1727 Sir Hans Sloane was appointed first physician to George II; that fact alone would be sufficient for making him the central figure and furnishing him with a baton. (The baton may also have reference to the fact that he was president of the College of Physicians from 1719 until October 1735.) Chevalier Taylor had returned to London in 1735 and was appointed oculist to the King in 1736. "Spot" Ward, though notorious as a quack, had been granted by George II an apartment in the almonry office at Whitehall, where, at the king's expense he maintained a dispensary for the poor. Thus the three doctors who are "on a chief," that is, in the most important position, are persons who were closely associated with the king and would for this reason alone be proper objects of satire by the Opposition. Although a physician of repute, Sloane was not safe from political attacks, a condition which was common to all men at that time, for political feeling ran high.

John Taylor, commonly known as Chevalier Taylor, who lived from 1703 to 1772, was trained under Dr. William Cheselden and was a person of some ability. His methods of advertising, his orations on his cures, and his claims to learning far beyond that of his contemporaries brought upon him the ridicule of society and caused him to be classified with the quacks. Samuel Johnson said of him, "Taylor was the most ignorant man I ever knew; but sprightly"; and to this remark Beauclerk added his recollection of a statement Johnson had made some time before: "I remember, Sir, you said Taylor was an instance how far impudence could carry ignorance."[8] Hogarth, who makes his identification positive by the eye in the head of the case and the drooping eyelid on the face, was justified in making him one of the trinity who look down upon the rest.

Joshua Ward, who is easily known from the birthmark on his face, which Hogarth has emphasized by making it cover one-half of his face, was easily the number one quack of his generation. "Spot" Ward, born probably in London in 1685, began life as a drysalter, spent the years 1717 to 1733 in France for causes that are not wholly clear, and returned to England to become one of its most controversial figures until his death in 1761. That he had no doubts about his own worth was indicated by his will in which he requested that he should be

buried in front of the altar in Westminster Abbey, or "as near to the altar as might be." Of medical training he had none; nevertheless, in France he developed a practice among the English at Dunkirk and became famous for his "drop and pill" with which he claimed to be able to cure all human ills. On his return to England, he gained the patronage of the king and became almost immediately the center of controversy because of his claims for his medicine; the papers of 1734 and 1735, the years preceding this print, are full of controversy over Ward's claims. The following paragraph from an essay "Of Quack Doctors" in the *Grubstreet Journal*[9] is typical:

> I shall only add, that altho' I think you have done well in exposing Mr. Ward's Malpractice, yet take care he don't sue you for *Scandalum Quackatum;* and conclude with this Advice to all who are inclined to take this old new revived Remedy.
>
> Before you take his *Drop* or *Pill,*
> Take leave of Friends, and make your Will.

Knowing that Ward had had no medical training, one wonders how he justified his practice of medicine. At least one answer is to be found in a pamphlet published in 1749, the long title page of which begins, *An Enquiry into Dr. Ward's Practice of Physick. And, His Practice Fairly Stated.*[10] The pamphlet is anonymous, but if Ward did not write it, he must have stood at the elbow of the author and supervised its composition. The following section is sufficient for our purpose.

> The MANY YEARS *Successful Practice* Dr. *Ward* has NOW Had, Makes him A *Physician* from EXPERIENCE.
>
> And, Such a *Physician,* is the *Best* of *Physicians.*
>
> Nay, The Experience that Dr. *Ward* has NOW had, being not only a great Deal Above *Twenty Years,* but from the *Many Thousands* he has Cured, who Otherwise in all Probability would Never have been Cured At All, makes him a Physician of Perhaps the LARGEST *Experience* of ANY Now in *Practice.*
>
> And, Still Testimonies of this, Daily More, and More Appear, by the *Crowds,* that are so *Constantly* Relieved by him, ALL which, most Justly, Gives him the Character, of
>
> *A Physician of the Largest, and most Extensive Experience of Any Physician* NOW *in being.*
>
> *Nascitur Poeta, Fit Rhetor.*
>
> It plainly appears, that Dr. *Ward* has NATURALLY a Turn, & Genius, to Physick, Which ALL the Schools in the World might not have Given him; And where a Person's *Natural Genius,* turns to a thing, they Excell.

As usual there were many who believed that Ward through his experience knew more than the regular practitioners but there were others who deeply resented his use of the public for his own purposes and

protested against his pretentions. Hogarth had no doubts about Ward's inadequacy.

A word should be said about the twelve physicians who, inhaling the fumes of the "vinegar of the four thieves" contained in the heads of their canes, are meditating upon the contents of a urinal. They are all caricatures of contemporaries but at this distance none of them can be identified. Two are known to have been Dr. Pierce Dod (1683-1754), who was noted for his opposition to innoculation for the prevention of small-pox, and Dr. Bamber, who according to Ireland was an anatomist of note. Perhaps Hogarth put him into this collection of physicians for the reason that on February 11, 1731, he resigned as lithotomist of St. Bartholomew's Hospital because the Board of Governors of the hospital would not elect his son-in-law to be his assistant.[11] On the slender basis of the knowledge that these two men are in the group, the conjecture may be hazarded that the physicians caricatured, although men in good standing, were in some way or other at odds with their brethren.

The motto "Et plurima mortis imago" may be Englished thus: "And the manifold image of death." This with the title "The Company of Undertakers" is indicative of Hogarth's attitude toward the whole group: death is the ultimate result of their ministrations. Whether all of the persons in the picture deserved such sweeping condemnation is doubtful, for Hogarth, like most satirists, cut a wide swath to be sure that his effect would not be lost.

Except for the insertion of Dr. Rock into the first plate of *The Four Times of the Day* Hogarth did not introduce medical men into his pictures until 1745 when he published his satire on upper class marriages in the series of six pictures entitled, *Marriage A-la-Mode*. In plate one, the marriage contract between the Right Honourable Lord Viscount Squanderfield and the daughter of a wealthy merchant of the city is negotiated; in the second plate, the unhappy and boring social life of the two, each going his own way, is depicted; in plate three, the young Viscount visits a quack doctor; in plate four, Lady Squanderfield holds a levee during her toilet and converses with Counselor Silvertongue; in the fifth plate, at the Turk's Head Bagnio Counselor Silvertongue, after having fatally wounded the Viscount, is escaping through a window, while Lady Squanderfield is on her knees before her dying husband; and in the final plate, the widow, having returned to her father's home in the City, dies from an overdose of laudanum. Such was the end of a marriage whose sole basis was that of money for social position.

Plate III, "The Scene at the Quack Doctor's Office" (See Fig. 3), is the one with which this paper is concerned. As a rule Hogarth's plates are perfectly clear as to their general intent, but this one, in spite of all of the thought that has been put upon it, remains obscure. That the

FIG. 3. The Scene at the Quack-Doctor's Office.

young Viscount, while his wife is doing the world of society, is spending his time with women of no reputation is obvious enough; but beyond that the action depicted is not so clear. The most generally received interpretation is that the Viscount has been deceived as to the health of the girl and has brought her to the quack who claimed to have cured her. Both he and she have boxes of the quack's pills. The Viscount apparently is threatening the quack, who is rather nonchalant about the whole business, but the woman, who may be a procuress and is in some way associated with either the girl or the quack, is opening her clasp-knife in preparation for the fray if there to be one. I judge the dispute was settled without physical violence, for when he is killed in Plate V, the Viscount is intact and unscarred. Fortunately, the interpretation of the picture is not wholly essential for this article.

The office which Hogarth has drawn for us contains an amazing collection of utensils, exhibits, and drugs. It reminds one of certain

physicians today who seek to impress their patients with the many machines and instruments they possess; our quack, however, was denied the benefit of chrome plating. And what a man he is! Rouquet, who knew Hogarth well described this quack thus: "Recently a barber, he is today, if one may judge by the display, not only a surgeon, but also a naturalist, chemist, mechanic, physician, and apothecary."[12] He is, moreover, as Roquet recognizes, a Frenchman, a fact which Hogarth intended to be known from the French book in the lower left hand corner of the plate.

So closely does the office follow Dr. Samuel Garth's description of a quack's office in *The Dispensary,* that one wonders if Hogarth may not have had the lines in mind when he drew his picture. This poem, first published in 1699, was completely developed by its author in the edition of 1706, and was popular through the eighteenth century. There had been an edition as recently as 1741. The most apposite lines are these:

> Long has he been of that amphibious fry,
> Bold to prescribe, and busy to apply.
> His shop the gazing vulgar's eyes employs
> With foreign trinkets, and domestic toys.
> Here mummies lay most reverendly stale;
> And there the tortoise hung her coat of mail;
> Not far from some huge shark's devouring head
> The flying fish their finny pinions spread;
> Aloft in rows large poppy heads were strung,
> And near, a scaly alligator hung;
> In this place, drugs in musty heaps decay'd;
> In that, dry'd bladders and drawn teeth were laid.[13]

Whereas in the eighteenth century medical men were either apothecaries, physicians, or surgeons, Hogarth has made his quack all three and thus satirically has given him a spread of knowledge which surpassed that of any of his contemporaries. That his man of all work was also a Frenchman was in accord with the common English hatred of the French. Samuel Johnson in *London* (1738) in writing of the French voiced the popular feeling:

> Obsequious, artful, voluble, and gay,
> On Britain's fond credulity they prey.
> No gainful trade their industry can 'scape,
> They sing, they dance, clean shoes, or cure a clap;
> All sciences a fasting monsieur knows,
> And, bid him go to hell, to hell he goes.[14]

"To cure a clap" fits perfectly Hogarth's quack French doctor. Moreover, although the meaning of the picture is somewhat obscure, there is

no doubt about the artist's intent to show that the quack's medicine has been inefficacious. Once again, therefore, Hogarth has leveled his arrows against quackery.

The last plate in which Hogarth dealt with the medical world, was the fourth of *The Four Stages of Cruelty,* published in 1751. This series, published cheaply so that all who would could buy, portrayed the history of Tom Nero: in plate one, he is a cruel boy torturing animals; in the second plate, he is beating his starved horse which had fallen and broken its leg; in plate three, he has just murdered a servant girl and is being arrested; and in the fourth and last plate, his body, being that of a hanged felon, is being dissected in Surgeon's Hall. As a story Hogarth's series breaks down in that Tom Nero's torturing animals and beating a horse does not logically lead to murder. The whole series is executed with such stark realism that it is revolting to sensitive minds and natures; it must be remembered, however, that it was not too tough meat for the class of persons for whom it was intended.

The title of the plate, "The Reward of Cruelty" (See Fig. 4), must be kept in mind, for Hogarth has made the dissection as gruesome as possible as a deterrent to evil-doers. He is not attacking dissection as such. The skeletons in the niches on the walls are those of James Field, a noted pugilist, and Jame MacClaine, a gentleman highwayman, both of whom had recently been hanged. Like the body on the table, they are also a warning to those who might follow their path. The verses which Hogarth engraved below the picture emphasize the moral.

Behold the Villian's dire disgrace,
Not Death itself can end.
He finds no peaceful Burial-Place,
His breathless Corse, no friend.

Torn from the Root, that wicked Tongue,
Which daily swore and curst!
Those Eyeballs, from their Sockets wrung,
That glow'd with lawless Lust!

His Heart, expos'd to prying Eyes,
To Pity has no Claim;
But, dreadful! from his Bone shall rise,
His Monument of Shame.

The dissection was under the direction of the newly established Surgeons Company. In 1540 the Barbers Company and the Fellowship of Surgeons were united by an Act of Parliament into the United Company of Barbers and of Surgeons. This company led an uneasy existence, for its membership was too varied for unity and its standards were low. In 1745 the Surgeons Company was established and the bar-

FIG. 4. The Reward of Cruelty.

bers were left to their trade. Because the new company undertook the teaching of surgery, Hogarth used its lecture room as the scene for his print and placed the president in the chair to direct the proceedings. The president at this time was John Freke (1688-1756), an able man who was surgeon of St. Bartholomew's Hospital from 1729 to 1755. Thus except for the exaggeration in the treatment of the body and the introduction of the kettle boiling the bones, which would be done elsewhere, the whole performance is being properly conducted. How many men Hogarth succeeded in keeping from turning highwayman cannot be determined, but I do know that the modern reader is inclined to turn away from the picture before he has studied the details which

emphasize the purpose. In this instance the moral Hogarth preached too hard.

The pictures which have been discussed in this paper show very clearly that Hogarth joined with the better minds of his day in attacking quack doctors and their nostrums. His efforts were rewarded by no particular tightening of standards or the passing of regulatory laws, yet they were a part of the movement of his century which saw the gradual advancement of knowledge and the increase of proper regulation. He has a place in the development of an intelligent public which is so necessary for the proper support and encouragement of the medical profession.

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9. Quoted from the *Grubstreet Journal,* No. 29, January 9, 1735, in *The Gentleman's Magazine,* Vol. V, p. 11 (January 1735).
10. The full title page of this rare pamphlet, which is in the Army Medical Library, is this: *An Enquiry into Dr. Ward's Practice of Physick. And, His Practice Fairly Stated. With an Examination into the Origin, and Meaning of the Words Empiricism, Empirick, Quack-Doctor, and Quack. And, An Exact Account of the Present State of Physick, as it is Now At This Present Time, Practised by Apothecaries, Empiricks, Quack-Doctors, and Quacks. Distinctly Shewing, which of the Present Practitioners in Physick, Now At This Time, In, and About London, and throughout the Kingdom, are Quack-Doctors, and Quacks? And Which, are Not? With Pope Leo's Opinion of A Quack. Sit mihi fas Audita Loqui. Verg.* London: Printed for J. Humphrey, a Pamphlet-Shop, Next to the Artichoke, near Great Turn-Stile, in Holborn, 1749. [Price Six Pence.] The quotation is from pages 5 and 6.
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