

## Choice 22

### Lord George Gordon at Newgate by Richard Newton

After twenty years of editing the Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence it was clear we needed a collection of eighteenth-century satirical prints and drawings. Their artists are the photographers of the time who show us its streets and rooms and the tacit assumptions of everyday life. I said to Annie Burr, "Study of satirical prints and drawings is a virtually unexplored continent and our print room could be its capital."

In 1953 Dick Kimball divided our squash court with a floor; the lower room, which is below grade, contains stacks for 10,000 books; the upper room has stacks for 4000 books, cases for 20,000 prints, and roller shelves for our Hogarth and Bunbury collections of prints and drawings. The old squash court gallery acquired a sink and a thymol cabinet made by the Yale Art Gallery in which prints and books are placed to kill the destructive mold on paper. The end wall of the upper room is almost covered by an oil conversation piece, Thomas Patch's "The Golden Asses," the name of a dining club in Florence that met in the 1760s with the British minister, Sir Horace Mann, Walpole's chief correspondent. Its name came from Machiavelli who 200 years earlier called the visiting English "The Golden Asses" because they were so rich, confident, and ignorant, an insult that delighted their elegant successors. In the picture, which is dated 1761, the members are seated at supper tables or are standing and talking with the self-assurance that fascinated Patch. Mann is standing at the left with the Duke of Roxburghe. Patch, who always included himself in his conversation pieces, is to the far right, astride a golden ass on a pedestal with Machiavelli's remarks engraved on it. Patch is holding his pallet and has raised his brush in triumph, but no one is taking any notice of him. Nearly all the sitters in his pictures are in profile except himself and are slightly caricatured if they didn't mind.

We have hung several prints whose figures were identified by Walpole:

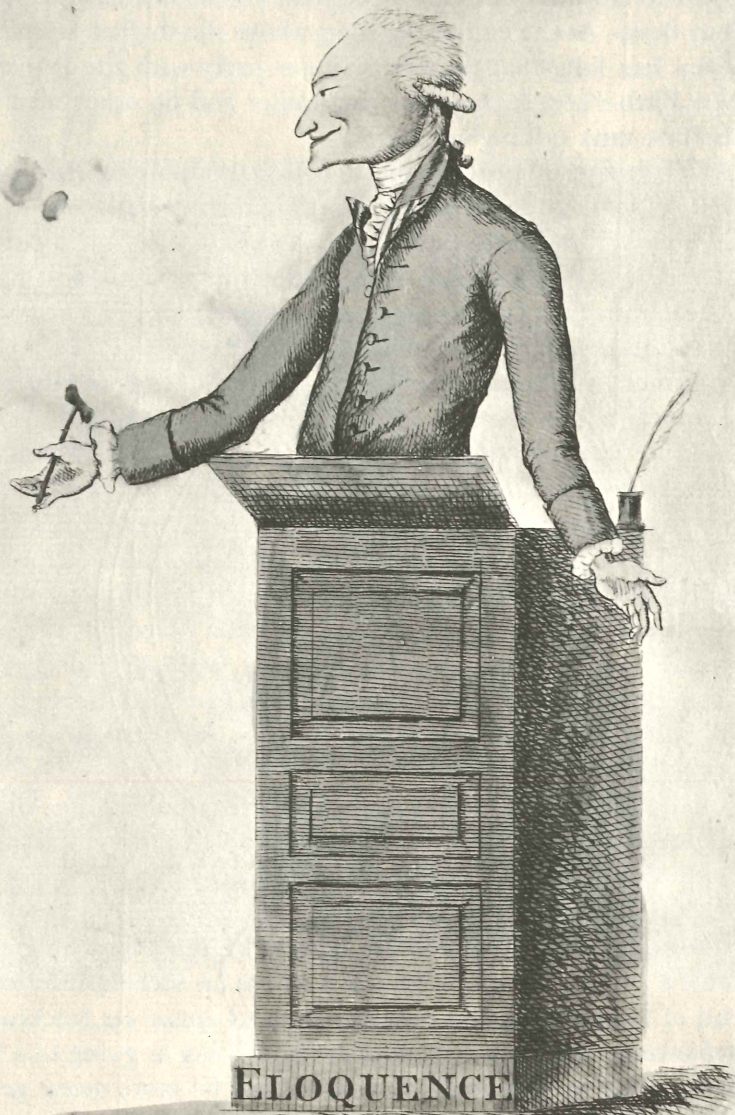
"Eloquence or The King of Epithets" under which Walpole wrote, *Christie, the Auctioneer*, 1782; on Patch's "Sterne and Death" he wrote "Sterne, author of *Tristram Shandy*, done at Florence," and he identified the Prince of Wales upon whose prostrate body the Dukes of Grafton and Richmond are standing while the younger Pitt stands on their shoulders and reaches for the Crown. I regard the print of Christie with special affection. It was given me by Dr Rosenbach when I stayed with him in Philadelphia many years ago. The tour of the house ended in his bedroom which had magnificent iron gates and an enormous bed once the property of a Medici. "Why have you never told me about that?" I asked, pointing to the print of Christie. "Why should I?" Rosenbach answered. "Look at the note on it." Rosenbach did so and burst out, "Any fool can see that's Horace Walpole's handwriting. Here, take it," and he hauled the print off the wall and put it in my hands.

My brother-in-law, Hugh D. Auchincloss, gave to Yale his great collection of nearly 5000 English caricatures for our new print room, and another superb gift of 1700 caricatures was given Yale for us by Augustus P. Loring of Boston. It is the major portion of the collection formed by his grandfather, Alfred Bowditch, who was one of the first in this country to see the importance of eighteenth-century satirical prints. He added learned and beautifully written notes on the mats. Gus Loring, a loyal Harvard man and member of the Walpole Society, gave the collection to Yale for Farmington because he believed that it would be more useful here than elsewhere. No such gift was ever made more generously, for Gus emphasized that the new owners were free to sell or trade any of the prints to strengthen the collection. Walpole's blessing on this gift was revealed when four of the prints turned out to have his annotations. George Suckling, the London printseller, let me have the bulk of his eighteenth-century caricatures. Other consignments of over 1000 prints came from Maggs and The Old Print Shop in New York. These en bloc accessions put us on a par with the British Museum's collection of English satirical prints from 1740 to 1800.

Yale transferred to Farmington the print collection of many thousand portraits, country houses, and views of London that had been given to the University Library by Joseph Verner Reed who applauded the transfer. Identified prints solve many problems. One recognizes quickly the leading politicians of any era, but since eighteenth-century artists did not label their figures, help is needed with the lesser known.

By 1971 it became necessary to add a fourth room to the old squash





## OR THE KING of EPITHETS

*Let me entreat—Ladies—Gentlemen—permit me  
to put this inestimable piece of elegance under your protec-  
tion,—only observe,——The inexhaustible Munificence  
of your superlatively candid Generosity must HARMONIZE  
with the refulgent Brilliancy of this little Jewel!!—T—.)*

*Pub<sup>d</sup> Jan<sup>y</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> 1782 by H. Humphrey N<sup>o</sup> 18 New Bond Street*

*Christie, the auctioneer 1782.*

Christie, the auctioneer.

court to store the files for more than 100,000 cards and provide space for four desks. At the end of the room above the shelves, stretches a print over seven feet long that records a dinner party with the Prince of Wales and Mrs Fitzherbert sitting near each other and 69 other men and women of the first rank talking volubly.

On my first trip to London to collect Walpole in 1925 I bought a book that belonged to Lord George Gordon, the instigator of the 'Gordon Riots' in 1780. The book is *Scotland's Opposition to Popery*, 1780. It is bound in green morocco with gold tooling, front and back. The front cover shows Our Lord, right hand upraised, above a cluster of thistles that surround an inscription "For the Right Honbl Lord Geo. Gordon," which is framed by standards of flags and stacked arms and angels blowing trumpets above them. I bought this book because I remembered how Walpole watched from afar the fires set by the Gordon rioters in East London and how his account of them brought back to me San Francisco burning from the Mission to North Beach on the night of 19 April 1906, as I, aged ten, watched from across the bay. I also liked owning such a beautiful book that had belonged to so celebrated a madman. I met him again in the twenties when Vernon Watney, who lived in Walpole's Berkeley Square house, showed me the iron bars Walpole added to its front door during the Gordon Riots. Subsequently, I rescued the door itself, bars and all, when the house was pulled down in 1937 and it is now in our long hall at Farmington.

In our print room is one of the twenty-six choices the Almighty is allowing me to save, a water-color drawing by Richard Newton of Lord George Gordon entertaining fifteen fellow-political prisoners in his dining-room on "the Master's side" at Newgate Prison where the privileged prisoners had their private quarters. He is wearing the beard he grew after he became a Jew and is seated on a dais above his socially inferior guests at one end of the table. He and all but three of them are smoking clay pipes, a defiance of contemporary manners as striking as going to a formal dinner-party today in blue jeans. You could not be more *avant garde* than Lord George Gordon and his friends.

Most librarians in 1929 believed that the place for prints and drawings was in a museum, not a library; nor did many scholars, other than art historians, pay serious attention to them. In 1929 R. W. Chapman of Oxford stared with disgust at our drawing of Lord George. "Why," he asked, "did you buy that *horrible* thing?" It is different today. When Andrew Wilton, then of the British Museum and now at Yale, saw the drawing he





Lord George Gordon at Newgate by Richard Newton.

burst out, "Why, that's a *Newton!*" And when Charles Montgomery, Curator of the Garvan and Related Collections of American Art at Yale, saw it he was astonished that it had so many Windsor chairs with such curious stretchers and induced the Registrar of Winterthur Museum, who was writing on Windsor chairs, to make a trip to Farmington to see them. Prints and drawings are documents that have messages for those who can read them.

A portrait by Nathaniel Hone in the English National Portrait Gallery introduced me to the study of pictures. The Hone was labelled, "Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford, Historian of English Painting and Author of a considerable correspondence." At lunch one day in the thirties I asked Henry Hake, the Director of the Gallery, "Why do you think the sitter in your Hone is Horace Walpole?" He was staggered. "Good God! don't you think he is?" and then he asked me who I thought he was? "Just a nasty little man with a bad cold." Hake looked grave. "We must have an inquest," he announced.

The inquest was held in the cellar of the Gallery. The jury were Hake, Kingsley Adams, the Assistant Director, and myself. I was installed in a great chair before a screen round which curious visitors to the Gallery peered. The questioned picture was flanked on the screen by Eccardt's and George Dance's portraits of Walpole, both unquestionably "right." Hake, magisterial in a wing collar and black tie, presided at the left of the screen. We began. When and how had the picture come to the Gallery? By purchase, Adams reported, at the sale of Lord James Stuart's pictures in 1865. This was a point in my favor since a portrait of Horace Walpole was the last thing a Stuart would have owned. How old was the sitter? Not over thirty, we thought. When was he painted? Hake and Adams agreed that it must have been after 1760 when rolled collars came in. Thirty from 1760 is 1730 and our Horace Walpole was born in 1717. Hake asked when I thought the Eccardt of Walpole was painted. I guessed 1754 or 1755 because Strawberry Hill appears in the background with its Refectory and Library, which were finished in 1754. I asked if they had looked at the back of the picture: "No, why should we?" "Because I think you'll find Walpole dated it." The picture was brought down and Walpole had written on the back,

*Horace Walpole*  
*youngest son of Sir R. Walpole*  
*by Eckardt*  
1754.



We returned to the questioned portrait. I guessed it was Walpole's first cousin, Horace Walpole, the eldest son of "Old" Horace for whom our Horace was named and for whom the extinct Earldom of Orford was revived after our Horace's death; that is, the two men had the same name and title. Adams produced a mezzotint of Cousin Horace in old age from a portrait by the excellent Norfolk painter Henry Walton that he and Hake agreed was the man Hone had painted years earlier. The Hone was carried away in disgrace and the postcards of it were removed from public sale. "Where," I asked, "is the original of Walton's portrait?" "That," Hake replied, "is for you to discover." I did so ten years later in the dining-room of the American Embassy at Canberra. Like the Gallery's Hone it was labelled, "Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford," which was correct so far as it went. When our Ambassador in Canberra learned that the sitter was not the letter-writer, but his undistinguished cousin, he let the picture recross the Pacific to Farmington where it hangs in our New Library next to cousin Horace's father, "Old" Horace Walpole by Jean Baptiste Vanloo.

Shortly after the inquest Hake asked me to join him and Adams in making an iconography of Walpole. When I protested my ignorance he waved it away, "Adams and I'll take care of all the technical business," he said, "but we can't do Horace Walpole without you." So I accepted happily. At Farmington we had identified most of Walpole's portraits and their artists and knew when they were painted, but we didn't know when and where they had been sold and resold and to whom and for how much and where and when and by whom they had been exhibited. Nor did we have all the engravings of them.

I asked to see some of the iconographies that the Gallery had done. Hake was embarrassed. "This will be the first."

"But there must be a standard work I can look at?"

Hake brightened up. "There is. It's of your great General George Washington," I nodded knowingly, "by an American, John Hill Morgan."

"Who," I said, "lives a quarter of a mile from us at Farmington, Connecticut, and is with his wife next door to us at Brown's Hotel this minute. Won't you lunch with us tomorrow?" Iconography is a small world, after all. It also takes time, I was to learn. Our iconography of Horace Walpole was delayed by the War, Hake's death, and Adams's succession to him as Director of the Portrait Gallery. It was not until Adams retired that our work appeared in the Walpole Society volume for 1968-1970, thirty years after we began it.

The question of my assistant in our new Print Room was settled quickly

because Annie Burr had proved her flare for iconography as Vice Regent for Connecticut in the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union. She also changed a label in the English National Portrait Gallery itself. The label on their portrait of Bishop Berkeley stated that its background was Bermuda. "But," Annie Burr pointed out, "Bishop Berkeley never got to Bermuda. He stayed at Newport, and that," she added, pointing to a ridge in the background of the picture, "is Paradise Rock there." Later in the summer she photographed Paradise Rock as it appears in the picture and sent it to Hake who gratefully corrected the Gallery's howler. When I talked to Annie Burr about iconography I was talking to one who knew more about it than I did.

Her appointment as Curator of Prints in the Lewis Walpole Library was made by a standing vote of the Yale Corporation, perhaps the only appointment ever so voted in Yale's history. She learned how to catalogue and index our material from Lawrence Wroth of the John Carter Brown Library at Providence who had devised a system for his Library's eighteenth-century prints. Our subject file grew as Annie Burr became more and more informed and she anticipated what the users of the index would be seeking. Three recent queries have been for prints showing corkscrews, candle-snuffers, and country dances, and all three enquirers said they were "overwhelmed" by the number of prints, all new to them, that we produced. The subject file answered a question I was asked at a meeting of the Winterthur Museum Board: Did curtains in colonial America come down to the floor in heaps and piles and mounds of silk as they then did at Winterthur and most American Wings? I doubted that they touched the floor in eighteenth-century England and if that was so they didn't come down to the floor in this country, which followed English fashion. Annie Burr's index answered the question in two minutes when thirty-eight prints between 1712 and 1800 proved that they never touched the floor.

The fears of the time appear in its prints. One was dismemberment of the Empire. An article by Edwin Wolf 2d in the *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* that marks the 250th anniversary of Benjamin Franklin's birth shows that the well-known print, "Magna Britannia her Colonies Reduc'd," was instigated by Franklin to encourage the repeal of the Stamp Act. In the print Britannia is leaning against a world globe; her spear and shield lie beside her, quite useless because her arms and legs, labelled "Virginia," "Pennsylvania," "New York," and "New England," have been chopped off. Her expression is understandably wan. The British navy is beached in the distance; the British oak in the foreground has lost



its leaves. Over the globe and Britannia is a ribbon inscribed "DATE OBOLUM BELISARIO." A lengthy EXPLANATION points out that the valiant Belisarius who saved Rome under Justinian was mutilated by that ungrateful Emperor and forced to beg, "Give Belisarius a penny." The Explanation is followed by a MORAL that leaves nothing to the imagination. When I took this to our print room, an earlier dismembered Britannia just happened to be lying on a table. In it her arms, labelled "Cape Breton" and "Gibraltar," are lying on the floor and she is being disemboweled for good measure. Annie Burr found still another print in which the British lion has lost a paw, "Minorca," and is about to lose two others, "Nova Scotia" and "Oswego." Franklin's print attacking the Stamp Act by showing Britannia dismembered preyed on the fear Englishmen had of losing their Empire.

In the four years left Annie Burr to work on her index she made upwards of 12,000 cards, adding to them whenever she could right up to the end. She used to wonder if anyone would ever use them, but we have had many visitors, some as far from Farmington as Peru, Ceylon, and South Korea. The subjects of the prints range from "Abolition of slave trade" to "Zoo." Annie Burr laid out a six-lane highway straight across the vast and relatively unexplored continent that will be travelled as long as the Lewis Walpole Library exists. Her work has been carried on by devoted people who have developed it to a point that is not, so far as I know, duplicated elsewhere. We have over 60,000 cards for the collection of satires and 50,000 for our "straight" portraits. Each satire has at least six cards for its date, title, persons shown in it, artist and engraver, printer and publisher, and subject. The largest number of cards for a single print is 43.

To help scholars explore the virtually unknown continent of English eighteenth-century satires, we shall reproduce photographically the 1200 in our library from 1740-1800 that are not described in the British Museum's *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires*. We shall then avoid the costly drudgery of writing descriptions that inevitably overlook details of interest to specialists—such as the Windsor chairs at Lord George Gordon's dinner-party. I believe the twenty-first century will find our print room the busiest part of the Library, that more rooms will have been added to it, and that its contents will continue to be studied by visitors from all over the world.