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Gerard Dou (1613-1675)

GERARD (or Gerrit) Dou's (1613-1675) name appears twice within the Robert McDougall Art Gallery collection. I should like to begin by briefly mentioning the lesser of the two works, that attributed to the 'School of Dou'.

Comparison of this work, *Cottage Interior with Kitchen Maid* (cat. 69/258) with *The Physician* (cat. 69/292) must leave the observer uneasy; all the more obvious characteristics of Dou's art which appear in the latter are lacking in the former. It is not my intention here to consider the *Cottage Interior* . . . at length—it is sufficient alone to suggest an area worthy of close consideration when attempting to establish the provenance of the work. Genre works prominently featuring fish, meat and vegetables, as this painting does, have an unbroken history in the Southern Netherlands, or Flanders, from the time of Pieter Aertsen (1509-75) and his nephew Joachim Bueckelaer (c. 1503-73) up until the end of the seventeenth, or the beginning of the eighteenth century. In Holland only one painter, Cornelis van Haarlem (1562-1638), pursued this predominantly Flemish (as we may justifiably say) sub-genre of painting.

As I shortly will go on to discuss, Dou led a school of painters whose work is characterized by the detail and glass-like surface found in *The Physician*. The execution of the *Cottage Interior* . . . is entirely different—the manner and subject tend to be Flemish. Whilst not wishing to become involved in an attribution for this work I would suggest that a painter such as Pieter Angillis (c. 1685-1734), born in Dunkirk, trained in Flanders, and active in England between 1712 and 1728, might be very much closer than the present 'School of Dou'.

Dou became the leader of the Leiden school of painting after Rembrandt's departure from the city, and was the supreme exponent amongst that group of painters called the *fijnschilders* or *feinmalers*. The *feinmalers'* work is characterized by an immaculately smooth shiny surface and minute detail, qualities initiated in Leiden by Dou. It is tempting to consider that the early predilection he showed for this surface may have had its origins in his initial apprenticeship to his father, a glass-maker and engraver, and his membership between 1625 and 1627 of the Leiden glaziers' guild. Certainly his 'style' appealed to the contemporary

public. He developed an international reputation, became in his lifetime one of the most highly paid artists, and became avidly collected (and imitated) throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries up until circa 1860, when taste, under Impressionist influence, began to swing away from his immaculate surfaces.¹

The Physician incorporates features other than the surface and miniscule detail—themselves difficult enough to imitate—which persuade me to support the attribution to Dou. The painting is signed, and although the presence of a signature is not in itself an official guarantee of genuineness, it does include the monogrammatic G.D. and latinized spelling, DOV, most frequently used by Dou. The face of the Physician, with its young Rembrandtesque features, may be found in a number of Dou's works. The cap he is wearing is identical to that worn by the principle subject of a Dou work of 1652, *The Quack Doctor*, in the collection of Museum Boymans-van Beuningen in Rotterdam.

The Physician is also dated, although only partially legible. Close examination of the date suggests to me 1653 which would place the work chronologically amongst works, including *The Quack Doctor*, with which it shares a general stylistic affinity. The head-dress of the woman with the basket, together with her dress and smock, are again identical to that of a principle foreground figure, a farmer's wife in *The Quack Doctor*. Further both paintings feature, on a draped oriental carpet, a shallow copper bowl with circular handle and semi-circular scallop out of the rim. Indeed this very same bowl features prominently in another Dou work, *The Dentist*, this time in the Gemäldegalerie in Dresden.

Dou had an inclination to frequently use an arched top in his paintings: sometimes this would take the form of an arched-top-shaped canvas as we find with *The Quack Doctor*, othertimes as in *The Dentist*, *A Woman Watering Plants* (Buckingham Palace), *A Servant Girl at a Window* (Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam), and *The Physician*, the composition is placed within a *trompe l'oeil* painted arch. Invariably, in the latter category of paintings, he used objects placed on or over portions of the arch to lessen the severity of its line, and to assist in the illusion of

space. Herein a pattern can be detected.

At the point in *The Physician* where the carpet is draped over the sill, we find in *A Servant Girl at a Window*, a piece of coarse hessian-like cloth very similarly arranged. In *The Dentist* we find, as I have mentioned, the same bowl, but this time placed on a diploma with large seal folding over the sill at the same point. Next to the diploma a pair of bellows extend towards us from the surface plane of the arch. The *Servant Girl* . . . , and *The Dentist* both employ a background curtain of the same type as the blue curtain behind the *Physician*. In the former two works the curtain is supported on a rod with curtain rings but the support in *The Physician* is lost in the darkness filling the upper portion of the arch. In both *The Dentist* and *The Physician* this curtain is carried to, and extends over, the inner surface of the right side of the arch. Whilst this does not occur in the *Servant Girl*, the line of the arch is broken at that exact same point—this time by a bird cage. We find, in fact, that Dou's interruption of the arch line in *The Physician* is part of a fairly standard compositional scheme, examples of the utilisation of which are by no means difficult to find. Incidentally if we examine the arch itself we find that the profile of the inner front edge is the same in all examples mentioned.

Another interesting connection between *The Physician* and the *Servant Girl at a Window* is provided by the grisaille relief underneath the sill in both examples. Both reliefs occupy a long rectangular area the width of the inner dimension of the arch, and both feature putti. Whilst the activities of the putti are different in the two paintings, there is one extraordinary parallel. The putto in the curious 'climbing' position at the left extremity, is repeated exactly in the Rotterdam picture, where he occupies the very same position. The careful observer will also note in *The Physician* example that the relief edge immediately to the left of this putto shows a chip in the stone. The Rotterdam picture shows the same chip, only this time fractionally higher, occurring at the putto's shoulder level.

Finally the Dou masterpiece, long an honour exhibit at the Louvre, Paris, now unjustly chased from its pre-eminent position by late 19th and 20th century distaste for the techniques of painters such as the *Feinmalers*, offers us two more interesting contacts with the McDougall piece. Central to the theme of this painting entitled (it is now considered erroneously) *The Dropsey Woman*, is the *Physician* examining the urinal. The reader will

note the general similarity, but if he compares the posture, and particularly the fingers and hands the same delicacy of conception, drawing and execution will be striking. The clothing, down to the knotted sash around the *Physician's* midriff, are very similar if not identical in all respects. Lastly the strange flask with metal top incorporating a ring, and relief masks boldly displayed on the body of the vessel, is to be found in the even more strange container in the bottom right of the Louvre piece.

From the beginning of his career Dou was particularly fond of still-life accessories in his genre works, affording them careful attention and rendering them meticulously to the point of over emphasis. A work such as *The Physician* may be read at more than one level, and, indeed, was intended to be, for neither Dou nor his 17th century public would have accepted the, largely still current, superficial theory that these paintings are collections of mere anecdote and detail. Already by 1719 the 'symbolism' of Dou's work was largely lost; Arnold Houbraken, painter, biographer of painters, and author of two emblem books could write that Dou's mind, 'zig in de laagte (had) gehouden', (had remained amongst the lower (intellectual) strata).

Such an opinion was to remain current for two and a half centuries, and only recently have scholars turned their attention to the task of 'deciphering' a number of paintings by the artist. In Dou's works accessories (on which he obviously has lavished considerable attention), assume positions of importance, whilst the reason for their inclusion, if their symbolism is not understood, is frequently far from clear. An appreciation of the symbolism of these objects adds immeasurably to our understanding of the subject and enjoyment of the work.

In 1531 the Italian, Andrea Alciati, published his book *Emblematum liber* in Augsburg. It was a collection of 98 emblems² and met instant popularity, being reprinted a total of 150 times between its original appearance and the eighteenth century. The genre found a particularly enthusiastic public in the Netherlands, where, in the same period, 250 emblem books were published, of which 168 were from the seventeenth century. It might not be too facetious to consider *emblemata* the comic strip of the contemporary intellectual circles. So great was its influence that the subject is inescapable to the student of Dutch seventeenth century literature and art. We of the twentieth century, accustomed to an art in which subject tends to occupy a sub-

servient role (l'art pour l'art) are inclined to underestimate the importance of meaning to a public familiar with the literary—visual-riddle symbolism of *emblemata*.

In 1614 the first emblem book, *Sinnepoppen*, by the Amsterdam merchant and man of letters, Roemer Visscher, was published in that city. Visscher, Jacob Cats, Ian van der Veen and others with their new genre were to assume an unshakable place in seventeenth century Dutch culture. Works by Dou demonstrate that he was intimately familiar with *emblemata*, and that in common with so many of his colleagues, *emblemata* offers the key to deciphering his (sometimes sly) message. Of course Dou's activity at Leiden, the stimulating university town, could hardly have helped but bring the artist into immediate and intimate contact with the new mode of the intellectual coterie.

Familiarity with some of the more popular emblem conceits can aid us in reaching an understanding of the subject of *The Physician*. The central figure, from which the painting derives its name, we see holding a flask up to the light and examining the contents. In fact we know that the activity here depicted is an examination of urine.³ Dou has chosen the same subject for a number of works, and it would appear from the frequency with which we come across examples of its use by Dou, Godfried Schalcken, Samuel van Hoogstraten, Caspar Netscher, Gabriël Metsu, Frans van Mieris, etc., that we have to do with a reasonably popular seventeenth century Dutch theme. Of course examination of urine was a useful diagnostic technique for all manner of ailments—in painting it was frequently used in combination with subtle suggestions scattered throughout the composition to suggest, often in a piquant context, *febris amatoria* (love fever)!

I believe that such is not far removed from our theme. Knowing that the examination is of urine, and knowing that urine examination is central to establishing pregnancy, sets us on the road to discovery of the implication of the other elements of the composition. Godfried Schalcken, (1643-1706) a pupil of Dou, and specialist of candle-light subjects, has in fact painted the same subject as part of a tongue-in-cheek allegory on the richness of virtue, and included in the urinal a miniature baby.⁴

Almost obscured by the darkness of the area behind the Physician figure we may observe a hanging parrot's cage. Similar cages appear frequently in Dutch seventeenth century art and

although its symbolism is not always clear, we do find that in the arts of the emblem and painting, it generally possessed three different meanings: the first was social, the man seeking honour must undergo punishment; the second religious, the Christian is only really free when in God's captivity. It is the third, the amorous meaning, which I believe concerns us in *The Physician*. The cage appears in Jacob Cat's, *Silenus Alcibiadis, sive Proteus* (Amsterdam 1622) under the motto 'Amissa Libertate Laetior': 'Happiness through slavery', and has included in the verse the statement that the imprisonment of love brings with it great joy.

Of course it is not difficult to find in the composition other elements which support the amorous implications of the cage, and thus confirm that it is most probable that the urine examination is to ascertain pregnancy—pregnancy of the woman with a basket in the background who observes proceedings with a certain degree of anxiety. Behind her we see next to the window a small cupid sculpture, and the grisaille relief—after the 17th century South Netherlandish sculptor Duquesnoy and frequently used by Dou—features putti; beings derived from the Greek God of Love, Eros. The putti are here depicted playing with, and shooting at, a goat; a subject which is emblematic for *Wellust* or *Geyheit*—sinful pleasure.

At the risk of straining my thesis I should point out that the globe, partially concealed by the blue curtain, has as its most prominent feature a scorpion. Selket (Selquet) was the old Egyptian scorpion-goddess who often played the role of guardian of conjugal union.

In conclusion it should be mentioned that Dou seems unable to indicate a possible new birth without reminding us of the transient nature of human life. *Vanitas* symbols were common fare in seventeenth century Dutch art, ranging from hour glasses, skulls, mirrors, candles, tops, flowers and butterflies, to children blowing bubbles and entire complex *Vanitas* compositions. Dou's Leiden, the theological university city, is noted for the pre-occupation of much of its painting with *Vanitas* still life compositions—in *The Physician* however, the symbol is a dual one, a book (itself a death symbol) and the skeleton leaning on a fork on the page at which the book has been opened, remind us that life is, at the best, a most fragile thing.

¹John Evelyn wrote on seeing his *Young Mother* (1658 Mauritshuis, The Hague), presented to Charles II in 1660 by the States of Holland, that it was painted, 'so finely as hardly to be distinguish'd from enamel'.

²For those unfamiliar with the art of the emblem, it is, in short, a combination of three elements. Firstly a short motto, thereunder an (engraved) illustration, and thereunder a verse or commentary (generally didactic). Ambiguity is 'built in' to each portion so that only when

all three sections are combined does the reader reach the intended meaning.

³Dr. J. A. van Dongen has written an absorbing history of medicine in art, *De Zieke Mens in de Beeldende Kunst* (Amsterdam 1968), in which paintings employing this motif came under discussion.

⁴Collection, Mauritshuis, The Hague, cat. 1935 p. 315. See also Jongh, E. de. *Zinne—en minnebeelden in de schilderkunst van de zeventiende eeuw* 1967, pp. 42, 95 note 62.

Lucas van Leyden (?1494-1533)

In the realm of art legends so beget legends that it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish fact from fiction; the factual circumstances of a great artist's existence are submerged beneath a welter of misleading and contradictory information. So it is with Lucas van Leyden, the greatest Dutch artist of the sixteenth century, the details of whose life are obscured in legend. One is left, finally, with the works of art themselves; they constitute the reliable proofs of their maker's existence; together with fragments of documentary evidence they must speak for, and tell of, the artist.

The sixteenth century is regarded as the great century of engraving, and while Lucas van Leyden was a distinguished painter, his reputation rests more securely on his achievements in engraving. In his own day he was recognised throughout the Netherlands and Italy as a master of engraving second only to Dürer, whose example he often appears to have emulated. Vasari, who admired Lucas' works, made comparison between the two masters.¹

According to tradition—and Carel van Mander,² his biographer, popularised this belief—Lucas van Leyden was a child prodigy who published fine copper engravings at the age of nine. His first tuition he received from his father, the painter Huygh Jacobsz. Later he studied with Cornelius Engelbrechtsz (1468-1533), but Lucas received his most influential ideas through contact with Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) and Jan Gossaert, (called Mabuse), (d.c. 1533) both of whom had absorbed, during visits to Italy, those Renaissance ideas which were to transform the Late Gothic artistic traditions of Northern Europe.

While most of his work was produced in Leyden, Lucas seems to have travelled widely. The

accessibility and dissemination of new ideas in subject-matter, style and expression modified and transformed in his work the pictorial terms in which Lucas had initially been schooled. For the subsequent changes in his work Lucas owes much to the journeys he made and the people he met.

In 1521 Lucas journeyed to Antwerp to attend a reception given for Dürer by local artists. The meeting of the two masters Dürer recorded in his journal³; in Antwerp they exchanged works⁴ and Dürer engraved a portrait of his new friend.⁵

A trip to Middelburg (where he gave banquets for local painters) in 1527 brought Lucas into contact with Jan Gossaert, the Antwerp Mannerist. Together they set out to visit artists in other centres—Ghent, Malines and Antwerp. According to Vasari, Lucas also visited Italy to study the 'antiquities' as was the common practice of increasing numbers of Northern painters.⁶

Pallas Athene, purchased in 1971 for the permanent collection of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, belongs to the period in his *oeuvre* when Lucas had mastered the Renaissance ideas to which he had earlier been introduced. It is a late work, and is thought to be the engraving to which van Mander alludes as Lucas' last graphic work, an impression of which is supposed to have been lying on his bed when he died.⁷

Athene, the goddess of wisdom who personified the Hellenic ideal, is drawn from classical literature, the usual source for subject-matter in the Renaissance period. Her identity is established in the tools of trade, the lance and the goatskin shield decorated with a gorgon's head: Athene was also a warrior. But in Lucas' representation her traditional helmet is gone; instead she wears her hair in a simple northern Renaissance style, bound



Gerard Dou. *The Dentist*, reproduced by courtesy of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden



Gerard Dou. *The Droptey Woman*, reproduced by courtesy of the Musée du Louvre, Paris



Gerard Dou. *Woman watering plants*, reproduced by courtesy of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II



Gerard Dou. *The Quack Doctor*, reproduced by courtesy of Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam



Gerard Dou. *A Servant Girl at the Window*, reproduced by courtesy of Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam (coll. Willem van der Vorm)



Lucas van Leyden (1494?-1533). *Pallas Athene*. Engraving 1530. Purchased 1971



David Cox (1783-1859). *Goodrich Castle on the Wye*. Watercolour. Purchased 1971

Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827). *And so to Bed*. Watercolour. Purchased 1971





Designed and engraved in the true Dutch taste by W. Hogarth. Published according to the Act of Parliament May 1740.

Rec^d June 5 1740 from Unversall of 5^s being the First Payment for two Prints, one Moses brought to Pharaohs Daughter, the other Paul before Felix which I promise to Deliver when finish'd on the payment of 5 Shillings more.

R. B. Each Print will be 7^s 6^d affr. the subscription is over. — W. Hogarth

in a cloth headpiece, the trailing end of which is drawn in a finely-chiselled manner closely imitative of Dürer.

In general the drawing—of drapery, rocks and clouds, and particularly the solidly-modelled figure with its anatomical interest but Northern proportions—illustrates the extent to which the Renaissance had undermined the artistic traditions of the North. Lucas van Leyden was amongst the first to translate the spirit of the Renaissance into Northern terms and the first to establish that spirit in the Netherlands.

Pallas Athene, achieves the serenity and harmony of composition to which Renaissance artists aspired; the composition is, as Vasari remarked of Lucas' work, very happy and free from confusion.⁵

There is, however, a pervasive tension, a restrained power, which belies the apparent serenity of the composition. One senses in the troubled atmosphere an underlying restlessness. Athene is seated in a frontal pose; her profile head, in deep shadow, wears a pensive expression of melancholy—a very fashionable ailment in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries! She gazes into the distance towards some object or adversary unknown to the viewer; she is still, solemn; the scudding clouds intensify the powerful impression of uncertain expectation.

Is this, perhaps, a visual statement of what it felt like to be an artist of extraordinary perception and sensitivity—as Lucas was—inhabiting a world fraught with religious and political strife?

At one time the impression of *Pallas Athene* recently acquired by the Gallery was in the collection of Frederick Augustus II, King of Saxony

(1797-1854). This collection was one of the most celebrated of the period, and included fine examples of Lucas' work. When the collection was finally dispersed many of the items passed to the Albertina in Vienna. *Pallas Athene* eventually found its way into a private collection in New Zealand. Its acquisition by the Gallery, (together with works by Hogarth, Piranesi, and Blake), considerably strengthens the print section of the collection.

NOTES

¹Giorgio Vasari (trans. Gaston Du C. De Vere), *Series of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* Vol VI p. 97.

²Carel van Mander, *Northern Renaissance Art: 1400-1600 (Sources and Documents)*, (ed. Wolfgang Stechow), p. 32.

³F. Sturge Moore, *Albert Dürer* p. 162.

⁴H. Knackfuss, *Dürer*, p. 128.

⁵F. Sturge Moore, *Op cit* p. 162.

⁶Vasari, *op cit* Vol. IX p. 269.

⁷Vasari, *op cit* Vol. VI p. 99.

⁸Carel van Mander, p. 36.

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William Hogarth (1697-1764)

PAUL BEFORE FELIX (BURLESQUED)

WILLIAM HOGARTH'S mezzotint ground etching, *Paul before Felix (burlesqued)* is one of a number of important prints recently received into the Robert McDougall Art Gallery collection. The following biographical and background notes may help to provide some readers with an approach to this confusing but engaging work.

Hogarth was born in London on November 10,

1697. After leaving school while still a boy he was at first apprenticed to a goldsmith, but took up engraving around 1720. He studied painting at the St. Martin's Lane Academy. Later he was apprenticed to Sir James Thornhill (1675/6-1734) whose daughter he married in 1729. From Thornhill he inherited another Academy in St. Martin's Lane, the forerunner of the Royal Academy. Oil paintings of small groups and conversation pieces

won for Hogarth an early reputation, but his later satiric and moralising works established him in a career as a great popular artist.

Such 'pictur'd Morals', (as the actor, David Garrick, described them), as *A Harlot's Progress* (1731), *A Rake's Progress* (1735), *Marriage à la Mode* (1745), and *Industry and Idleness* (1747) presented the vitality and energy of Augustan England and also exposed its folly, its hypocrisy and its cruelty and these were treated with a satiric force quite equal to that of his literary counterparts, Swift, Pope and Fielding, the difference between pictorial satire and literary satire being merely the difference between the media; the intentions were identical.

Regretably, there is not space to investigate in detail his association with some of the most important writers of the period for Hogarth was a major shaping influence on the emerging art form of English prose fiction. Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) and Henry Fielding (1705-54) borrowed extensively from the 'pictur'd Morals'; Mrs Jewkes and Colbrand, for example, in Richardson's novel *Pamela* (1740) are Hogarthian characters, as are Mrs Bridget Allworthy, Partridge, and Square in Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749). Much of the tumbling exuberance of *Tom Jones*—a 'Rake's Progress' painted in words—Fielding owes to Hogarth, a debt he generously acknowledges throughout the novel. As in the Preface to *Joseph Andrews* Fielding pays high tribute to Hogarth's skill in delineating character. There is sufficient evidence in Fielding's novels to suggest collaboration with his friend, Hogarth.

In literature, as in painting, the spirit of satire ran very high in eighteenth century England, and a quite distinctive brand of native humour and wit arose. Poetry and prose were often employed for the expression of personal invective and such attacks, often grossly unfair, scurrilous and without foundation, were designed to heap public scorn and contempt upon the heads of those unlucky enough to find themselves at odds with the writers. Newspapers became the public arenas in which great battles of wit were fought; there, enemies became friends, friends sworn foes. (Many a victim smarting from witty barbs and thrusts might have wished for the verbal equivalent of Hogarth's skilful pictorial ripostes.) Political, intellectual and cultural giants jousting in printed words and pictures provided highly agreeable fare for a public with a voracious appetite for such reading matter. Needless to remark, the public exhibited the usual agility of mind and imagination

which enabled its members to discover themselves on the winning side of the current issue, no matter what it might be.

The Augustans were socially, politically and economically very much aware—they thrived on controversy—and this is reflected, as one might expect, in the abundance and rich variety of their art, literature and journalism. The lampoon, the burlesque, the caricature in words and paint were developed and extended with great ingenuity as modes of public instruction and propaganda. Hogarth, with his satiric commentaries on contemporary society, was largely instrumental in re-establishing in England the tradition of popular satire and moralizing art.

Paul before Felix (burlesqued) encapsules characteristic mid-eighteenth century attitudes. The immediate occasion of the burlesque, was that it should serve as a bill of receipt for the forthcoming engravings of his paintings, *Paul before Felix* and *Moses brought to Pharaoh's Daughter*. The subscription ticket was announced in the *General advertiser*, May 15, 1751.²

While the burlesque was, in part, self-advertisement and self-parody, Hogarth also held up for public scrutiny contemporary artistic practices to which he took particular exception, especially those he considered to be the effects ruinous to English painting of Rembrandt's increasing popularity.³ By the 1750's Rembrandt's works were enjoying an enormous vogue in England and they engendered inevitable reactions: fraudulent engravings on the one hand, Hogarth's burlesque on the other.

Paul before Felix (burlesqued) was but one manifestation of a life-long protest against cultured snobbery, a satire on the taste which Hogarth was ambitious of reforming. He waged his campaign in the firm conviction that the old master cult and the continental paintings currently flooding the English market perverted the taste and judgement of his contemporaries and blinded them to the merits and the potential of an emerging native English art.

For all Hogarth's protests, however, the old masters continued to make a considerable impression on English art, and Hogarth, feeling the pressure of their competition, attempted several relatively dismal efforts in the Italian Grand Manner, including the original *Paul before Felix* and *Moses brought to Pharaoh's Daughter*.

Hogarth's clear intention in *Paul before Felix* (burlesqued) was to ridicule Rembrandt and his various imitators by imputing to them violations of

mid-eighteenth century aesthetic principles, in terms of which the Dutch master's practices were understood to offend the requirements of pictorial decorum. Academicians held that his 'vulgar manner does not suit the great style', the official view! For example, peopling historical and biblical scenes with the humble folk and low characters of one's own day indicated to the Augustan mind a want of respect and reverence, and a sense of occasion. The intrusion of the humble and low on the activities of the great seemed profane.

Such practices raised questions of taste, decorum and propriety and the supposed infringements furnished Hogarth with ammunition to load his satire.

The details of Hogarth's comedy of insult reward close examination; as with his 'pictur'd Morals', the burlesque may be read and several interpenetrating levels of wit and comedy emerge.

Based on an episode of high seriousness from the New Testament, the burlesque depicts the apostle Paul pleading his case against Tertullus, the informer, before Felix, Governor of Judea: 'And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come, Felix trembled.' (Acts 24:25). The scene is peopled with the same characters who appeared in his earlier formal painting on the same subject—Paul, Felix, Drusilla, Tertullus and Ananias—but each of them is excessively caricatured.

Paul is represented as a mean, vulgar, emaciated runt above whose mortal head a rickety halo hovers uneasily and who has to stand on a stool in order to be seen and heard. The apostle is before two Felixes: one, the noble representative of the Senate and people of Rome whose office is confirmed in the banner monogrammed 'S.P.Q.R.' (*Senatus populusque Romanus*), the fasces held by the lictor behind him, the wreath crowning his head, and the Imperial Eagle; the other, a snarling dog.

All of the biblical characters are represented as ludicrous and ridiculous to expose the 'vulgar' practices of which Hogarth and his fellow Augustans disapproved. Drusilla is a Dutch *vrouw* whose bourgeois tastes aspires to lap-dogs and earrings—which sit on her somewhat incongruously; Ananias, the High Priest, with murderous intentions illuminating his countenance, is barely restrained from leaping upon the apostle with a knife, while Paul is equally oblivious to an impending attack from the rear, so engrossed is he in his rhetoric; Paul's guardian angel—a weary, crumpled, very mortal, Dutch burgomaster—is

slumped behind the stool dozing, his legs immodestly splayed.

One very coarse stroke plumbs the depths of 'vulgarity'. To discover it we might ask ourselves if Drusilla's reaction, the leering faces, the accusatory gestures and his dismay and embarrassment indicate an involuntary *faux pas* which Felix has committed in consequence of his 'trembling'. (Even the inanimate eagle has turned its head!) Felix and Paul, the noblest figures in their respective spheres in the biblical episode are here demeaned as objects of odium and contempt. It is profane, of course, but again, the profanity is imputed to Rembrandt; Hogarth is merely pointing to the fact.

And why do familiar signs of seventeenth century Dutch life intrude into a biblical and historical scene? There is a Dutch landscape complete with windmills, church and village, a yacht and row boat; humble Dutch folk, mute witnesses of the proceedings, crowd an inner recess of the courtroom; pewter plate arranged on shelves adds an incongruous touch of domesticity. Again, these are incongruities, superfluties and inaccuracies imputed to Rembrandt. Hogarth ridicules what he considers to be Rembrandt's 'vulgar' practices, his confusion of the public and the private, the contemporary and the historical, the high and the mean.

English court procedure is another target of Hogarth's wit. It is known that about 1731 he painted a satirical representation of a court of justice and that he had a particular grudge against the Court of Chancery for failing to administer in an equitable fashion the Copyright Act of 1735 intended to discourage the pirating of which Hogarth himself was a recurrent victim. (Since he was largely instrumental in securing that Act, it is known as 'Hogarth's Act'.

Through Tertullus, the 'certain orator' who 'informed the Governor against Paul' (Acts 24:1), Hogarth arraigns the whole system of English justice. In the burlesque Tertullus is depicted as an advocate arrayed in the habit of an English sergeant-at-law. He is tearing his brief (upon which are words of Scripture) and a demon is piecing the fragments together again. 'Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, we accept it always and in all places most noble Felix, with all thankfulness'. (Acts 24:2-3). 'For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world and a ringleader of the

sect of the Nazarenes.' (Acts 24:5). Tertullus is thought to be a lampoon of Hume Campbell or Dr. William King, Principal of St. Mary Hall, Oxford; Paul may be a lampoon of Rembrandt.

The corpulent figure of Justice stands in a classical *contraposto* pose—a travesty of the convention. In her drunken disarray a bandage has slipped over one eye (one-eyed Justice!); bags laden with gold, the rewards of legal decisions, hang by her side; in place of a flaming sword she holds a butcher's knife upon which is inscribed a dagger, part of the coat-of-arms of London.

A senile scribe-recorder is taking no interest in the proceedings; he has recorded not a single word on his scroll. Felix seems incapable of meting out justice. The proceedings are chaotic and unjust, and this of course is what Hogarth is satirising. Catastrophe in the form of a heavy baroque theatre curtain is about to engulf Tertullus, perhaps the whole court. Court proceedings, like the theatre, are a farce and a sham. The theatre curtain is also entirely in keeping with the conventional but striking theatricality of the burlesque; the 'stagey' gestures, expressions and postures accord with Hogarth's intentions:

I wish to compose pictures on canvas, similar to representations on the stage; and farther hope, that they will be tried by the same test, and criticised by the same criterion . . . 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*.¹

This ambition particularly informed such paintings and engravings on moral subjects such as the *Harlot's Progress*, the *Rake's Progress*, *Marriage à la Mode* and the *Election*. It accounts for the rhetoric of gesture in the burlesque while the exaggerated facial expressions recall an Augustan interest in physiognomy. Swift in *The Legion Club*, written earlier in 1736, addressed these lines to Hogarth:

How I want thee humorous *Hogart*?
Thou I hear, a pleasant Rogue art;
Were but you and I acquainted,
Every Monster should be painted;
You should try your graving Tools
On this odious Group of Fools;
Draw the Beasts as I describe 'em,
Form their Features while I gibe them;
Draw them like, for I assure you,

You will need no *car'atura*;
Draw them so, that we may trace
All the Soul in every Face.

There are two extant versions of *Paul before Felix* (*burlesqued*) and few impressions of either version are known today.² (Copies of the print were still available from Hogarth's widow in the late 1760's).³

The later fourth state of the burlesque differs from the first state (of which the Gallery's recent acquisition is an impression) in the following ways: the water, land, tree and sky have additional cross-hatching so that the buildings, sail and reflections stand out in sharper relief; a small imp has been added, and he is depicted sawing through a leg of the stool on which the apostle is standing; the land rising behind the windmill has been blended with the sky; a strip of land outside the courtroom window has been more solidly defined. These additions and alterations sharpen the satire considerably, especially in respect of Rembrandt's chiaroscuro effects and characteristic tonal contrasts. Early impressions of the etching were stained (with coffee, perhaps) to suggest the appearance of old master graphics.

The Gallery is very fortunate to have added to its collection *Paul before Felix* (*burlesqued*), a characteristic work of Hogarth's in an excellent state of preservation.

NOTES

¹A method of engraving in which the copper plate is roughened uniformly. Lights and half-lights are obtained by scraping away the nap thus produced, deep shadows by leaving it.

²The bill of receipt attached to the Gallery's impression of the burlesque reads: 'Recd. June 5 1751 of Sam le Vandewall Esq. 5s being the First Payment for two Prints, one Moses brought to Pharaohs [sic] Daughter, the other Paul before Felix which I promise to deliver when finish'd on the payment of 5 shillings more. N.B. Each Print will be 7s 6d after the subscription is over. Wm. Hogarth'—signed and sealed.

³Hogarth's burlesque was itself burlesqued by Paul Sandby (1725-1809) in a satirical engraving, *The Magic Lantern*, in 1753. Hogarth's head is a magic lantern, and from his mouth a lantern slide of *Paul before Felix* (*burlesqued*) is projected onto a wall.

⁴Francis Downman, *Great English Painters*, pp. 44-5.

⁵The publication line of the first state reads: 'Design'd and scratch'd in the true Dutch taste by Wm. Hogarth'. Later states read: 'Design'd and etch'd in the ridiculous (sic) manner of Rembrandt'.

⁶The publication line continues: 'Publish'd according to Act of Parliament May 1st, 1751'.

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Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827) & David Cox (1783-1859)

ONE could hardly think of two more diverse painters to deal with at the same time, nor perhaps, two more highly interesting and entertaining, for that matter. This is especially so with Rowlandson whose wit must have lost very little of its edge with the passing of time. Indeed, the situations depicted in much of his work might equally apply today, and that perhaps, is one of the qualities which makes him a great artist.

If we judge a great artist on what he says and the way he says it—that is, his wealth of observations or imagery, and a certain skill in the way in which it is presented, then Rowlandson is worthy of consideration as one of the 'greats'.

Rowlandson never painted in oils. In fact, he never worked in any other medium apart from watercolour and ink. There is very little body colour used at all, usually a thin wash is all, combined with the very masterly and expressive lines quickly drawn with pen and ink.

In delicacy of treatment Rowlandson's paintings are reminiscent of Paul Sandby's work, but any similarity ends with the use of pen and ink and in the pale tints of the wash technique. Sandby's work shows meticulous detail and silhouettes compared with the robust characterization that singles Rowlandson's work out as one of the finest social satirists of all time. While he laughs at human antics, however, he laughs *with* them. It's as though he identifies closely with them in an earthly, exuberant love of life. He is a commentator, not a mocker. He sees the nobility as well as the pathetic of his characters, as in the rotund figure of the man being carried lovingly, and sack-like, into the bed-chamber; it seems as a matter of course and of habit. In this sense of involvement and quiet understanding Rowlandson expressed some-

thing which is timeless. His figures of fun are rather like those portrayed by Hogarth, but again they are funnier, more lovable, and understandable. Perhaps it is because with Rowlandson, his very technique of presentation—that very pale, thin quality—leaves so much to one's own imagination. Perhaps it is that we only catch a glimpse, an insight into what he's getting at, and we supply the rest by association or imagination. This, perhaps, is the essential, the mystique of Rowlandson; this 'abstraction' as it were of mental association with remembered or imagined reality. It doesn't matter if the statement he makes only seems sometimes to supply us with light relief, because one cannot avoid coming back and back to a little painting like this and going away again very much refreshed.

The paintings of David Cox are refreshing in a very different way. Perhaps a better word than refreshment, here, would be refinement, because in fact we are confronted with what the eye immediately registers as a formula—and a fine one—in the way in which the paint has been applied. It is 'refreshing' in the quite unexpected sense that this looks like 'impressionism' before its time, and that in fact, is how Cox has often been regarded. For example, some of his watercolours are so filled with a feeling of the open air, and airiness of the outdoors, that especially those which are beach or coastal scenes have sometimes been compared with similar subjects by the French painter, Eugene Boudin, who was the forerunner of Impressionism.

David Cox was a very professional and sophisticated painter. He worked in oils as well as watercolours, but it was as a watercolourist that he

gained and has retained his stature. Cox was a leader in his time, and one who came to have a great many followers.

He was also a romantic. In the sombre masses of decaying castle towers and walls, ivy-hung and vegetation-covered he found his forms and objects of interest and thrust them in front of clear, fresh skies, to brood and strike a contrast between human scale and natural grandeur. In these settings his sketchy figures seem capricious furnishings on an alien stage, oblivious to the masses overpowering them.

Goodrich Castle on the Wye is a small painting, yet grand in manner. The forms provided by the ruined castle provide an impressive display from the point of view of the artist's observation of forms in space, and it's as though the sharp angles and lines of the towers and walls had had a soft clinging veil thrown over them to deliberately conceal yet still hint at the underlying form.

The momentarily frozen figures caught, impressionistically for the moment, are a colourfully but carefully splashed little foil to this massive back-

drop, and their lightness, their flimsiness and transitory state is echoed slightly in the birds above the tower, in the clear boundless sky, small though it is, is such a pleasing contrast with the forms of the castle structure. The tensions between solidity and lightness are here released once more, while the painting as a whole retains a precise control over the arrangement of its few simple parts, and a slowly-radiating, subtle jewel-like quality that is rugged, rather than beautiful.

As he grew older his eyesight began to fail, though he continued to travel and work. His painting became rougher in treatment and he also came to concentrate more and more on the atmospheric effects which were always so much a feature of his work, and which did not require so much attention to detail. It was this lack of detail (in an age when so much attention was paid to intricate detail) that at one stage led to criticism of his work. It is significant, though, that Cox replied to such critics—'Do they not forget these paintings are the work of the mind?'

BRIAN MUIR

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