THE QUARTO

VOL. 1, NO. 3 THE CLEMENTS LIBRARY ASSOCIATES APRIL, 1995

AMERICA IN A MIRROR: CARICATURE AS HISTORY

Caricature has a long tradition in American popular culture. Pictures that use exaggeration and wit to make a political point, a social comment, or a moral judgment have had a peculiar power over our imagination. Whatever the rhetoric, written or spoken, it has often been the cartoon, journalism's most devastating weapon, that has made an issue or an individual stick in the public mind.

"Caricature," according to editorial cartoonist Draper Hill, "is not a synonym for satire, or even a genre of drawing. It is a language of exaggeration, a method of projecting inner characteristics, real or imagined, into appearances." The cartoonist combines caricature with a code — a set of symbols or emblems, the visual metaphors that speak to people living in a particular time and place. Consequently, caricature is ephemeral. When we no longer understand its code, when its message has lost its immediacy, it loses its impact on our imaginations. Yet, it is this transient quality that makes cartoons so valuable as historical evidence, as a vernacular record of our political values and social mores. Because caricature is designed for print, for popular consumption in the cheapest format, it is the most genuinely democratic art. It is the perfect device for criticism. The cartoonist does not have to justify his point of view; he can use his art to report, accuse, entertain, moralize, or to focus public opinion on any target he chooses. His only obligation is to use his art to express an idea, and to make that idea accessible and engaging to the broadest audience.



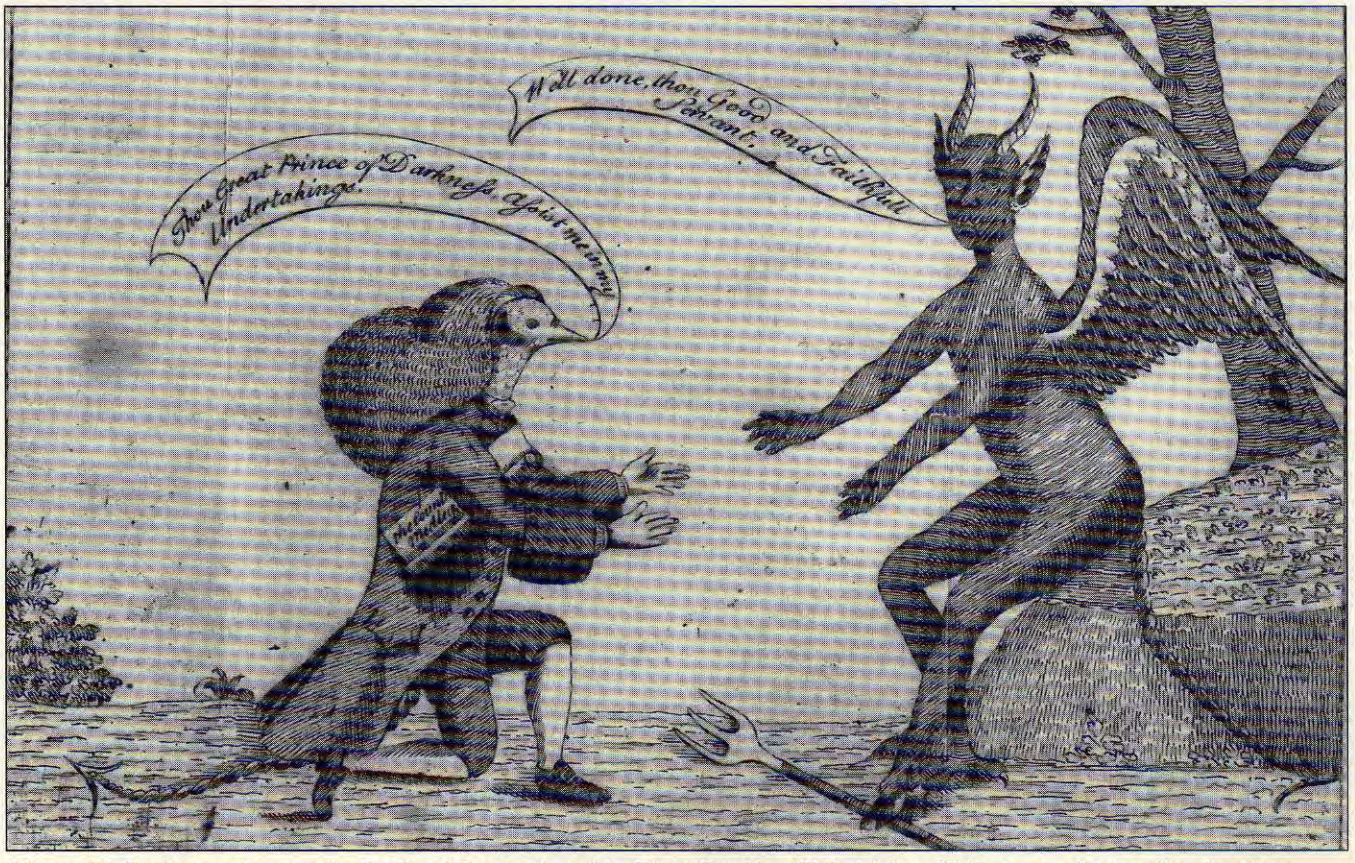
Cartoonist Grant Hamilton used nursery rhyme imagery to make a simple point — corruption is bipartisan. Republican Boss Platt licks the platter of New York state patronage clean; seated is Democratic Boss Croker, his stomach bulging. From Judge, *November 19, 1898.*

Caricature, as art historian Ronald Paulson has written, has two components — the representational and the rhetorical. As pictures of people, objects, or scenes, caricature ranges freely around artistic conventions. It takes familiar settings and human emotions or the images of allegory, folklore, history, or fantasy, compresses them into one picture, and makes us laugh by the unexpected incongruities. "A good caricaturist needs no great talent in any other artistic direction," cartoonist Bohun Lynch insists. "He is governed only by his own sense of truthful misrepresentation."

As rhetoric or polemic, American caricature has an honorable tradition. Cartoonists have exposed abuses of power, the corruption of government, and the hypocrisy of society. At their most trivial, cartoons provide a running commentary on events, people, attitudes, and preoccupations, their influence no more than one factor in any given political climate. They reflect the momentary shifts in public sentiment. At its most skillful, American caricature has been moral satire. When Thomas Nast exposed the corruption of Boss Tweed, or crusaded for minority rights, or denounced the futility of war, he followed a tradition that began in the Reformation with Luther's satirical woodcuts, and continued with Bruegel, Callot, Hogarth, Goya, and Daumier.

Although the idea of *caricatura* — exaggerating a human form for comic effect — began in late sixteenth century Italy, printed caricature, as a form of political and social commentary, is the invention of eighteenth century England. As a popular political culture developed in the relatively free climate of mid-eighteenth century England, the demand for information and for comment grew.

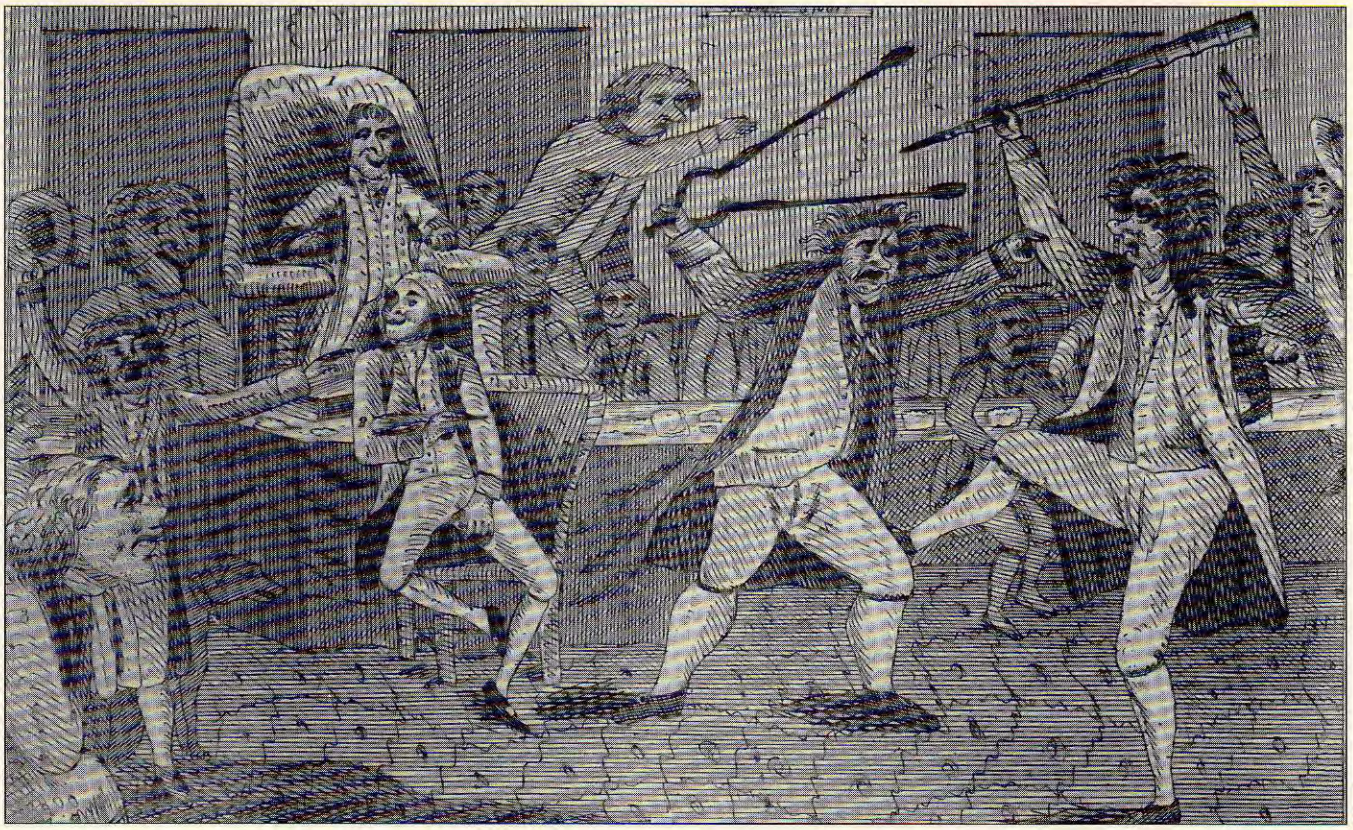
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Above: *"A Conference between the Devil and Doctor Dove," by Henry Dawkins (Philadelphia, 1764), is one of the earliest American political cartoons. Doctor Dove, a writer of scurrilous verse for Pennsylvania's Proprietary Party, is shown kneeling before the Devil (his own demon's tail visible beneath his coattails), "Thou Great Prince of Darkness, assist me in my Undertakings." Satan replies, "Well done, thou Good and Faithful Servant." From the origin of caricature in the satirical woodcuts of the Reformation, the Devil has been a common motif.*

Below: *Pirating material from English sources was standard practice in colonial publishing. Paul Revere lifted "The able Doctor, or America Swallowing the Bitter Draught" from the* London Magazine. *He appropriated the cartoon to the radical cause by adding the word TEA, publishing it in 1774 to mobilize support for Boston when Parliament passed retaliatory legislation following the notorious tea party.*





Cartoons in the 1790s were the work of anonymous amateurs. They were relentlessly political in content, often cluttered in design. "Congressional Pugilists" (1798) records an unedifying moment in American history when a Vermont Congressman accused of cowardice spat in the face of his colleague from Connecticut. They fought with cudgel and fire tongs until separated.



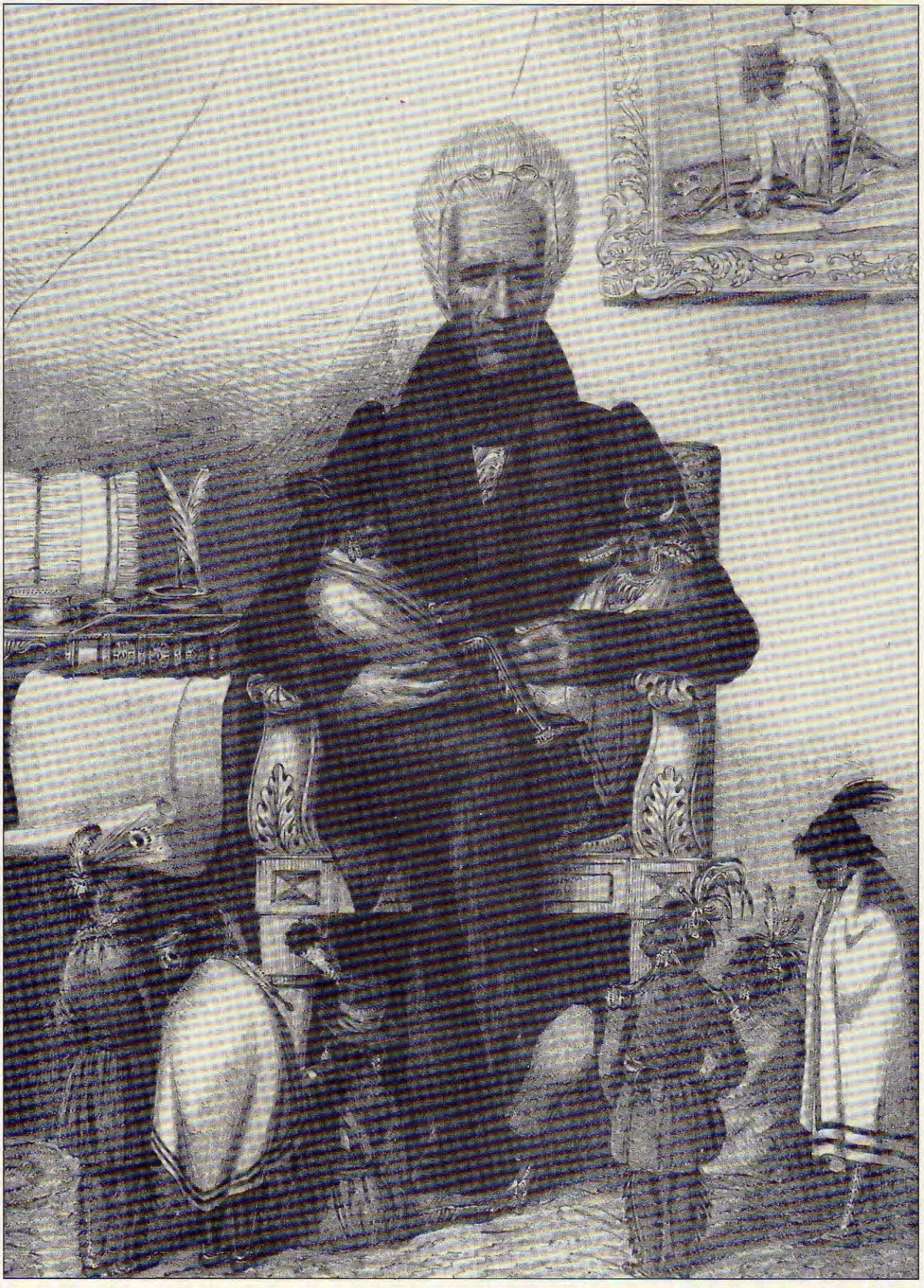
Graphic satire was an important component in periodicals during the first decades of the nineteenth century. The Echo, *published by Richard Alsop (Boston, 1807-1812), was openly hostile to Jefferson. It ran a particularly vicious series of cartoons by Tisdale and Leney in 1807. One was "Infant Liberty Nursed by Mother Mob." A slattern holds an infant to huge breasts labeled "whiskey" and "rum." In the background Jefferson's "republican mob" storms a public building.*

Right: *William Charles had learned the engraver's trade in London before emigrating to Philadelphia in 1808, and he borrowed freely from the work of Gillray. A popular, prolific artist during the War of 1812, Charles helped make the cartoon part of our national political life. In "John Bull Making a New Batch of Ships to Send to the Lakes" (1814), Charles ridicules the British loss of their entire Great Lakes fleet to the Americans. King George sputters, "What, What, What!" To his right a man warns, "You had better keep both your ships and guns at home. If you send all you've got to the Lakes, it will only make fun for the Yankeys to take them."*



Below: *Philadelphian Edward Clay's social satire (ca. 1830) contrasts a Quaker of plain but elegant dress, accompanied by his lovely daughter, with an Irish immigrant carrying his worldly possessions on his back, clay pipe stuck in the band of his high-crowned hat. A guest, mounted on a well-bred horse, is welcomed to the Quaker's prosperous home. But the Irishman, asking directions to Philadelphia, is given a condescending answer, one that belies the Quaker reputation for tolerance.*

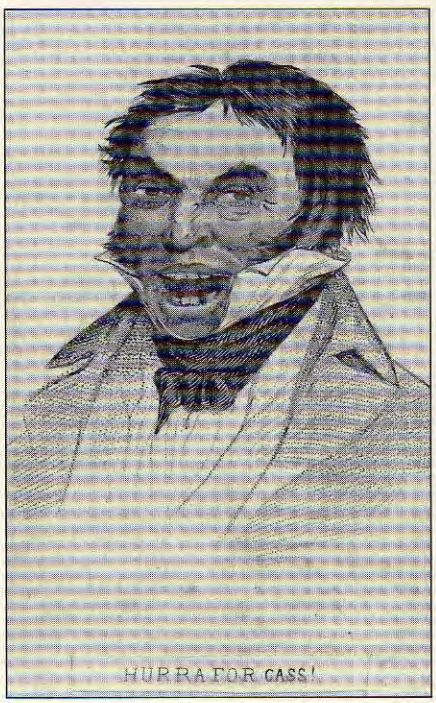


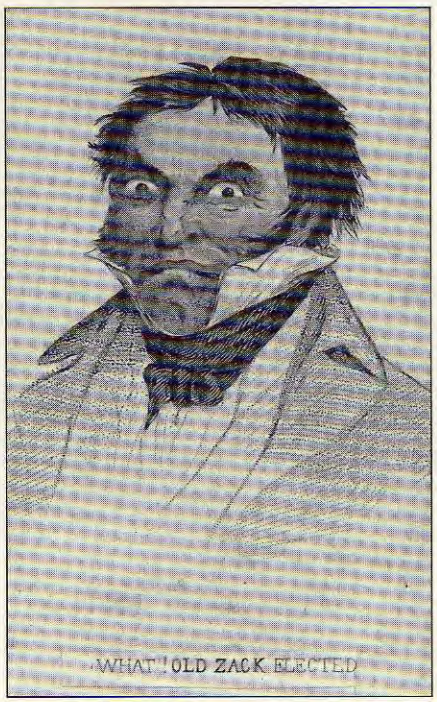


Technology revolutionized the popular market for cartoons in the 1820s. Commercial lithography, a relatively inexpensive, flexible process by which impressions are taken from designs inked on stone, replaced the difficult process of engraving on metal. Prints could be mass produced on cheap, single sheets. The result was a flood of political cartoons during the Jacksonian Era (1828-1840). In his first message to Congress, President Jackson proposed sending Native Americans to unoccupied land west of the Mississippi. By May 1830, the Indian Removal Bill had become law. An anonymous artist, with masterful sarcasm, drew Jackson as the Great Father.



Above: *Lola Montez, celebrated "European" beauty, mistress variously of Liszt, Dumas, and a Bavarian king, arrived on the New York stage in 1852, billed as a "Spanish dancer." No amount of publicity could disguise her limited talent. Johnston records the "enthusiastic reception of Lola by an American audience" — one Quaker, who hardly dares to look, and one dismayed gentleman, peering over his* New York Herald, *whose pages endlessly had promoted Lola.*





David Claypool Johnston had ambitions to become America's Cruikshank. Although the quality of his draftsmanship was uneven, his caricatures, published as book illustrations and single sheets, show he had an eye for human foibles and the ability to translate them into witty drawings.

Left: *Johnston's ingenious cartoon envelope allowed him to change a politician's expression with the pull of a tab, a device he used to comment on the results of several presidential elections. His 1849 version,* Metamorphosis: A Locofoco Before, and After, the Late Election, *shows a radical Democrat reacting to the news that Whig candidate Gen. Zachary Taylor has defeated Democrat Lewis Cass — "Hurra For Cass!" changes to "What! Old Zack Elected."*



Comic almanacs began to appear in the 1830s, a welcome relief from the moralizing fare of conventional almanacs. From them evolved the illustrated humorous weekly. Yankee Notions: or, Whittlings from Jonathan's Jack-knife, *is representative of the genre. Chauvinistic, racist, bigoted, its favorite targets were foreign immigrants, Jews, Blacks, and women. Racial stereotypes used in facial features and dialects were standard devices for cartoonists like Augustus Hoppin. His cover for Febraury, 1853, had Jonathan and son Junior commenting on the stupidity of a "furriner" who has fallen through the ice.*







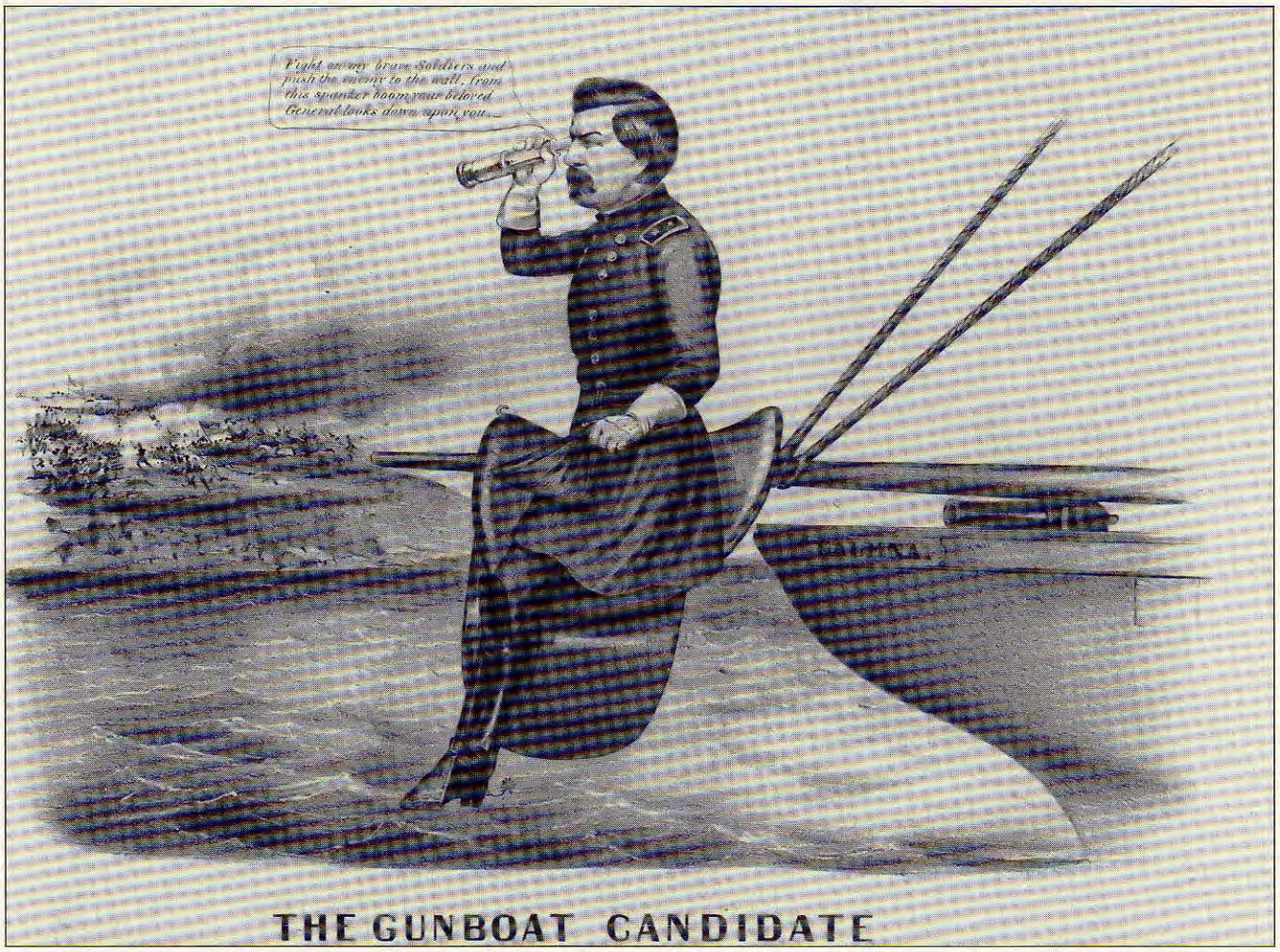


Above: Vanity Fair, *America's* Punch *during the 1850-60s, owed its popularity on the eve of the Civil War to the cartoons of Henry Louis Stephens, as they reflected the controversies tearing the nation apart. During the 1860 presidential campaign, Stephens caricatured Douglas as a pious hypocrite. Lincoln's inaugural address, March, 1861, had been conciliatory toward the South on slavery, but firmly opposed secession. Stephens drew Lincoln balancing hope for peace against the reality that Confederate guns had fired on Ft. Sumter. Stephens, in 1862, raged against "Old Marm Britannia" for her continued sympathy with the South, but he was ambivalent on emancipation, unconvinced that freed slaves would find kinder masters.*

Right: *The first issue of Richmond's* Southern Illustrated News, *September, 1862, carried an advertisement for engravers and the blocks of ash wood used to make newspaper woodcuts. It would replace* Harper's Weekly *in the South and be the Confederacy's only pictorial magazine. Cartoons were a regular feature. "Butler, the Beast, at Work," carried on April 30, 1864, shows the hated Benjamin Butler. Appointed military administrator when Union troops took New Orleans in 1862, Butler incensed the South with his order that a local woman who insulted Union officers or soldiers "shall be regarded and held liable to be treated as a woman of the town plying her avocation." Today, copies of the* Southern Illustrated News *are extremely scarce.*



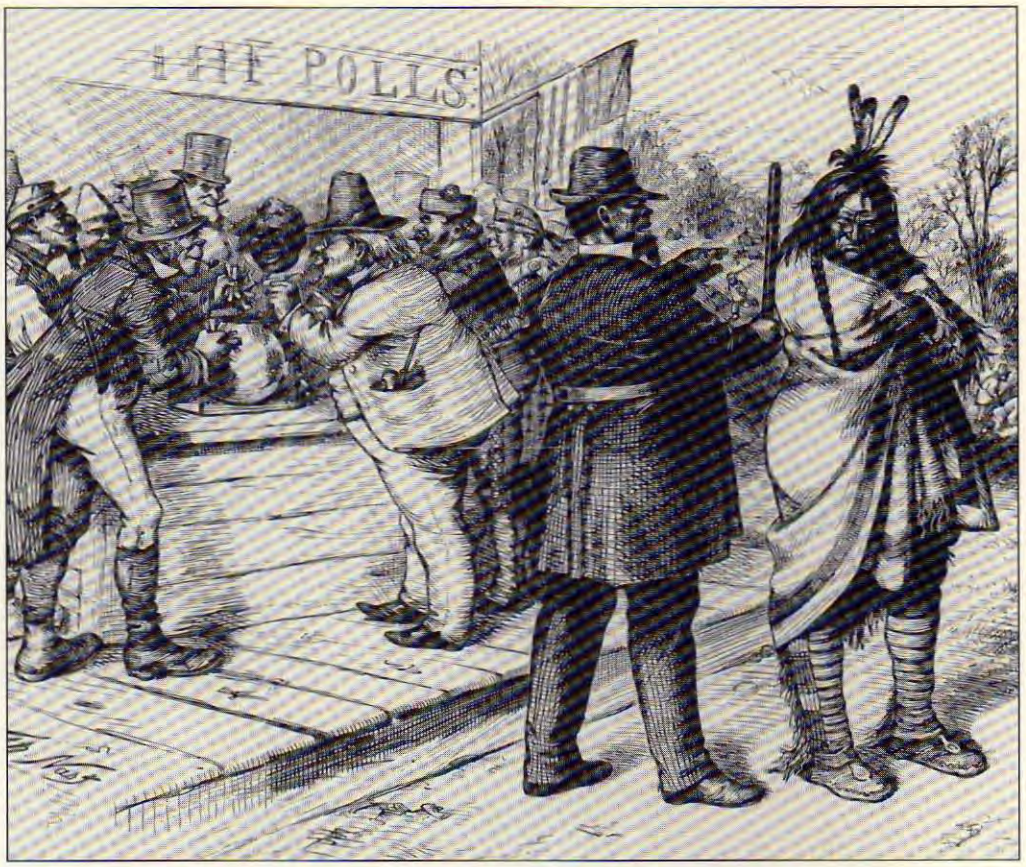
BUTLER, THE BEAST, AT WORK.



THE GUNBOAT CANDIDATE

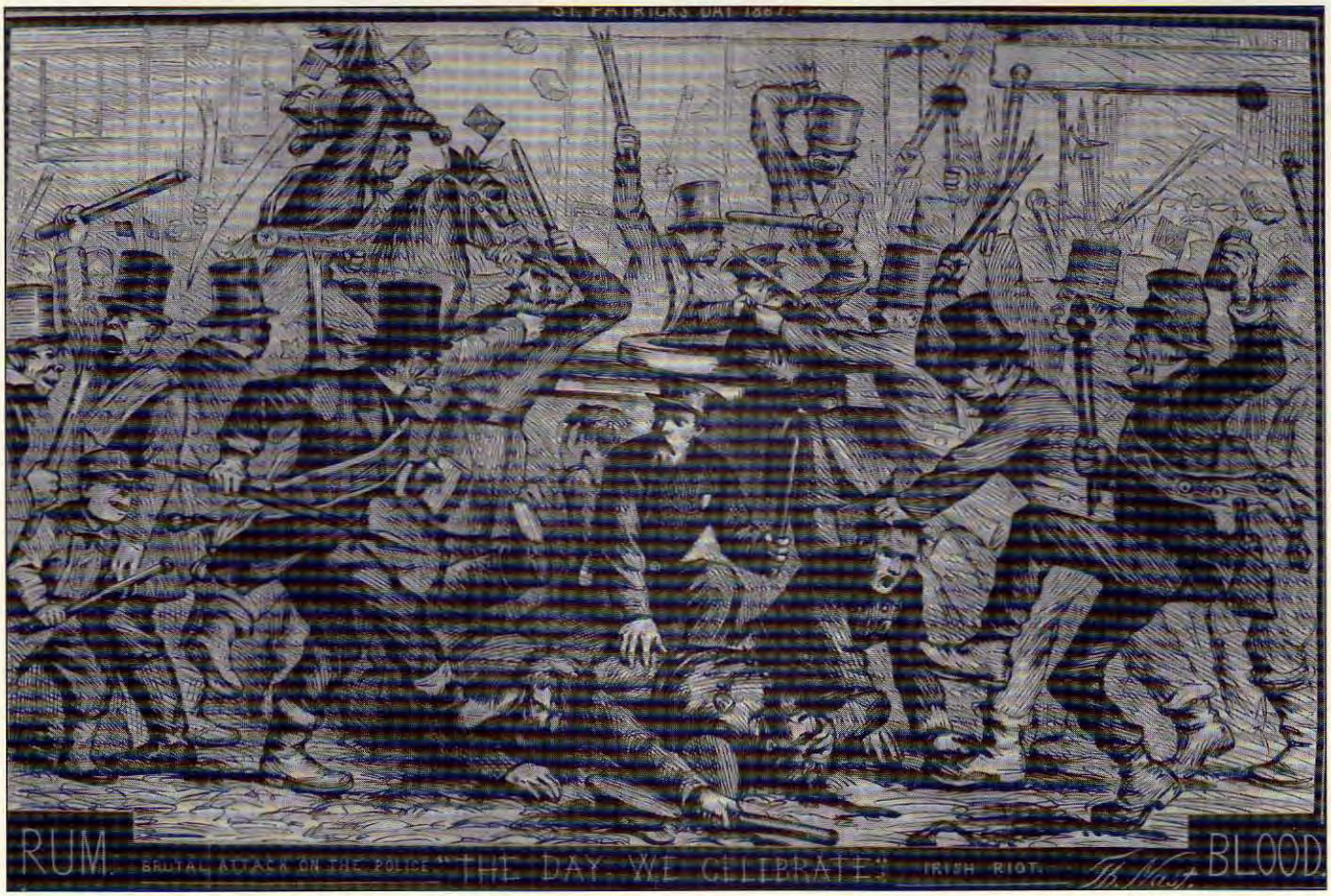
Above: *During the Civil War, Currier and Ives mass produced lithograph cartoons. Hastily done, few were well drawn. The best were by Louis Maurer. "The Gunboat Candidate at the Battle of Malvern Hill" appeared during the 1864 Presidential election. Democratic candidate General McClellan is accused of incompetence. Sitting safely in his saddle mounted on the boom of the ironclad* Galena *(a reference to his abortive gunboat attack on Richmond and the battle ending the disastrous 1862 Peninsular Campaign), his uniform immaculate, McClellan urges, "Fight on my brave Soldiers and push the enemy to the wall, from this spanker boom your beloved General looks down upon you."*

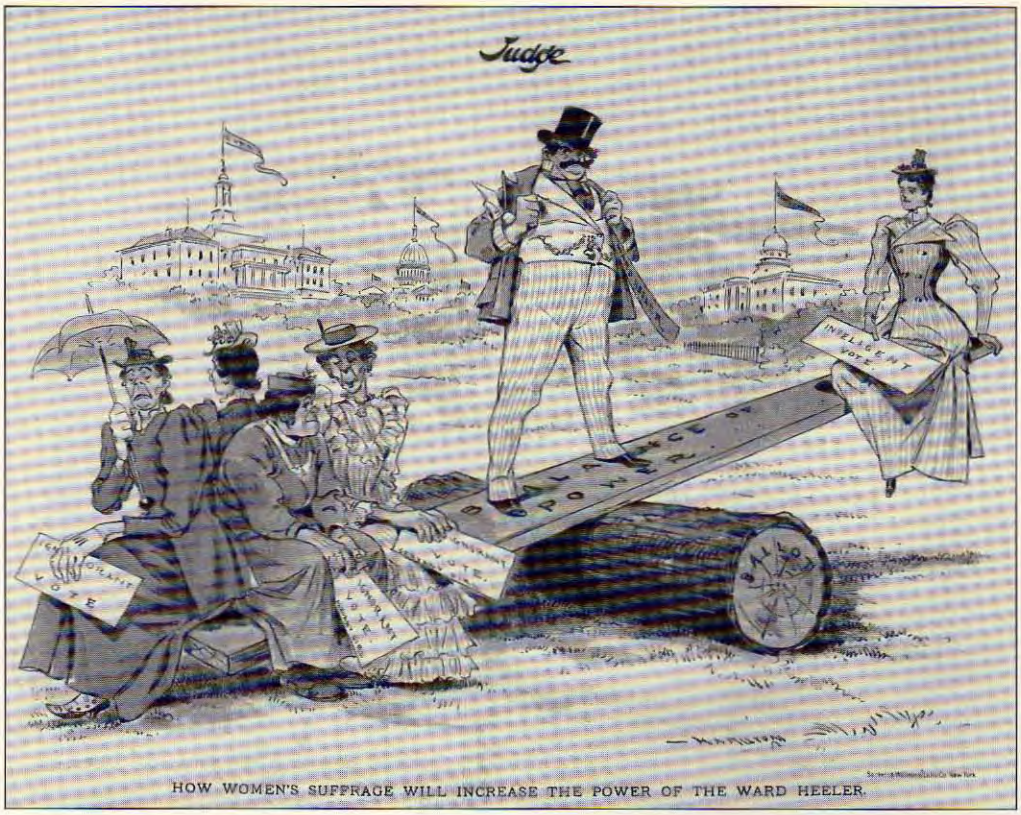
Thomas Nast, America's greatest political cartoonist, influenced public opinion for three decades. Between 1862 and 1885, over 3,000 of his drawings appeared in Harper's Weekly. *Nast was a genius in creating powerful images that simplified issues and focused emotions. He is remembered as the creator of Santa Claus, the Tammany Tiger, the Republican Elephant, and the Democratic Donkey. Like all great satirists, Nast had a strong moral sense. He crusaded for the rights of Native Americans and against the corruption of New York's Tammany Hall, yet he was capable of using ethnic stereotypes so vicious that they may reasonably be described as racist.*



Right: *In "Move On," Nast used ethnic stereotypes of both European immigrants and Native Americans to argue the injustice of excluding the latter group while allowing the former to become full citizens.*

Below: *The Irishman's image in American and English caricature had evolved from the crude but benign Paddy of the 1830s into a menacing, simian brute by the 1860s. Nast, using the code for Irishmen first seen in* Punch *cartoons — the sloping forehead, long upper lip, huge mouth, and jutting jaw — depicted Irish marchers attacking policemen during the St. Patrick's Day riot of 1867.*





Left: Judge *attracted a stable of artists whose talents were enlisted for the Republican Party. Grant Hamilton's "How Women's Suffrage Will Increase the Power of the Ward Heeler" (1894) is typical in using prejudice against Irish immigrants and fear of corrupt politicians as a rationale for denying women the right to vote.*

Judge and *Puck* changed the character of American graphic humor in the 1870-80s. Both were militantly partisan weeklies — *Puck* Democratic, *Judge* Republican. They raised the artistic quality of American graphic humor, but in their competition, both reached new depths in political abuse. *Puck* and *Judge* would monopolize the market until the final years of the century, when they were eclipsed by the metropolitan newspapers and syndicated editorial cartoons.



Right: *Joseph Keppler,* Puck's *founder, succeeded Nast as America's leading cartoonist. For* Puck's *cover, February 2, 1898, Keppler drew on the traditional alliance between the Democratic Party and the American working man.*

— *continued from page 1*

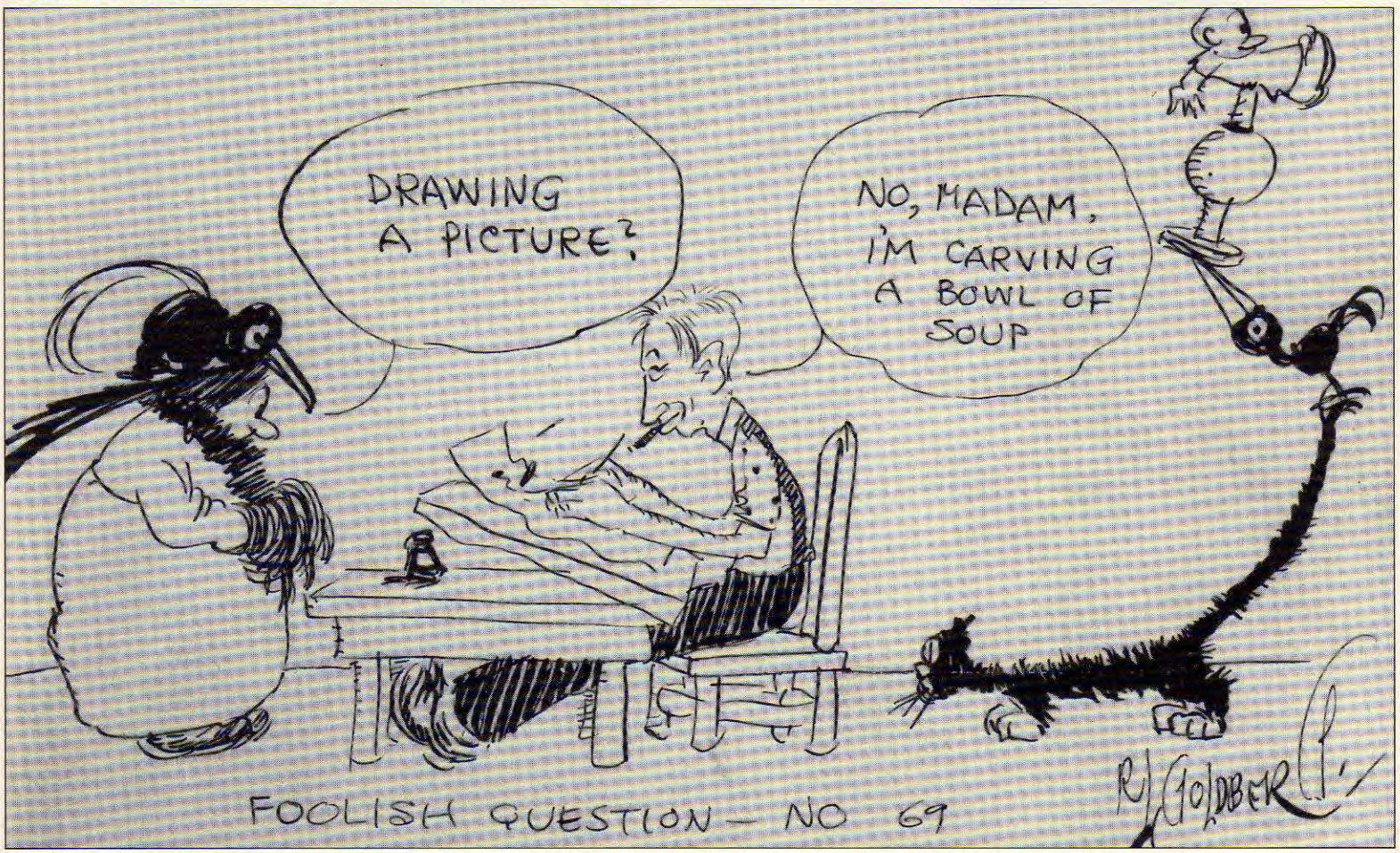
Prints, unlike newspapers or periodicals, were not subject to censorship or libel laws. They obviated the need for literacy. Caricatures were sold as separate sheets in printshops and circulated in coffeehouses. In the hands of artists like Hogarth, Gillray, Rowlandson, and Cruikshank, the cartoon became an accepted part of political controversy.

It was this English tradition that Americans imitated. Over the years, as the Clements Library collected American caricature, it collected English graphic satire as well. During the 1950s, the Library developed an outstanding body of cartoons relating to the American Revolution by English artists. In the 1980s, the library began collecting the caricatures of James Sayers and James Gillray. Through the generosity of Duane N. Diedrich, the Library has a fine group of original Thomas Nast drawings. Recently, a remarkable opportunity arose to acquire a large number of Jacksonian and Civil War era cartoons from a collection made at the time these prints were issued. Today, the Clements can provide researchers with a broad range of graphic satire.

The American caricatures presented here, a sampling of our holdings, range from rare colonial imprints to nineteenth century pulp magazines, from fine engravings on single sheets to lithographs mass produced for the popular market; there are woodcuts, the staple of weekly illustrated newspapers, and even original drawings. Together, they cover nearly 175 years of American caricature, from the 1760s to the 1930s, from Paul Revere to Gluyas Williams. They are presented, not as art, but as evidence, as a mirror reflecting changes and continuity in American history.

Right: *Gluyas Williams' cartoons are synonymous with the early years of the* The New Yorker. *One of the original group of artists hired when the magazine was founded in 1925, his elegant drawings and urbane wit projected exactly the right image. American comic art was transformed by* The New Yorker. *The modern cartoon — a picture integrated with a caption to clinch a joke — was created for its pages. Williams produced a series of "Industrial Crises" drawings for* The New Yorker. *Here multimillionaire J.P. Morgan, to make ends meet after the 1929 Stock Market crash, resorts to lending out the Morgan Library's priceless rare books and manuscripts to patrons for 4 cents a day.*

Below: *Rube Goldberg drew this caricature of himself in 1910 as his affectionate contribution to a friend's autograph book.*





INDUSTRIAL CRISES

Owing to loss-taking, the Morgan Library is forced to go on a circulating basis.

Drawing by Gluyas Williams, c 1933, 1961 The New Yorker Magazine, *Inc. All Rights Reserved*

MARY DARLY, CARICATURIST

Mary Darly, a London print maker and etcher by trade, an ingenious artist with a wicked wit, changed the face of English political prints. A contemporary of Hogarth, she lacked his genius and skill, yet her caricatures, drawn, as she advertised them, in the "O'Garthian Stile," were striking. No less so was her contribution to the art of graphic satire.

Mary and her husband, Matthew, were well known in the London publishing trade of the 1750s-1760s. Their shop in the Strand, opposite the stalls of Hungerford Market, produced more political prints than any of the others scattered between St. Paul's Churchyard and Charing Cross. The Darlys were creative in marketing their political prints. Some they sold as single sheets, others were collected into small books. They were the first to print satires on small cards, a popular innovation, much like the modern picture postcard. The Darlys thrived on political rancor. They had greeted George the Third's new reign with a torrent of scurrilous attacks on Lord Bute, advisor to the young King and allegedly his mother's lover. Mary herself had designed and etched most of the prints they sold.

In December 1762, a notice appeared for *A Book of Caricaturas on Sixty Copper-Plates. With the Principles of Designing, in that Droll and pleasing Manner: by M. Darly*. It was the first attempt by an English artist to set rules for caricature drawing. Mary's text was two brief paragraphs. "Caricature is the burlesque of character, or an exaggeration of nature, when not very pleasing." Drawing, she claimed, was excellent diversion for young ladies and gentlemen, "Tis the most diverting species of designing and will certainly keep those that practise it out of the hippo or Vapours," that is, off the race track and free of melancholy. Her rules were simple:

"Observe what sort of a line forms the Phiz or Carrick, you want to describe, wither its straight lined, Externaly circular, internaly circular, or Ogeed. When you have found out the line, then take notice of the parts as to their

Bottom row, pages 14 and 15: *Mary Darly's technique for drawing "carricks," shown on the left, was adopted by James Sayers to caricature English politicians William Pitt, Lord North, and General Burgoyne (1789).*

Figure 3

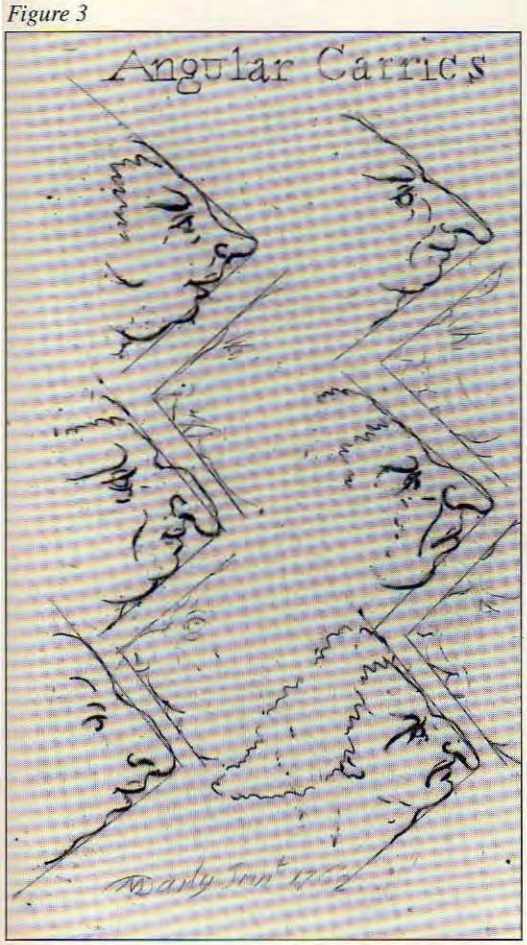
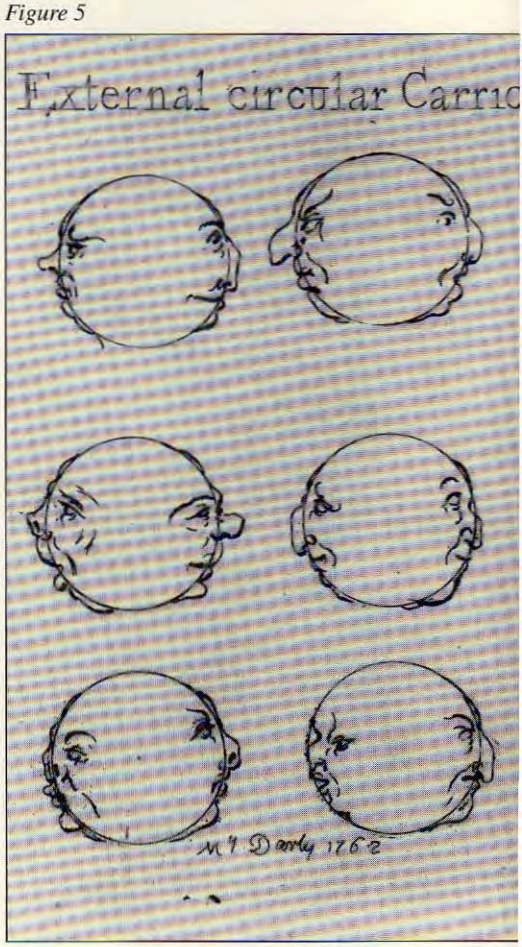


Figure 4



Figure 5



situation, projection and sinking, then by comparing your observations with the samples in the book, delineate your Carrick giving it the proper touches till finished. Keep constantly practising from this book till drawing in this manner becomes familar & easy & is attended with pleasure."

The remainder of Mary Darly's small book consisted of plates illustrating her rules for drawing "carricks," based on physiognomy — the "science" of reading an individual's character from outward appearance. Her drawings revolutionized the style of English political prints. Rather than use emblems, symbols, or animals, to represent public figures, artists began to produce caricatures of public figures. James Sayers, working in the 1780s, was the first to use Mary Darly's rules to develop a recognizable, easily repeated recipe for an individual politician's face. Gillray perfected the technique a decade later.

Thanks to the generosity of our Associates, the Clements Library recently acquired a fine copy of Mary Darly's seminal book.

Figures 1 and 2 (Right)*: Heads drawn by Mary Darly to illustrate the technique of caricature.*



Figure 1

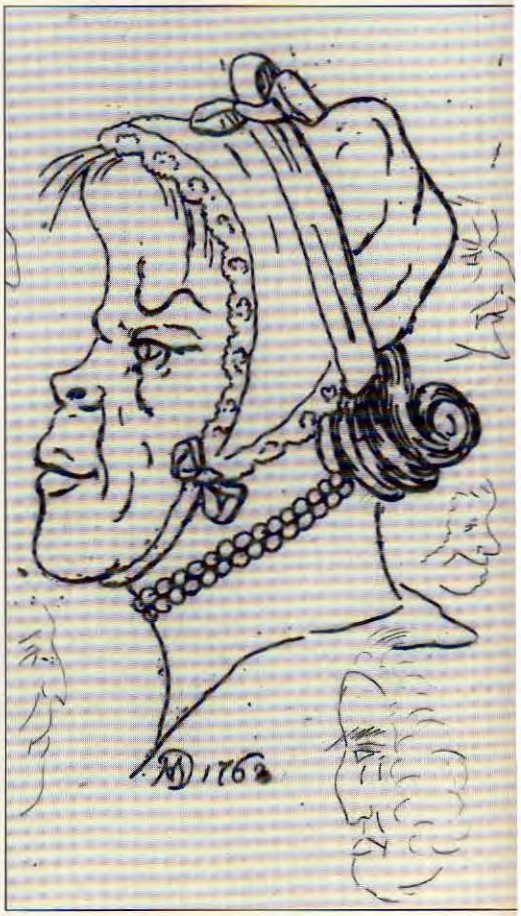


Figure 2

Figure 6

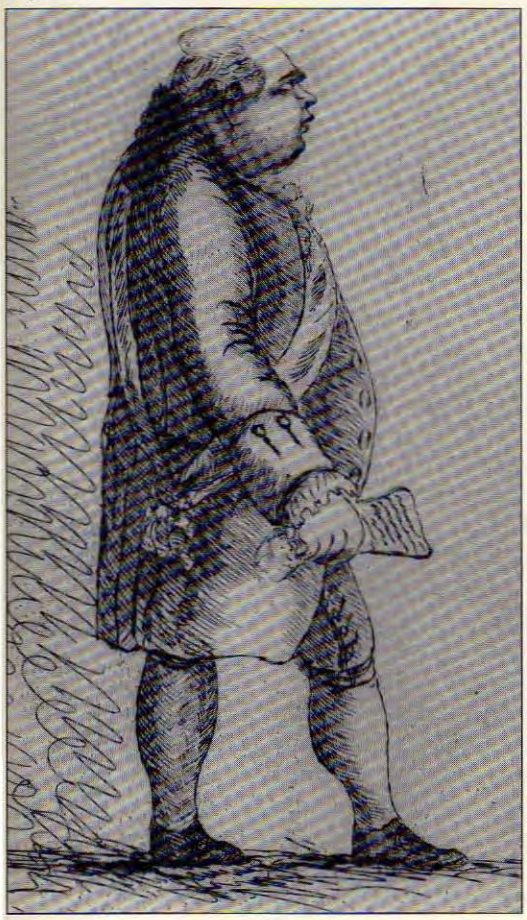


Figure 7

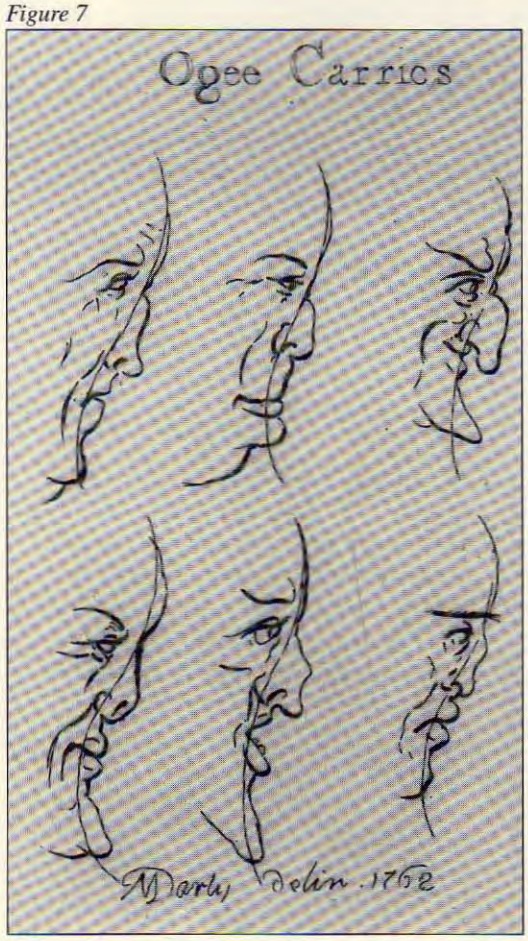


Figure 8





Above: *James Gillray's masterpiece,* Doublures of Characters: or - Striking Resemblances in Phisiogmomy *(1798) predicts the moral deterioration of leading Whig politicians, including Charles James Fox (fig. 1) and playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan (fig. 2).*

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Clements Library Associates share an interest in American history and a desire to ensure the continued growth of the Library's collections. Funds received from Associate memberships are used exclusively to purchase historical materials. Annual membership is $25.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 10-June 30, Exhibit, *America in 1795: "The Preservation of our Peace, Foreign and Domestic"*

May 2, Clements Library Associates Board Meeting, three o'clock in the afternoon, at the Library.

May 6-7, 17th Annual Ann Arbor Antiquarian Book Fair, a benefit for the Clements Library, at the Michigan Union, in the ballroom, 2nd floor, Sat. May 6, 5:30-9:00, Sun. May 7, 11:00-5:00. Admission $3.00.

May 19, Clements Library Duplicate Sale, closing date.

June 1, Clements Library Associates Spring Program. Lecture, *Declarations of Independence,* Professor Pauline Maier, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, at the Library, 7:30 pm, reception following.

June 2-4, First Annual Conference of the Institute of Early American History and Culture

July 10-September 8, Exhibit commemorating the end of World War II.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Conference on Early American History

On June 2-4 the First Annual Conference of the Institute of Early American History and Culture, based in Williamsburg, Virginia, will take place at the University of Michigan. The aim of the Conference is to bring together senior and younger scholars of early America (to about 1815) in a forum for the rich and diverse range of work now being done in that active and exciting field of study. Meeting rooms at the top of the Rackham Building are the site of thirty sessions scheduled for the three days, Friday through Sunday, while the Clements Library will host informal receptions Friday and Saturday evenings. Clements Library Associates are welcome to attend the Conference. For program information, please call the Library (313) 764-2347.

Clements Library Associates Spring Program

Professor Pauline Maier will speak on "Declarations of Independence" at the Clements Associates Spring program, June 1, at 7:30 pm. A distinguished historian of the Colonial, Revolutionary, and Early National periods, Professor Maier has been on the faculty of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology since 1978. Her numerous publications have explored the nature of popular politics in early America; they include *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain: 1765-1776,* and more recently, *The Old Revolutionaries: Political Lives in the Age of Samuel Adams.*