William Hogarth's *Four Stages of Cruelty* and Moral Blindness

Maureen Warren

Ann Gill must have believed that she would run away with Tom Nero and start a family. Why else would she go to the cemetery in the middle of the night after she had robbed her benevolent mistress?[1] And what did Tom do in return? Rather than rewarding Ann's loyalty, he slit her throat. The townspeople captured Tom, but the damage was already done. Ann Gill was just one more casualty in Tom Nero's pursuit for personal gain.

This narration of Tom's vicious deeds is derived from and describes the third print in a series entitled *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, created by William Hogarth in 1751 (Figure 3). Hogarth depicts Tom's betrayal as the logical extension of his cruel behavior toward numerous other victims. In the first print in the series, Tom tortures small animals for his own amusement (Figure 1). In the second, he vents his frustration by beating a horse to death (Figure 2). Tom murders his pregnant lover in the third print and his punishment appears in the fourth (Figures 3 and 4).

Hogarth's *Four Stages of Cruelty* is a cautionary tale. These engravings warn the viewer not merely about the dangers of hurting other human beings, but also about the origins of such behavior. Although Tom's cruelty eventually leads to homicide, Hogarth's principal interest in the series is preventing violence against animals—not people. This paper explores the dominant motifs in *The Four Stages of Cruelty* in order to understand how Hogarth conceptualized morality. Situated within the Enlightenment discourse of sensibility, Hogarth drew upon the idea of moral sentimentalism as proposed by Lord Shaftesbury.[2] Shaftesbury suggests that human beings act ethically because they are prompted by an inner, sixth sense. As such, in order to represent Tom's malfunctioning moral sense, Hogarth employed the *leitmotif* of blindness in *The Four Stages of Cruelty* to equate the inability to see with the inability to sense right from wrong.

Phase One: Diminishing Moral Sentimentalism

William Hogarth (1697-1764) was no stranger to social satire. His depictions of contemporary vice and corruption were so popular that such scenes, regardless of their authorship, are now called "Hogarthian."[3] In England, he pioneered the practice of creating modern history paintings that edify the viewer through a narrative sequence of events. Like other examples of this genre, *The Four Stages of Cruelty* begins with a dubious protagonist, escalates with increasingly repugnant behavior, climaxes with legal retribution, and concludes with a spectacle of public humiliation.[4] *The Four Stages of Cruelty* can be further divided into two distinct narrative units: a first phase involving Tom's diminishing moral sensibility and a second phase evincing his complete moral bankruptcy. In the first phase, Tom and his cohorts are abusing small animals in the London parish of Saint Giles, a slum notorious for poverty and violence (Figure 1).[5] Although he is the leading character in the series, Tom might be overlooked amidst the tumult of malevolent activity, if not for the boy who points at him while drawing a hanged man with "Tom Nero" written below. Tom stands in tattered clothing, about

This article would not have been possible without the unwavering support of my doctoral advisor, Dr. Claudia Swan, and the enthusiastic assistance of Dr. Elizabeth Liebman, who taught a graduate seminar on "Sensation and Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Arts and Sciences." I would further like to acknowledge the tremendous help I received from Allison Hansen as well as the organizers, participants, and attendees of the Graduate Student Symposium in the Department of Art History at Florida State University and the editorial staff of *Athanor*.

1 The letter in the lower left corner of *Cruelty in Perfection* clarifies the story for the viewer. It reads: "Dear Tommy, My mistress has been the best of women to me, and my conscience flies in my face as often as I think of wronging her; yet I am resolved to venture body and soul to do as you would have me, so do not fail to meet me as you said you would, for I will bring along with me all the things I can lay my hands on. So no more at present; but I remain yours till death. Ann Gill."

2 Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury, "An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit," in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Lawrence Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

3 *Grove Art Online*, s.v. "Hogarth, William" (by Shelia O'Connell), http://www.oxfordartonline.com/ (accessed May 2, 2009).

4 Hogarth used this same narrative structure in *A Rake's Progress*. In that series Tom Rakewell shuns his pregnant fiancé, squanders his inheritance, lands in debtor's prison on Fleet Street, and finally is sent to the madhouse in Bethlehem Hospital (known as Bedlam) where he provides entertainment for wealthy women.

5 The small round patch with "SG" on Tom's shoulder identifies him as a student at the charity school of Saint Giles. John Nichols and John Ireland, *Hogarth's Works: With Life and Anecdotal Descriptions of His Pictures* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1883), 54.

to plunge an arrow into a dog's rectum.[6] Boys commit numerous other malicious acts around Tom, including tying a bone to a dog's tail, tossing a cat out of a window, hanging cats by their tails, and burning out the eyes of a dove with a red-hot wire. Amidst all this cruelty, only one child attempts to intervene. A well-dressed boy stays the hand of Tom to offer him a tart, in hopes that he will leave the poor dog alone. The caption below the engraving, written by the playwright and clergyman James Townley, praises the lone do-gooder and reinforces the didactic function of the series by urging the viewer to *"Learn from this fair Example—You Whom savage Sports delight, How Cruelty disgusts the view While Pity charms the sight."*[7]

Hogarth illustrates different categories of malicious behavior in *The First Stage of Cruelty*. Some of these vicious acts were so conventional that they became sporting events. Two bloods sports appear in the first scene: "cat baiting" (provoking a dog to attack a cat) and "cock throwing" (tying a rooster to a stake in order to throw clubs at it). Blood sports also appear in the background of *The Second Stage of Cruelty* (Figure 2). There, a crowd of spectators watch as a bull throws a person into the air with his horns. This incident suggests the practice of "bullbaiting," an eighteenth-century blood sport in which people wagered as to which dog in a group could most injure a bull without dying.[8] In Hogarth's print, the bull manages to break free from the tether and attack one of the people in the crowd. This small detail constitutes the only instance in which an animal is the agent rather than the object of violence in *The Four Stages of Cruelty*. Hogarth's emphasis on blood sports in the series suggests that they were a form of animal cruelty that was both routine and encouraged by society at large.

Hogarth represents many other widely accepted forms of animal abuse in *The Second Stage of Cruelty*. While the first engraving includes cruelty toward domestic animals for pleasure, the second shows the exploitation of beasts of burden for profit. In this print, Tom raises his whip to beat to death an emaciated horse, which has collapsed under the weight of an overburdened coach. The corpulent, gesticulating lawyers in the carriage are also complicit. They have packed the coach with too many people in order to avoid paying for additional transportation. To the right of this gruesome scene, a man beats a lamb that has fallen down on the way to market. Behind them, another man prods a donkey that is mercilessly weighed down by two men and a surplus of goods. Hogarth depicts the first human victim in this engraving. On the right, a drayman on a beer cart has fallen asleep and failed to notice a little boy who will be crushed under his wheels. Townley's caption praises the animals as "generous" and "tender" and questions the motives of those people who enjoy or profit from their suffering.[9]

In the first two prints, the sheer abundance of violent deeds characterizes London at mid-century as an extremely cruel place. However, Hogarth was not the only person who criticized such behavior. Animal rights advocates in the eighteenth century complained that children hung animals, nailed them to gates, put out their eyes, cut them open, and even burned them to death. Animal cruelty was not only more common, but also more accepted in public.[10] In addition to pets, beasts of burden also endured brutal conditions. They were routinely beaten, whipped, and otherwise mistreated. Whips were not the only means of disciplining pack animals. People sometimes cut slits into the spinal cord in order to insert a wooden wedge that could be tapped with a mallet to cause excruciating pain.[11] Animals used for labor were often malnourished, mistreated, and their carcasses eventually sold as food. While domestic pets fared much better in the eighteenth century, only purebred dogs or exotic specimens (such as monkeys) were chosen for companion animals. Mongrel dogs and stray cats were targeted for cruel treatment by children and extermination by the government.[12]

6 Ibid. Ireland suggests that this act deliberately evokes a demon in the 1635 engraving, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, by Jacques Callot. The act of inserting an arrow into an animal's rectum is the only cruel act not frequently mentioned in eighteenth-century sources. Hogarth might have included it both to reference the print about demonic torment as well as to draw more attention to Nero by representing him as unusually cruel.

7 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Townley, James (1714–1778), Playwright and Church of England Clergyman" (by L. Lynnette Eckersley), http://www.oxforddnb.com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/view/article/27606/ (accessed May 25, 2009). Townley was a deacon in the Church of England who was known for his curriculum reforms, which stressed the importance of math and drama. When he wrote these captions for Hogarth, he was employed as the third under-master for the Merchant Taylors' School in London. The full caption reads "While various Scenes of sportive Woe / The Infant Race employ. / And tortur'd Victims bleeding shew / The Tyrant in the Boy. / Behold! a Youth of gentler Heart, / To spare the Creature's pain / O take, he cries—take all my Tart, / But Tears and Tart are vain. / Learn from this fair Example—You / Whom savage Sports delight, / How Cruelty disgusts the view / While Pity charms the sight."

8 The now-extinct Old English Bulldog was bred for bullbaiting. Their closest descendants include the American pit bull terrier, American bulldog, and some types of the Staffordshire terrier. Kathryn Shevelow, *For the Love of Animals: The Rise of the Animal Protection Movement* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2008), 40.

9 "The generous Steed in hoary Age / Subdu'd by Labour lies, / And mourns a cruel Master's rage, / While Nature Strength denies. / The tender Lamb o'er drove and faint, / Amidst expiring Throws; / Bleats forth it's innocent complaint / And dies beneath the Blows. / Inhuman Wretch! say whence proceeds / This coward Cruelty? / What Int'rest springs from barb'rous deeds? / What Joy from Misery?"

10 Shevelow, *For the Love of Animals,* 135-6. Shevelow cites a letter to the newspaper from John Lawrence who claims to have seen children performing these acts. She also states that children sometimes hung animals in order to replicate the executions at the Tyburn gallows. Ibid., 130.

11 Ibid., 133.

12 Ibid., 128-9.

Phase Two: Moral Bankruptcy

The penultimate engraving in the series, *Cruelty in Perfection*, portrays the murder of Ann Gill—the proof of Tom's moral bankruptcy after his many years of bad behavior (Figure 3). Finally, Tom looks distressed—not because he regrets his ruthless actions but rather because he fears his imminent punishment, which we see portrayed in *The Reward of Cruelty* (Figure 4). The caption below the scene states that such cruelty can not be hidden by "Night, with all its sable Cloud" because even in the hours of darkness "Foul Murder cries aloud."[13] In the final print, we can surmise that Tom has been sentenced to death on the gallows because the noose is still wrapped around his neck. His body lies on a table in an anatomy theater filled with surgeons. In the center, the chief surgeon sits in a chair and gestures to the empty ribcage with a stick as three surgeons dissect Tom's foot, abdomen, and eye. [14] A dog sniffs Tom's heart, which has fallen onto the floor next to a man who collects Tom's entrails in a bucket. The names "James Field" and "Macleane" appear above the skeletons in the niches in the upper corners, alluding to the boxer and the highwayman hanged in 1751 and 1750 respectively.[15] In the lower left corner, a cauldron boils bones, which reminds the viewer that Tom's skeleton will be boiled and reassembled in order to preserve the memory of his punishment for others.[16] The crowd exhibits various reactions to the anatomy lesson. Some watch with enthusiasm while others seem completely uninterested. The final caption cautions the viewer not to feel sympathy because Tom's cruelty merited the "dire disgrace" of public dismemberment so that his bones will serve as an everlasting "Monument of Shame."[17]

Locke, Lord Shaftesbury and the Moral Sense

Many writers have commented on the dominant narrative in *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, which urges the viewer to behave virtuously. Ronald Paulson and James A. Steintrager claim that Hogarth criticizes authority figures in this series. Paulson makes the reasonable assertion that overseers, both schoolmasters and carriage owners, are absent and therefore unable to regulate Tom's behavior. As such, Paulson interprets *The Four Stages of Cruelty* as a call for increased legal and civic regulation.[18] Steintrager proposes an alternative interpretation, arguing that Hogarth attempted to convince viewers that kindness is the right and natural response and thus the cruelty of both Tom Nero and the surgeons is monstrous. Steintrager doubts the underlying logic of the series, questioning whether pity can be understood as an inherently-human value if it is so unusual in Hogarth's images.[19] However, while authority figures (whether absent guardians or present surgeons) play an important part in the story of Tom Nero, they are not Hogarth's foremost concern. An examination of the dominant visual motifs reveals that Hogarth did not appeal to reason as the arbiter of morality in *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, rather, the series engages mid-century sensationalist discourse. In order to adequately explain the means by which Hogarth articulates his claims, we must first examine John Locke's notion of sensibility and then Lord Shaftesbury's subsequent writings about the moral sense.

Sensationalist discourse was based on the notion of the *tabula rasa* (or blank slate) proposed in 1690 by John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. According to Locke's theory, human beings are born without preexisting knowledge and they learn only through sensory experience.

13 "To lawless Love when once betray'd, / soon Crime to Crime succeeds: / At length beguil'd to Theft, the Maid / By her Beguiler bleeds. / Yet learn, seducing Man, 'nor Night, / With all its sable Cloud, / Can screen the guilty Deed from Sight; / Foul Murder cries aloud. / The gaping Wounds, and bloodstain'd steel, / Now shock his trembling Soul: / But Oh! what Pangs his Breast must feel, / When Death his Knell shall toll."

14 The German art historian Bernd Krysmanski noticed numerous similarities between *The Reward of Cruelty* and a woodcut from the 1495 medical treatise *Fasciculo di Medicina*, which illustrates a medieval dissection. Bernd W. Krysmanski, *Hogarth's Enthusiasm Delineated: Nachahmung Als Kritik Am Kennertum: Eine Werkanalyse: Zugleich Ein Einblick in Das Sarkastisch-Aufgeklärte Denken Eines "Künstlerrebellen" Im Englischen 18. Jahuhundert*, Studien Zur Kunstgeschichte (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1996), 1:166-7n430 and 2:904. Clearly, Hogarth borrowed the basic compositional structure from the earlier woodcut, down to the container in the foreground for the discarded viscera; but while the medieval anatomical print provided the underlying structure for *The Reward of Cruelty*, Hogarth updated the scene with references to contemporary Londoners.

15 Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth's Graphic Works: First Complete Edition, Compiled and with a Commentary by Ronald Paulson*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 1:241.

16 Barbara Jaffe and James A. Steintrager both believe that Hogarth desires to show the cruelty of the surgeons. While his portrayal is certainly unflattering, the images focus on cruelty to animals to a much greater degree, and the evaluation of the surgeons is secondary to the larger message of moral blindness. Barbara Jaffe, "William Hogarth and Eighteenth Century English Law Relating to Capital Punishment: Symposium on the Art of Execution," *Law and Literature* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 267-278; James A. Steintrager, "Perfectly Inhuman: Moral Monstrosity in Eighteenth-Century Discourse," *Eighteenth-century Life* 21, no. 2 (May 1997); James A. Steintrager, "Monstrous Appearances: Hogarth's 'Four Stages of Cruelty' and the Paradox of Inhumanity," *Eighteenth-century: Theory and Interpretation* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2001); James A. Steintrager, "Animals and the Mark of the Human," in *Cruel Delight: Enlightenment Culture and the Inhuman* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 37-59.

17 "Behold the Villain'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 Bones shall rise, / His Monument of shame."

18 Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth: Art and Politics, 1750-1764*, vol. 3 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991).

19 In fact, Steintrager suggests that some viewers may have seen the series as promoting cruelty. He states: "Take away our prior orientation in favor of sympathy and non-cruelty, and it becomes more difficult to read the series and less plausible that it contains a clear message. Without such an orientation, instead of concluding that the series opposes cruelty, a viewer might surmise that the 'Four Stages' concerns the unjust persecution of a lad who enjoys sporting with animals." Steintrager, "Animals and the Mark of the Human," 51.

In many regards, *The Four Stages of Cruelty* echoes advice given by John Locke in his 1693 treatise on education. Locke urges parents to prevent children from tormenting small animals because it will lead to the loss of compassion for their fellow human beings.[20] Instead, parents must teach their children to respect even the smallest creatures in order to become moral adults, advice that corresponds to the metanarrative of Hogarth's series.

To understand the means by which Hogarth makes his argument, we must turn to Locke's student, Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper, the First Earl of Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury published an essay entitled "Inquiry concerning Virtue or Merit" in 1711 and again in 1718 in his book: *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*.[21] This text became the basis for the idea of sensationalist morality.[22] Shaftesbury made two interrelated arguments in *Inquiry*. First, he stated that goodness is something both humans and animals can achieve if they contribute to their species as a whole and, in turn, they benefit the entire ecosystem, which he refers to as the system of earth. This goodness has nothing to do with morality because creatures react to their "passion or affection" without considering the consequences.[23]

Shaftesbury then turns to a discussion of virtue, which he describes as the basis of morality and the prerogative of human beings alone. Virtue is not a rational process of moral evaluation. In other words, it is not merely thinking about what is right and wrong. It is literally a sixth sense that motivates human beings to act in response to sensory information. Shaftesbury explains that the senses perceive more than just tangible objects. They also transform touch, sight, smell, taste, and sound into "the affections of pity, kindness, gratitude and their contraries" so that once sensory stimulation is "brought into the mind by reflection" it can "become objects."[24] These "affections" (or feelings, as they might now be called) are judged to be pleasant and "liked" or unpleasant and "disliked" by the sixth sense, which Shaftesbury defines as the moral or reflected sense. The virtuous person responds to the emotions generated by the senses by liking the moral and good and disliking the immoral and bad and is consequently stirred to action.[25] These virtuous actions subsequently promote the well-being of humanity and thus the goodness of the system.[26]

Shaftesbury states very clearly that reason alone is not a sufficient basis for morality. Too many practices can be rationalized in some manner or another to appear moral in their logic when, in fact, they are immoral.[27] Just as Locke focuses on childhood education, Shaftesbury argues that repeated and dogmatic practices can either nourish or distort a person's character—repetition is key. For Shaftesbury the incentive for moral behavior is not solely or even primarily the positive or negative response of a parent or authority figure. Virtue is accompanied by a multitude of personal and societal rewards. Sympathy, the effect achieved when a virtuous person desires to help another, can be more satisfying than even sensory pleasure. He argues that sympathy, even when aroused "by mere illusion, as in tragedy,…is the highest delight and affords greater enjoyment of thought and sentiment than anything besides can do in a way of sense and common appetite."[28]

The Four Stages of Cruelty and Moral Blindness

Rather than appealing to reason, Hogarth intended to develop his viewers' moral sense and cultivate a sympathetic response to *The Four Stages of Cruelty*. Even if Hogarth's audience did not have access to Shaftesbury's theory, they could be engaged by the idea of the moral sense in purely visual terms.[29] If Hogarth intended to show his viewers this sixth sense in action, he faced a difficult task: after all, how

20 John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (London: printed for W. Baynes, by Hemingway and Crook, Blackburn, 1800), collection of the British Library, accessible in Eighteenth-Century Collections Online, 134, section 116.

21 Shaftesbury, "An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit," 163-230.

22 *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Lord Shaftesbury [Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury]" (by Michael B. Gill), http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/shaftesbury/ (accessed June 19, 2010).

23 Shaftesbury, "An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit," 169, see also 167-172.

24 Ibid., 172.

25 Ibid.

26 Gill, "Lord Shaftesbury." Gill argues that because the relative goodness of behavior must be determined by reason, both reason and sentiment play important roles in morality according to Shaftesbury. However, Shaftesbury is quite clear that the moral or reflected sense operates independently of reason to judge right from wrong.

27 Shaftesbury, "An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit," 175.

28 Ibid., 203-4.

29 The move to create a visual analogue to Shaftesbury's theory would be in keeping with Hogarth's goal of making this series as accessible as possible to the lower classes. Paulson has demonstrated that Hogarth tried to keep the cost low and the message straightforward in order to reach this audience. Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth: His Life, Art, and Times* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 2:110. Initially, Hogarth hired John Bell to make woodcuts with the hope that they would be inexpensive, but after two blocks were made it became clear that intaglio would be a cheaper mode of production. Hogarth issued the series as engravings and very few impressions of the woodcuts survive. Little is know about John Bell, except that he was an English woodcut-artist who was still working in 1780. Paulson, *Hogarth's Graphic Works*, 63. Engravings from *The Four Stages of Cruelty* were sold for one shilling apiece if they were printed on ordinary paper, but, for sixpence more, a collector could buy a version on superior paper. Hogarth made his intentions clear by publishing the following announcement in the London *Evening Post*: "N.B. As the Subjects of these Prints are calculated to reform some reigning Vices peculiar to the lower Class of People, in hopes to render them of more extensive use, the Author has publish'd them in the cheapest Manner possible," cited in Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 3:17.

can an image portray an internal process? In order to solve this dilemma, Hogarth visualized the moral sense by equating it with sight and thereby associating cruelty with the loss of sight.[30] Indeed, upon closer examination, blindness occurs as a *leitmotif* in each engraving in *The Four Stages of Cruelty*.

In *The First Stage of Cruelty*, a boy sticks a red-hot wire into a dove's eye (Figure 5). The eye is blotted out with a large black circle, which issues a puff of smoke. A round finial on the balcony repeats the circle and thereby draws more attention to the blinding of the bird. One could even go so far as to suggest that the pompom on Tom's hat, which is in a diagonal with the finial and the bird, looks like the pupil of an eye—as does the circular tart in the kind boy's hand and the glass ball on the lamp post above.

This theme reccurs in *The Second Stage of Cruelty* (Figure 6). Both the drayman and the lamb have their eyes closed, although for very different reasons. One is asleep and the other is dead. However, a more literal blinding occurs on the left. Tom has beaten his horse so badly that he has dislodged an eye from the socket, which now dangles next to the blinders on the horse's harness. Unfortunately, this disturbing detail is not implausible. Eighteenth-century carters and coach drivers sometimes beat their animals hard enough to crush the skull or knock out the eyes.[31]

In *Cruelty in Perfection*, Hogarth continues to depict sightless victims. Ann Gill lies dead, with her mouth open and her eyes closed. Not only is the victim blind, but the spectators avert their gazes also so that they cannot see. The man wearing a hat to the right of Tom looks up, as if pleading for divine intervention or perhaps retribution. The gesture of the man who stands behind the fence is even more compelling (Figure 7). Although he holds the lantern that illuminates the corpse for all to see, he holds his hand up to block his own view—rendering himself blind to the brutality below. Finally, a bat—which was erroneously believed to be blind—flies through the night sky above.[32] This scene marks a transition in the series. In the first two images, Hogarth emphasized the role of eyewitness testimony. First, he included the little boy drawing a stick-figure hanging from the gallows and pointing to Tom. Then, Hogarth incorporated the man recording Tom's coach number in the second print. Both of these figures have seen Tom's brutal acts and respond with either a critique or an effort to curb his behavior. In the third print, evidence (the letter) replaces eyewitness testimony. The time for firsthand testimony has passed; the deed is done and Ann has been murdered. This shift is significant because Hogarth warns the viewer that in the descent toward moral blindness, there is a point at which one will never see the light of virtue again.

By the time we reach *The Reward of Cruelty*, Hogarth no longer bothers to show the victims losing their sight. Instead, he reiterates the underlying message of the entire series: cruelty is moral blindness. Whereas the instances of blindness in the first three scenes are all plausible in the context of eighteenth-century life, the way in which Hogarth incorporates the theme in *The Reward of Cruelty* is unexpected (Figure 8). Standard anatomical lessons did not include gouging the eyes out of the corpse with a large knife. This is a clear deviation from known practice. Even when surgeons dissected an eye, they did not use such a large knife to extract it. Furthermore, they did not use a large eye hook and a pulley to lift the head a few inches off the table. Like the round finial in the first print, these additions serve to repeat the circular forms (such as the eye, Tom's head, the hole in the hook, and the pulley) and draw more attention to the act of blinding. Viewers who recognized Dr. John Freke in *The Reward of Cruelty* would have been aware of yet another reference to vision. Dr. Freke (1688-1756) was the first ophthalmic surgeon in London, specializing in diseases of the eye.[33] In this print Hogarth took creative license in order to repeat his claims: to behave like Tom Nero is to have a dysfunctional moral sense. The enjoyment of cruelty signals an absence of virtue (the natural inclination to loathe the suffering of others and to enjoy the sensation of sympathy). If viewers hope to avoid a similar fate, they must develop their moral sense and take action to help those in need, and whether they are animals or a people makes no difference. This engraving brings the viewer full-circle and recalls the caption on the first print in the series that urged viewers to "Learn from this fair Example…How Cruelty disgusts the view, While Pity charms the sight."

William Hogarth achieved something significant with *The Four Stages of Cruelty*. He stated that

> there is no part of my works of which I am so proud…because I believe the publication of them has checked the diabolical

[30] Sensationalist philosophers were fascinated with blindness. Denis Diderot (1713-1784) published the 1749 book *Lettre sur les Aveugles*, in which a blind man discusses the role of the senses. Philosophers also debated "Molyneux's problem," which questioned the supposition of John Locke and William Molyneux (1659-1698) that a blind person who learned shapes (a sphere, a pyramid, a cube) by touch could not recognize them by sight alone if s/he were suddenly able to see.

[31] Shevelow, *For the Love of Animals* , 133.

[32] Christine Ammer, *The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 65. The idiom "blind as a bat" dates back to the late 1500s. Echolocation only began to be studied in the 1790s, when the Italian scientist Lazzaro Spallanzani (1729–1799) conducted a series of experiments on bats.

[33] Freke worked at St. Bartholomew's Hospital from 1729 to 1755. Ireland believes the Chief Surgeon is Freke while Paulson suggests it might be the man gouging out Nero's eye. Ireland, *Hogarth's Works,* 63; Paulson, *Hogarth's Graphic Works,* 1:29 and 449; and "The History of Medicine," Barts and The London Hospital, http://www.bartsandthelondon.nhs.uk/aboutus/history/medicine.asp.

> spirit of barbarity to the brute creation, which, I am sorry to say, was once so prevalent in this country.[34]

It seems *The Four Stages of Cruelty* had the desired effect.[35] Literary scholar Kathryn Shevelow contends that these images mark a turning point in the animal rights movement in England, which gained momentum in the second half of the century.[36] As such, Hogarth had good reason to feel pride in his work, not only for his high-minded ideals but also for their creative articulation in a visual format.

Northwestern University

[34] The remarks were reported by Mr. Sewell, the bookseller. *European Magazine* June 1801, cited in Paulson, *Hogarth: His Life,* 2:109

[35] This may be because *The Four Stages of Cruelty* remained in the public eye for generations, in part because the copperplates for the engravings survived well into the twentieth century. During Hogarth's lifetime, he pulled impressions as needed to supply print sellers and other customers. After his death, Hogarth's wife Jane took possession of the copperplates for *The Four Stages of Cruelty* and sold new impressions. A pricelist from 1765 reveals that customers could purchase the four prints in *The Four Stages of Cruelty* for six shillings or buy the larger bound set of "Hogarth's late engraved Works" for thirteen guineas. After Jane Hogarth died in 1789, numerous publishers acquired the plates for *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, along with many other copperplates Hogarth made after 1732, and republished them in volumes of Hogarth's prints. They were reissued at least ten times in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See the "Copperplates and Editions of Hogarth's Prints" section in Paulson, introduction to *Hogarth's Graphic Works,* 1:68-73.

[36] Shevelow, *For the Love of Animals,* 146.

Figure 1. William Hogarth, *First Stage of Cruelty* from *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, 1751, etching and engraving, 37.9 x 30.9 cm (plate), Princeton University Library, GC113. Photo credit: Princeton University Library, Graphic Arts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

Figure 2. William Hogarth, *Second Stage of Cruelty* from *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, 1751, etching and engraving, 38.3 x 32.2 cm (plate), Princeton University Library, GC113. Photo credit: Princeton University Library, Graphic Arts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

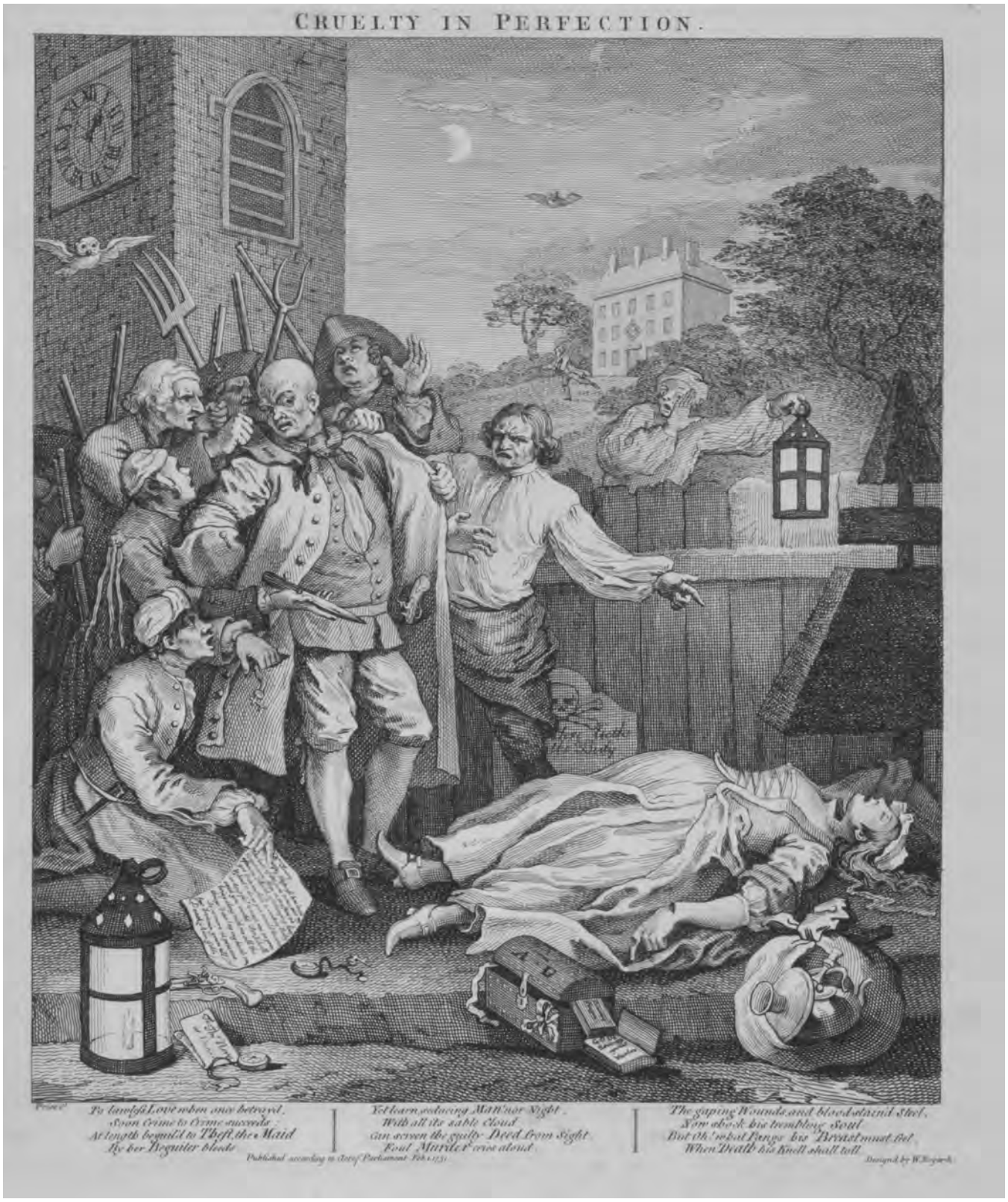

Figure 3. William Hogarth, *Cruelty in Perfection* from *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, 1751, etching and engraving, 38.3 x 32.3 cm (plate), Princeton University Library, GC113. Photo credit: Princeton University Library, Graphic Arts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

Figure 4. William Hogarth, *The Reward of Cruelty* from *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, 1751, etching and engraving, 38.3 x 32.1 cm (plate), Princeton University Library, GC113. Photo credit: Princeton University Library, Graphic Arts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

Figure 5. Detail of *First Stage of Cruelty*, 1751, etching and engraving, Princeton University Library, GC113. Photo credit: Princeton University Library, Graphic Arts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

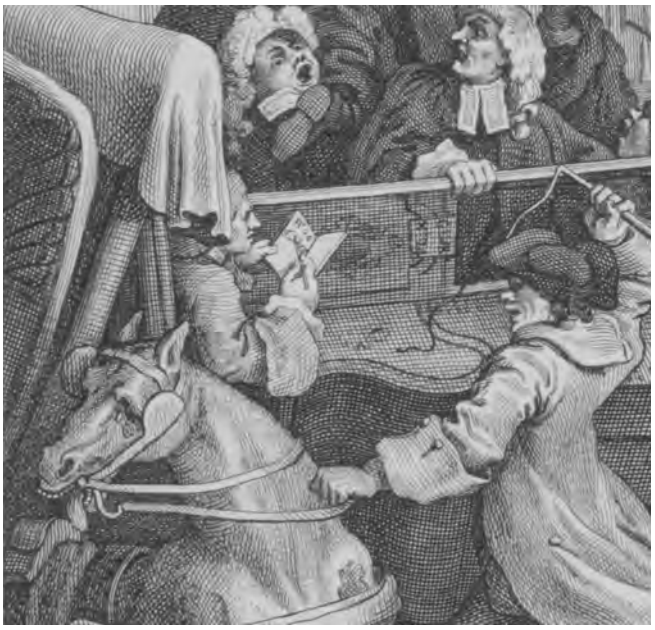

Figure 6. Detail of *Second Stage of Cruelty*, 1751, etching and engraving, Princeton University Library, GC113. Photo credit: Princeton University Library, Graphic Arts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

Figure 7. Detail of *Cruelty in Perfection*, 1751, etching and engraving, Princeton University Library, GC113. Photo credit: Princeton University Library, Graphic Arts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

Figure 8. Detail of *The Reward of Cruelty*, 1751, etching and engraving, Princeton University Library, GC113. Photo credit: Princeton University Library, Graphic Arts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.