



William Hogarth

A FREEMASON'S HARLOT

By Jeremy Bell





In 2017, the United Grand Lodge of England will celebrate its 300th anniversary, having established in June of 1717. One of the first Freemasons to be initiated into this newly formed organisation was **William Hogarth**, the most famous British artist of his time.

For reasons that will become clear in this book, Hogarth ‘exposed’ all the secret signs of the first degrees by including them within his most popular artwork. He concealed them so masterfully, that they have not been seen for nearly three centuries.

These are not errant details hidden in the background, but are formed by the main characters in some of the most popular prints of all time along with passwords, secret ‘knocks’ and many other Masonic symbols.

Hogarth also concealed several details that slandered the ‘Father of Freemasonry’ (John Desaguliers). The artist featured the third Grand Master covered in wax; dressed in drag; and in the act of ‘catching a fart.’

Readers will discover three previously unseen self-portraits of Hogarth, himself, and new sightings of Sir James Thornhill, Inigo Jones, James III, Lord Burlington, Alexander Pope, Orator Henley, ‘Butcher’ Cumberland and Bonnie Prince Charlie.

Details that have confused commentators for centuries are finally explained: ejaculating ministers, masturbating kings, orgasmic curtains and a stabbed chicken. There are also several new readings of a graphic sexual nature.

Over 300 illustrations explain the fascinating story of how Hogarth worked with the Premier Grand Lodge to ensure its survival. It will be of great interest in this, the Tercentenary of the inception of Modern Freemasonry.

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He was asked to contribute a paper to a recent anthology that commemorated the 250th anniversary of Hogarth’s passing: *Hogarth: 50 New Essays: International Perspectives on Eighteenth-Century English Art*.

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Figure 2.1 i: Moll Hackabout arrives in London and meets Mother Needham, a notorious procuress.



Figure 2.1 ii: Moll is mistress to a wealthy Jewish man. She creates a diversion to allow a second lover to escape.

Chapter II

The Harlot

Thornhill was much offended at his daughter's unequal match; Sir James' wrath lasted for two years; but the entreaties of his wife, the submissiveness of his daughter, and above all, the rising reputation of Hogarth, prevailed, and Thornhill forgave the young painter.

During the interval, Hogarth designed and etched "A Harlot's Progress," so much to the gratification of Lady Thornhill, that she advised her daughter to place it in her father's way. Accordingly, one morning, Mrs. Hogarth conveyed it secretly into his dining-room.

When he rose, he inquired whence it came, and by whom it was brought? When he was told, he cried out, "Very well, very well! The man who can make works like this can maintain a wife without a portion."

—Anecdote Biography of William Hogarth, John Timbs, 1860.

An important part of this story has been missed out. I will show that Thornhill's reported accolade was based upon his realization that *A Harlot's Progress* incorporated all the secret signs of the new Grand Lodge ritual. William Hogarth, who by 1732 had been a Mason for several years, had managed to disguise these signs, passwords and 'knocks' so skillfully within the paintings, that they have not been noticed since.

Let me paint the scene: mother and daughter are trying to reunite a father and his banished son-in-law. By leaving Hogarth's artwork where Thornhill could see it, they thought to impress Sir James with this moralistic tale of the life of a London prostitute. Sir James would in fact see much more.

"Well, what do you think of them?" asked Lady Thornhill as she showed her husband the first scene (*Figure 2.1 i*). "Can you see a young girl recently arrived in London? She is about to be ensnared by this awful woman? Look how the old bawd chucks her on the chin."

Sir James stared at the detail being pointed out to him. There was something familiar about the position of this open hand at the young woman's throat. He had been a Freemason for many years and, as a Master of his lodge, had initiated dozens of candidates. Suddenly, the wording of the ritual came to mind: *'Extending the Four Fingers of the Right Hand and drawing of them cross his Throat is the sign.'* Prichard, *Masonry Dissected* (1730).

"Yes, yes, I see it!" Sir James had his eye-glass out now, and was staring at the fan that was pointed at the young girl (*Figure 2.2*). He remembered another line from the ceremony: *'After one comes in at the door ... the open compasses pointed to his breast.'* —*The Mason's Confession* (1727).

Thornhill would have recognised the clumsy position of the young girl's hands as the sign of the First Degree. Compare it to illustrations from the first graphic exposé by Avery Allyn in 1865 (*Figure 2.3 right*).

I share these illustrations in confidence because, while Freemasonry is nominally a secret society, these static illustrations of the signs by Allyn were recently republished in its entirety by the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry (Southern Jurisdiction, USA) in a publication by Arturo de Hoyos, their Grand Historian: *Light on Masonry: The History and Rituals of America's Most Important Masonic Exposé*, (*Scottish Rite Research Society*, 2008).

Hogarth cleverly portrays this method of preparing the new Masonic initiate by having the young woman blush in order to feature her with her eyes closed. Her face is veiled by her extremely large brimmed hat, that serves as a virtual blindfold

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Figure 2.2



Figure 2.3

(*Figure 2.4*). Indeed, on close inspection her eye seems to be closed. The hat is closely tied under her chin, giving the semblance of a rope. She is also dressed in a large white apron—the badge of Freemasonry.

All of these details correspond to the description in the Allyn exposé: ‘*The conductor then ties a handkerchief or hoodwink over his eyes, and afterwards puts a rope, called a cable-tow, round his neck.*’

The Masonic line of moving ‘*from darkness to light*’ is quoted in the exposé. Now look at the shadow on the building behind her (*Figure 2.4 my red arrow*). The shaft of light hits the young girl’s eyes as ‘*the candidate*’ appears to move out of the shadow on the wall behind her. *A poor blind candidate who has long been desirous of being brought from darkness to light.*’ —Allyn.

You can almost hear Sir James Thornhill gasp at this ingenious graphic (*Figure 2.4*).

Even ‘*the Three Distinctive Knocks*’ that accompany a candidate’s entrance into the lodge had been masterfully disguised (*Figure 2.5*). The knocks are featured as nails in the door lintel (two and then one) rather like a Morse Code: *Another signe is knocking at any door two little knocks and the third a big one* (*Sloane MS, c.1700*). I believe that Hogarth hints that this clue is to be sounded, by putting the lintel in line with the clapper of the bell. The exposé mentions ‘*claps*’ as part of the ceremony. (*Figure 2.5 my red dots underneath nails in the print.*)



Figure 2.4

Concerning the bell, the Constitutions of the Grand Lodge (1738) mention that ‘*Grand Lodge met in ample form at the Bell Tavern Westminster, 1724–25.*’

The chequer-board sign that leads you to the clue is also a Masonic pointer. It is listed as a ‘*mosaic pavement*’ in *Prichard* (1730) and comes from a biblical passage (John 19:13).

SCENE 2: SECOND DEGREE

You can imagine that Lady Thornhill would be thrilled that her husband was taking so much interest in the first painting as she ushered him along to the second scene. “... and look darling, now the poor

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harlot has been kept as a society lady.” Thornhill now actively looked for signs of the second degree. They instantly jumped out at him.

If Freemasons are reading this, they might like to take a moment and look through all six coloured prints at the beginning of this chapter to see how many signs they can find. Again, the brethren can be assured that these illustrations and descriptions from Allyn’s and Morgan’s exposes have already been reprinted in their entirety by the Supreme Council.

Compare the fop in Scene 2 (*Figure 2.6 left*) to the illustration on the right. This was printed in another popular exposé by Malcolm Duncan in 1866. Non-Masons will see a sign made by holding one’s right hand flat out, while the left is held up. Hogarth cleverly hides this hand position in the scene by depicting the fop, steadying an overturned table while holding a teacup.

While it may seem impossible to actually hold both cup and saucer in his manner, this was a way in which Hogarth could show the man’s left palm while his right hand was faced down. These rather awkward actions can be so easily explained when you realize that the artist was trying to incorporate a hand signal into the action taking place. Note that the painting (destroyed) would have been reversed (*Figure 2.6*).

The harlot shows her naked breast, hinting at another part of the sign of the Second Degree. This action is part of the ancient oath in which a candidate vowed that before he revealed the secrets, he would have ‘my left breast torn open, my heart plucked out and given to the wild beasts of the field.’ I believe the ‘wild beast’ is symbolised by the pet monkey (*Figure 2.7*). Note that the right breast is shown in the reversed print, but would have been the correct left breast in the painting.

‘The sign is given by taking hold of the left breast, as though you intended to tear out a piece of it, then draw your hand with the fingers partly clenched ... with some quickness.’ – Avery Allyn.

Thornhill’s trained eye might alight upon the foot position of both characters (*Figure 2.7 my red*

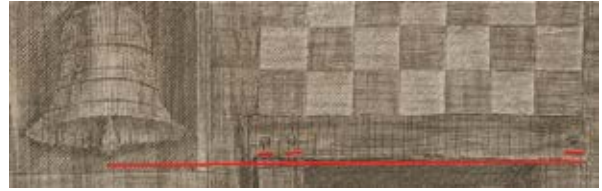


Figure 2.5

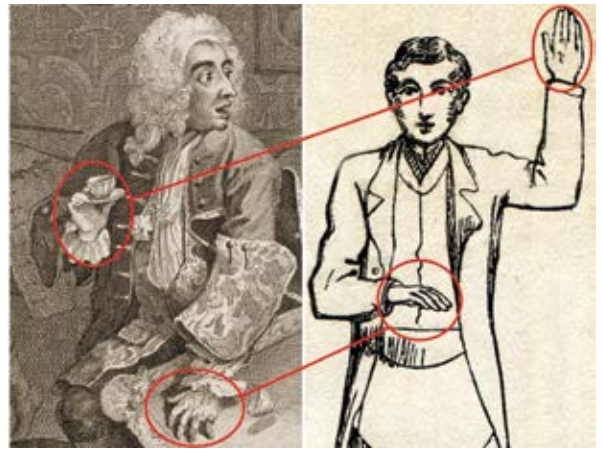


Figure 2.6



Figure 2.7

lines). I believe that Hogarth drew the harlot kicking over the table so he could position her feet at right angles, a posture not normally associated with a lady. The words ‘my feet forming a square’ are repeated a dozen times in *Morgan’s Exposé of Freemasonry (1827)*. Hogarth cleverly shows just a heel but this hint creates a perfect square which, according to Morgan, is the prescribed foot position when these signs are given. The harlot’s keeper is close to kneeling on the

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stool, which Freemasons will recognise as another detail from the ritual.

SCENE 3 – 'LABOUR TO REFRESHMENT'

Back to Thornhill's parlour, where Sir James is laughing at the third painting which shows the harlot's fall from grace (*Figure 2.8*). He has realized the Masonic joke intended for him alone.

"From labour to refreshment at high twelve", he blurts out to his wife's confusion. "Sorry, darling, it's one of the oldest Masonic terms which old Desaguliers is always harping on about. You see, the prostitute has finished her *labour* of love."

"Just look at the cat's rear end, and the curtains that are showing an orgasmic state (*Figure 2.9*). Do you see it? The face hidden in the curtains is making an 'ohh' sound as this courtesan enjoys a *refreshing* cup of tea! Oh capital fun!! Look! There is a condom in the wash bowl!"

Lady Thornhill gasps. "Oh Good Lord, I thought that was a lemon peel for punch!" They both laugh out loud! (*Figure 2.10 bottom from another Hogarth print N9.4*).

"Look how the artist has masterfully kept the feet at a square by positioning one of her stockings at a right angle to her shoe under the table (*Figure 2.11*



Figure 2.8

top).” Thornhill returned to Scene 1 to examine the position of how her feet were depicted when the young Harlot was theoretically just a ‘candidate.’ They were drawn correctly, at an uncomfortable parallel position (*Figure 2.11 bottom*). All feet in the series are positioned at either a square or are clearly drawn to be more parallel like this.

SCENE 4: FOURTH DEGREE

Lady Thornhill now looked a little more carefully at the fourth painting, which showed a jail scene. She could never appreciate the masterfully disguised signs of the Mark Mason degree (which many called the Fourth Degree). Here is a description of the relevant ritual from *Morgan's Monitor*:

‘Each brother walks up and thrusts his right hand through the hole in the window [and gives a sign]. The candidate does not know the sign and so has his hand seized. “An impostor! an impostor!” Another person exclaims, “Strike off his hand! strike off his hand!” and at the same time runs up with a drawn sword to give the blow.’ (*Figure 2.13 from Allyn*).

The jailer is dressed in a Mason's apron with his feet at a square (*Figure 2.12*). He is making the sign of chopping off a hand, as he points at the hemp that the harlot is beating as part of her prison sentence. Hogarth has cleverly combined her mallet with the tricorne hat on the wall behind her, to produce the appearance of an axe (*Figure 2.14*). She uses it to cut off what looks like an arm with curled fingers. You will never look at that hemp again without seeing a severed limb (bottom right).

I include a photograph of these Lodge props that are still used today (*Figure 2.14 top right*). The axe lies alongside a ‘wicket’ through which the candidate puts his hands during the ceremony. Hogarth has included this very same contraption in the scene. The man in stocks, who stands directly behind the jailer has his hands in a contraption exactly the same as this ‘wicket.’

Many Hogarth scholars have commented on the jailer's curious hat (*Figure 2.15*). Hogarth used it to blend with the large cuff of the man in the stocks in order to connect the two and send a message. I have

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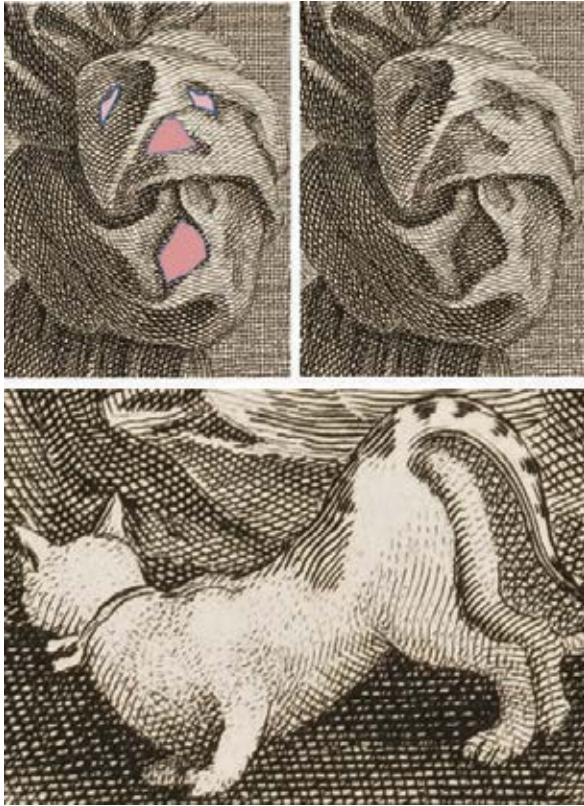


Figure 2.9



Figure 2.10
Bottom image
from *Midnight
Modern
Conversation*

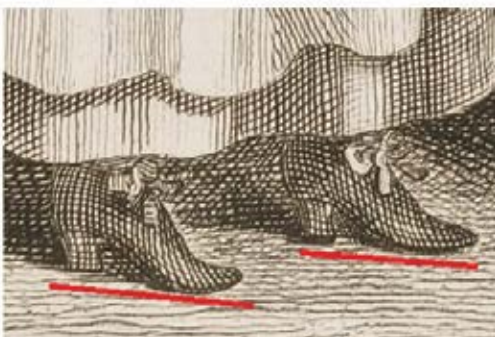


Figure 2.11

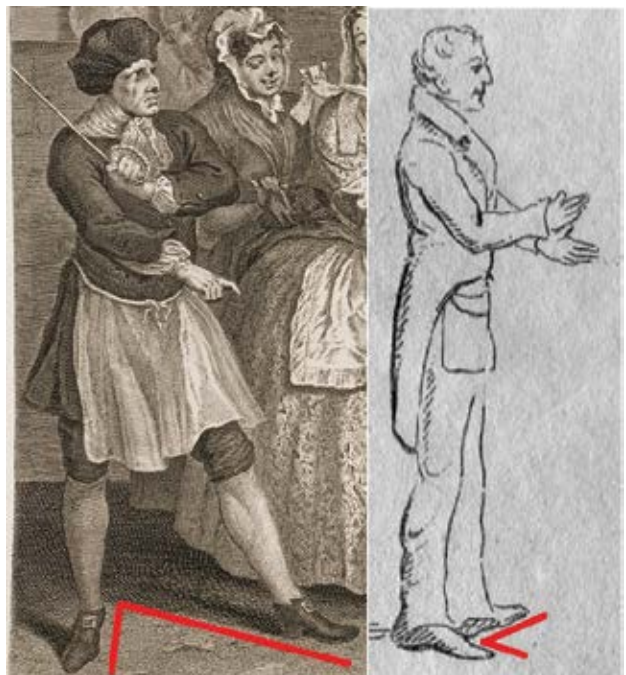


Figure 2.12

WILLIAM HOGARTH: THE FREEMASON'S HARLOT

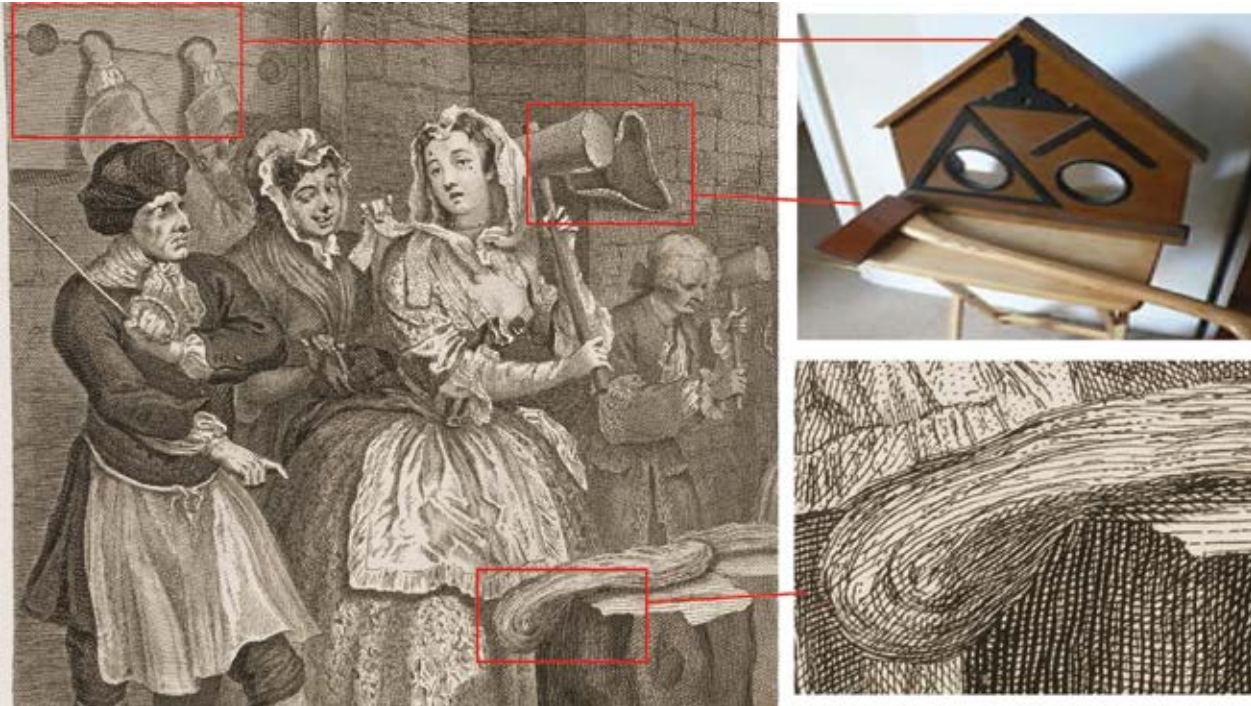


Figure 2.14

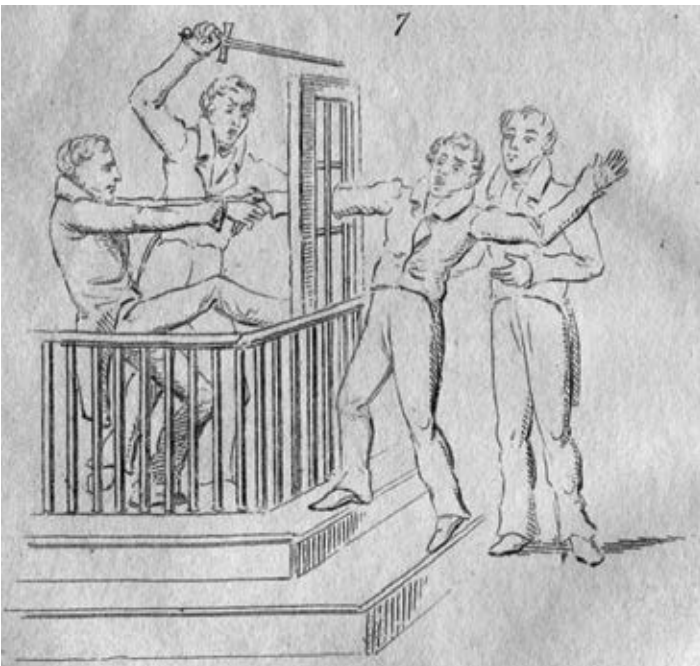


Figure 2.13



Figure 2.15

shown Hogarth using this technique of overlapping characters to connect details many times in this book.

SCENE 5: FIVE POINTS OF FELLOWSHIP

“Ah, what have we here?” His wife starts to explain how the poor girl’s corpse has been wrapped in a shroud (Figure 2.16 left). Sir James would recognise this as the blanket used to cover the candidates during their third degree initiation (Figure 2.16 right). He is busy scanning for something less obvious. “Of course!” he eventually blurts out. “The fifth scene has the Five Points of Friendship—the ancient form of passing the secret word.”

According to the exposés, the password of the Third Degree can only be whispered when two Master Masons are standing in this curious position.

The two doctors are touching feet, knees and shoulders (Figure 2.17 red circles). One is talking directly into the other’s ear. Now read a line from the *Dundee Manuscript of 1727*: ‘placing himself hand to hand, foot to foot, knee to knee, ear to ear and says [the Master’s Word].’ (Figure 2.17 right from Duncan)

‘In Freemasonry King Solomon is said to have established a secret word ‘MHB’ that is a passkey to the third degree.’ —The Builder Magazine, February 1915.

The first two letters of this password are clearly written upside down on the ceiling above the two doctors (Figure 2.18 red square). It is as if the words are appearing as they are being whispered. Hogarth thus creates a sense that some action is taking place. He is known to use this clever technique in many of his works.

Lady Thornhill saw the letters MH and assumed they were the initials of ‘Moll Hackabout’ (the name



Figure 2.16

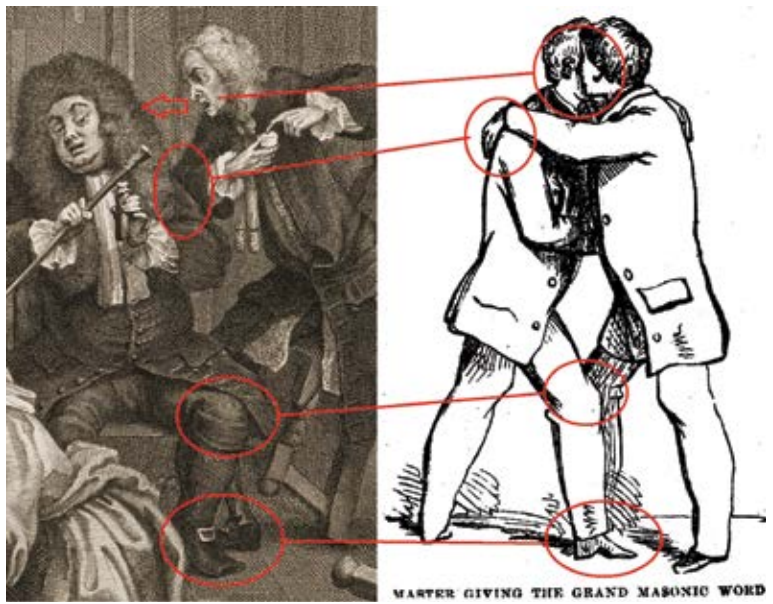


Figure 2.17

of the Harlot as given in the final scene). The same initials ‘M.H.’ are given on the trunk in scene 1. Lady Thornhill saw the last two letters on the rafters, (‘CU’) and thought these were the beginning of a vulgar word (Figure 2.18). Indeed, Jenny Uglow assumed this in *Hogarth: A Life and a World*, Faber (1998). Many reprints missed out the letters altogether out of disgust, while others admitted their confusion: ‘MH CU? on the ceiling of a Harlot’s Progress. No satisfactory explanation has been proposed,’ wrote Robert Cowley as late as 1983 (*Hogarth’s Marriage A-La-Mode*, (Cornell, 1983)).

James Thornhill however, would have had a satisfactory explanation. He would have read ‘MHCU’

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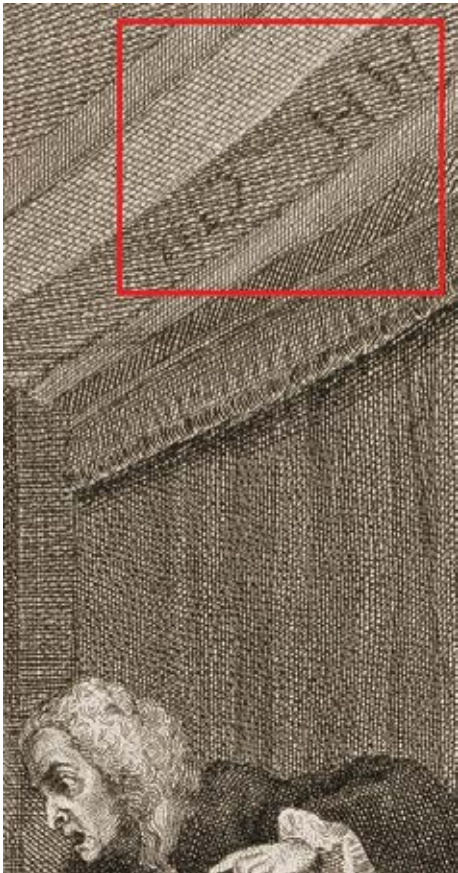


Figure 2.18



Figure 2.19

as ‘*Most High Contriver of the Universe.*’ This was a term first used in the new ritual, of which Hogarth would have been one of the first Freemasons to hear. It appears in *Prichard’s Masonry Dissected* of 1730, exposing the word in full, but would have been written down in this acronym form in the Lodge to keep the word secret. Of course, Hogarth would have enjoyed splitting up these letters to mislead non-Masons that a vulgar word had been etched into the rafters.

“Wait”, Sir James looks a little more carefully and bursts into laughter “Why that is Dr. Misaubin, a well known Freemason from France. And I believe I recognized the magistrate Sir John Gonson back there apprehending the harlot. And look, that is Colonel Charteris fondling himself in the first painting! Ha, what a lovely little slander!” Thornhill scanned the faces for anyone else he might recognise.

SCENE 6: THE FUNERAL

“Oh Good Lord, is that Desaguliers in the final scene?” His wife shakes her head. “No, James, that is an old woman crying at the funeral!” (*Figure 2.19*). “But she does have a manly forearm! Why, so it is! It is Desaguliers! His wart is covered with a plaster and look, he has a bottle of his favourite Nantes at his feet. Was he not telling us he was from that part of France?”

“Yes”, agrees her husband, “but I think the glass is overturned on purpose because he came here after the Revocation of Nantes and there he is refusing a glass—‘*Revoking the Nantes!*’ Oh what a clever little riddle!”

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“There is his gouty foot and his ubiquitous white handkerchief, and he is praying just like a minister! I just heard a lecture of his on an experiment which is now called ‘Desaguliers’ Balance.’ There he is falling off a chair!! Oh capital!”

They were right. It was indeed Reverend Desaguliers dressed up as a woman. Hogarth was the one of the first candidates to go through these new rituals in 1725, which were written by the ‘father of Freemasonry.’ Hogarth would have been initiated by Desaguliers, who performed this Third Degree on all candidates in the first years of its introduction.

Sir James saw other things in this corner of the print that he was not going to divulge to his wife; they were the signs that Masons used to recognise each other in public. Desaguliers’ glass was one, as described in *The Grand Mystery of Freemasonry Discovered* (1724) ‘signs to know a true mason: turn a glass, or any other thing that is hollow, downward after you have drank from it.’

Desaguliers seems to sport another sign in the way he wears his dress off his shoulder (*Figure 2.19 red circle*). *The Sloane Manuscript* (1700) gives a list of ‘Freemason’s signs,’ one of which involves: ‘taking their handkerchief ... and throw it over their Left shoulder letting it hang down their back ... then holding it Straight out before them they give it two Little shakes and a big one.’ This last part of the sign is given by the harlot next to Desaguliers, who steals a handkerchief with an extended arm (*Figure 2.19 red circle*).

Thornhill looked through the funeral scene, hunting for symbols like a child searches through a ‘Where’s Waldo’ puzzle (*Figure 2.20*). There had been nothing like this before. We often laud Hogarth for being the first to put a story in cartoon form like this, but the real reason for his initial success might just have come from his fellow Masons who enjoyed hunting around for symbols.

SIGNS WITHIN THE HARLOT’S FUNERAL

Indeed, the final scene is a veritable hide-and-seek! Hogarth has hidden several of the tools of

the mason’s trade within the Harlot’s funeral. Take a moment and see if you can find these within the print (*Figure 2.1 vi*), or read on if you want a clue. Hogarth has hidden the following: square, plumb, level, trowel, moon, maul, rough stone and smooth block, callipers, gloves and plumb line.

Let me start with the form of a Mason’s square that can be detected in the door jamb. The hinges of the screen also make the shape of a plumb rule. The other most important tools of the Master Mason are the level, found in the shape on top of the mirror on the right.

The order in which these three tools are hidden in the print, corresponds to the order they are printed in *Duncan’s Monitor*, as seen in the illustration included alongside them (*Figure 2.20*).

The shield on the wall is made up of three trowels—the basic tool for any bricklayer. The lattice window is taken straight from an illustration in *Duncan’s Monitor* (which I have added to the periphery). It is the floor design of Solomon’s Temple. A hole in the window (which is moon shaped), has been stuffed by a sponge. I believe this is a representation of the rough rock (or ‘ashlar’) next to the smooth stone made by the window’s lintel. When you compare them to known depictions on Mason’s aprons of the time, they match (see notes). There is no other explanation ever given for these details.

The Masonic white gloves are found on the stool, next to a glove stretcher that suggests a Mason’s compass. The orphaned boy represents the widow’s son, mentioned so frequently in the Third Degree ritual. He is sitting in front of his mother’s coffin, playing with a plumb rule.

The coffin has acacia on it, exactly as so many Masonic paintings show. *Pritchard’s Masonry Dissected*, published two years before the print, mentions the plant and how important it is in the ritual: ‘... a Sprig of Cassia at the Head of his Grave.’ Hogarth places a sprig on the very coffin.

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Figure 2.20



Figure 2.21



Figure 2.22: Father Time and the Virgin, by Amos Doolittle (1754–1832).

FATHER TIME AND THE VIRGIN'S RINGLET

One last clever Masonic inclusion concerns the character in the corner, who has given commentators most grief as they skirt about trying to describe the wandering hands of the horny clergyman (*Figure 2.21*)! I believe that Hogarth brilliantly illustrated a very well known Masonic symbol entitled 'Father Time counting the Ringlets of the Weeping Virgin's Hair.' This is usually found as statuary at Masonic gravesites, as seen in (*Figure 2.22*).

We read in *Duncan's Monitor*, (1866): 'Masonic tradition informs us that there was erected to his memory a Masonic monument, consisting of a beautiful virgin, weeping over a broken column ... in her right hand a sprig of acacia ... behind her stands Father Time, unfolding and counting the ringlets of her hair.' (my underlining)

The beauty spot makes the youngest looking prostitute shed a tear like the 'weeping virgin.' She is holding a sprig of acacia' as described above. (The acacia is in her right hand in the original painting, left in this reversed print.)

The 'broken column,' represented by 'father Time's wine glass stands in for an erection, and the spilled wine and handkerchief represents his ejaculate.

You can almost hear those dirty old men chuckle as they realise the vulgar joke: the minister has his hand up her skirts, counting the 'ringlets' of her pubic hair!

Lady Thornhill would only see a mourner in a funeral parlour holding a sprig of rosemary for remembrance. Masons would recognise the importance of acacia in a scene that was an obvious depiction of the Third Degree in Freemasonry.

Thornhill looked around the paintings in the parlour with different eyes, searching for clues. It was so much fun. One sign eluded him—that of the Third Degree. Can you find it?

Let me superimpose the sign of the degree from Duncan's well-known exposé. It shows how the artist hid the extended arms of this degree sign by showing a woman putting on her gloves



Figure 2.23

(Figure 2.23). Hogarth manipulated the perspective a little to allow this to happen. He needed a reason for both of her hands to be held straight out, and so he has figured her stealing a silk handkerchief from the undertaker's pocket.

THE UNDERTAKER'S GLOVES

"Do you remember those gloves I brought back for you the night I was initiated into the lodge?" Thornhill asked his wife. "You are instructed to go home and give a pair of gloves to the woman you most esteem. This scoundrel is giving them to a common prostitute—it's a joke. He is no undertaker, he has just gone through the Third Degree, and there he is, rewarding a prostitute for a recent tryst." He began to laugh.

Lady Thornhill was also laughing at the sexual connotation of the glove stretcher next to the prostitute. It was a pseudonym for penis used in the erotic novel *'Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure'* by John Cleland. Sir James did not know his wife was reading such smut!

Thornhill was amused by the dreamy look on the undertaker's face as he gave a post-coital gift to the dishevelled prostitute. Notice that her dress is still undone exposing her breast.

Thornhill suddenly shrieked, and collapsed in his chair. "Wait there! I recognise this undertaker's face! It is that scoundrel William Hogarth!" Thornhill pointed at the undertaker in the painting. "There he is, as clear as day—it's William bloody Hogarth! That chancer who ran away with my daughter. This is all his work! Bring him forth!"

When I juxtapose Hogarth's self-portrait (c.1735), you can see the uncanny likeness to the funeral director! How cheeky of the artist to hide himself in the scene giving gloves to a hooker! (Figure 2.24)

As Thornhill's daughter went to fetch her husband, Sir James stared at the paintings. He was amazed that this man he introduced into the Freemasons was able to hide all these Masonic signs. They were all there: the first, second and third degrees and the Mark Master Mason, along with the

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Figure 2.24: Hogarth Self portrait, c.1735. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, Yale, USA.

Points of Fellowship and several other signs and symbols—all so cleverly hidden within six beautifully detailed paintings; it was truly amazing and like nothing he had ever seen before.

It was not that the signs were hidden randomly within a set storyline. They were made by the main characters, and so provided the basis from which the narrative proceeds. The secrets dictate the drama in each print. With some amazing character contortions, Hogarth had managed to dovetail all this into the fascinating plot of a Harlot's downfall, and create enough ambiguity in the details to allow non-Masons to devise their own separate narrative. This very idea of telling a story was revolutionary.

Thornhill pondered his son-in-law's brilliance at this remarkable camouflage. He returned to that depiction of the Grand Master in drag. He could not wait to show his fellow brethren. They would all want a copy. The artist was going to make a fortune just within the lodges alone. It was then that this realisation came over him—"the man who can produce this can afford to keep my daughter."

Indeed, we are told that *A Harlot's Progress* was an overnight success. Over a thousand came to Hogarth's studio and the prints sold out at a guinea a piece. One can imagine that much of this momentum would have been from Thornhill telling fellow brethren at Grand Lodge about his son-in-law's Masonic based artwork.

If Hogarth's first success concealed well known gentlemen exhibiting Masonic activities, then you would expect his sequel to include the same. That is exactly what the next three chapters will show. Indeed, the Harlot was nothing when you compare her to what the Rake was going to expose.

I believe that Thornhill and Hogarth had already collaborated on *Bad Taste* and *Gormogons*. Let me show you how these two artists teamed up again to produce *A Rake's Progress*.

While the breaking of his Masonic vow had strained their friendship, the same Fraternity had brought Hogarth and Thornhill back together. As the Masonic toast goes: 'Happy to meet, Sorry to part, Happy to meet again!'

Chapter III

The Rake

It may look as if Hogarth has made a huge mistake in the print of the first scene—the initials on the chest (P.G.) stand for ‘Positive Gripe’ (Figure 3.2). We are told that ‘Gripe’ was the main character’s original name before Hogarth changed it to the more descriptive ‘Rakewell.’ I do not believe Hogarth makes such mistakes. This is actually the first of many Masonic clues in the series.

While this surname might conjure up the image of a cantankerous old man who ‘gripes’ and complains, Hogarth chose it for its Masonic connotation. This was the old spelling of ‘grip’ or handshake as would have been read in an exposé dated 1730 (my underlining throughout).

Q. How shall I know that you are a Mason?

A. By Signs and Tokens ...

Q. What are Tokens?

A. Certain Regular and Brotherly Gripes.

Q. What are Signs?

A. All Squares, Angles and Perpendiculars.

—Prichard, *Masonry Dissected*, (1730).

There are ‘Squares, Angles and Perpendiculars’ within the print made by the lantern, chest and hat box. (I have drawn a red circle around a set of squares) (Figure 3.3). Masons would immediately recognise that Tom’s feet are positioned at a recognizable Masonic stance. Even the discarded boots ‘stand’ to attention.

After learning the proper stance during his initiation, the candidate would kneel to receive his vows. This is the position that we see the tailor assuming. All elements of the ritual, (described in Prichard below), can be seen in the print. The tailor’s slipper is half off, representing ‘neither bare-foot nor shod’ and his knee breeches are unbuckled conforming to the ‘bare-bended Knee’ (which is also bent at a square) (Figure 3.4).



Figure 3.2

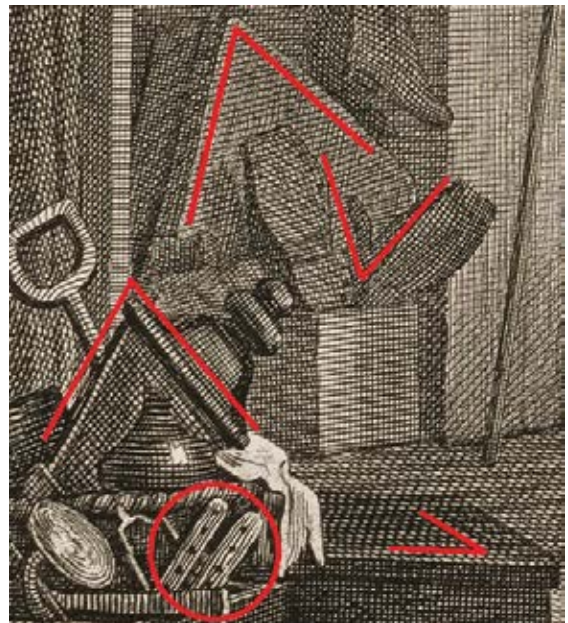


Figure 3.3



Figure 3.4

Q. How did he make you
a Mason?

A. With my bare-bended Knee and
Body within the Square, the
Compass extended to my naked
Left Breast, my naked Right
Hand on the Holy Bible; there I
took the Obligation (or Oath) of
a Mason.

Q. How did he bring you?

A. Neither naked nor clothed,
bare-foot nor shod, deprived of
all Metal....

–Prichard, (1730).

Observe Tom's fingers in the form of a compass (*Figure 3.5*). In his other hand, he is trying to offer money to his pregnant girlfriend. In doing so, Tom is 'deprived of all metal,' mentioned in the ritual below. This comes from the biblical account of the building of King Solomon's temple in which no metal was used. Not having metal swords also helped preserve peace in the lodge.



Figure 3.5

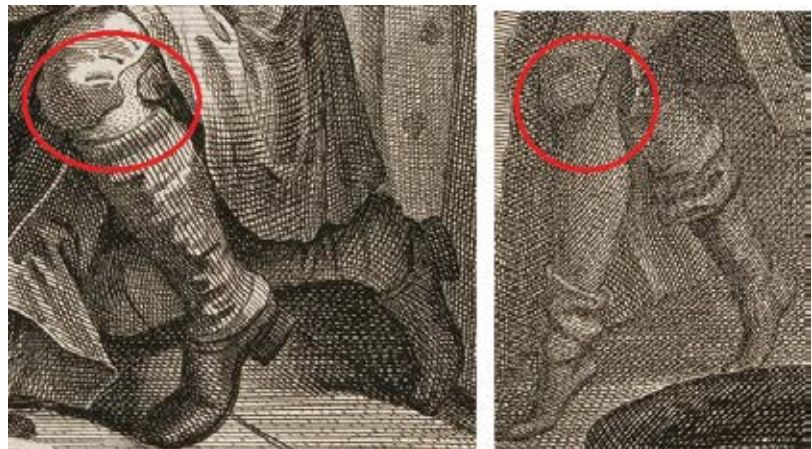


Figure 3.6

Q. Why was you deprived of all
metal? (Sic)

A. That I should bring nothing offensive or defensive
into the lodge.

–Three Distinct Knocks (1760).

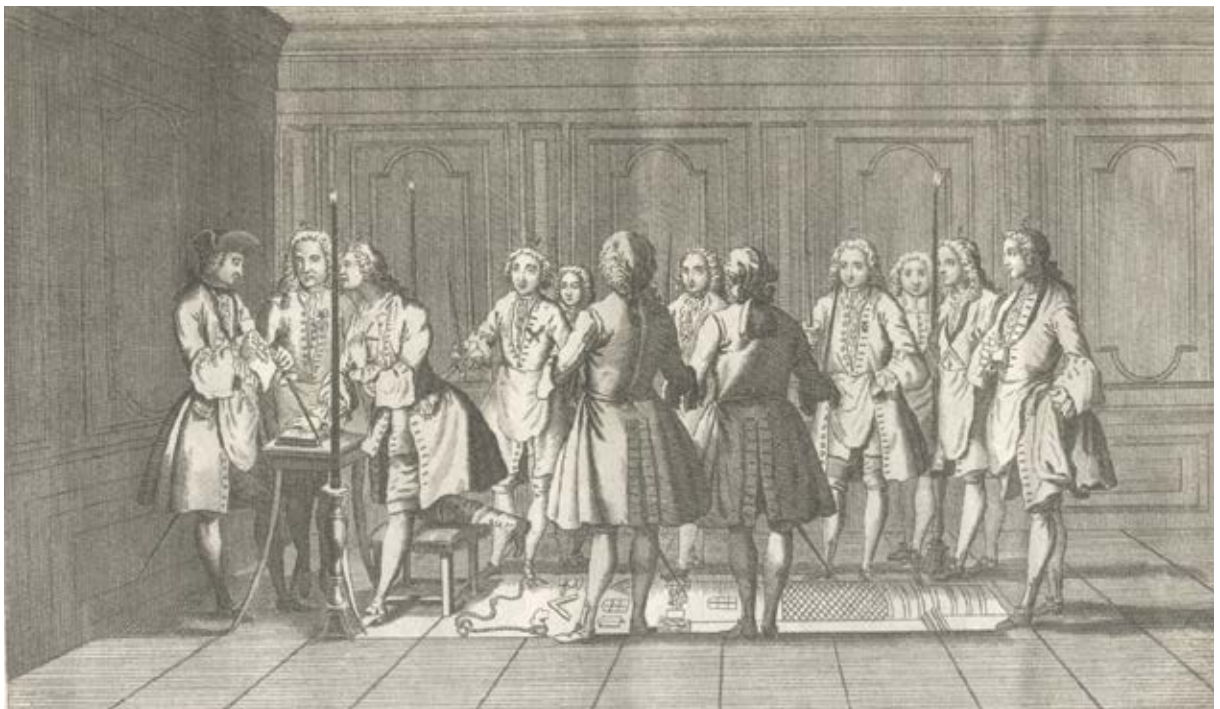
Hogarth showed this same detail concerning the metal in Scene 2 of *A Harlot's Progress*, when the young lover is without his sword (*Figure 3.6 right*). The fact that this young man also has his knee bared and one stocking down shows that both characters are also conforming to this ancient and peculiar Masonic ritual of being 'neither naked nor clothed.'

This play on words can be viewed as a riddle: 'neither naked nor clothed' (the candidate was sometimes covered by a robe); 'neither standing nor lying' (since he was kneeling); 'neither bare-foot nor

shod' (slippers half off). These very same word-plays are to be found as riddles in folk stories collected by James Child in his 19th century anthology of ballads.

All the prescribed elements of the initiation are there, divided between the young man and his tailor. In *A Harlot's Progress*, we find this same method of dividing the several elements that make up the signs of a degree between two characters. When the harlot arrives in London, the First Degree signs are revealed between the young girl and the madam (*Figure 2.1 i*). Scene 2 conceals the Second Degree signs that are made between the harlot and her keeper. It obviously made it easier to camouflage Masonic secrets when elements of the sign were distributed like this.

CHAPTER III – THE RAKE



Some of the same Masonic ritual covered in Hogarth's Progresses are found in these French prints. The top illustration shows the candidate being received in the Lodge at the point of a sword (Figure 2.2 right), like the fan pointing at the Harlot's heart. The other print shows the points of compass at a naked breast, symbolised by the forked chicken in Figure 3.II. —*Assemblée de Francs-Maçons pour la réception des Apprentifs. Léonard Gabanon, 1740.*



In this colourful frontispiece to an exposé of 1800s, we see a candidate at the point of a sword, just as when Moll arrives in London (Figures 2.2 and 2.4). The man's bare leg was featured twice by Hogarth (see Figure 3.6). The gloves and apron hanging on the wall resemble the washing in the Harlot's bedchamber (Figure 2.1 v).