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# MASTERARBEIT

Titel der Masterarbeit:

Iain Bell's *A Harlot's Progress*:  
A Dramaturgical Analysis of the Journey from  
Engravings to Opera

verfasst von

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angestrebter akademischer Grad

Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2014

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:

A 066 581

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:

Theater-, Film- und Mediengeschichte

Betreut von:

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*Diana Damrau as Moll Hackabout in Iain Bell and Peter Ackroyd's A Harlot's Progress: world premiere at Theater an der Wien, October 2013 (Image © Werner Kmetitsch)*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>FOREWORD</b>   | <b>4</b>   |
| <b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>   | <b>5</b>   |
| <b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>  | <b>6</b>   |
| <b>2. HISTORY OF THE PIECE</b>  | <b>9</b>   |
| <b>2.1. William Hogarth and British Capitalism of the Early 18<sup>th</sup> Century</b> | <b>10</b>  |
| 2.1.1. Biography of the Artist  | 10         |
| 2.1.2. Development of a New British Capitalism  | 15         |
| <b>2.2. William Hogarth's <i>A Harlot's Progress</i> Series</b>                         | <b>22</b>  |
| 2.2.1. Historical Influences  | 23         |
| 2.2.2. Adaptations of the <i>Harlot</i> Narrative                                       | 27         |
| <b>3. IAIN BELL'S <i>A HARLOT'S PROGRESS</i> OPERA</b>                                  | <b>36</b>  |
| <b>3.1. Conception and Realization</b>  | <b>36</b>  |
| 3.1.1. Theater an der Wien Commission   | 36         |
| 3.1.2. Transmedial Adaptation   | 38         |
| <b>3.2. Dramaturgy</b>  | <b>43</b>  |
| 3.2.1. Comedy   | 46         |
| 3.2.2. Tragedy  | 51         |
| <b>3.3. Music</b>   | <b>61</b>  |
| 3.3.1. Character  | 61         |
| 3.3.2. Correlation Between Structure, Character, and Setting                            | 68         |
| 3.3.3. Dramaturgical Significance of Orchestral Silence                                 | 72         |
| <b>4. CRITICAL RECEPTION</b>  | <b>76</b>  |
| <b>APPENDICES</b>   | <b>89</b>  |
| <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>   | <b>169</b> |
| Primary Sources   | 169        |
| Secondary Sources   | 170        |

|                         |            |
|-------------------------|------------|
| <b>ABSTRACT</b>         | <b>176</b> |
| <b>ZUSAMMENFASSUNG</b>  | <b>177</b> |
| <b>CURRICULUM VITAE</b> | <b>178</b> |

## Foreword

In the autumn of 2013 I was fortunate to join the world premiere production of Iain Bell and Peter Ackroyd's *A Harlot's Progress* at the Theater an der Wien. As a *Produktionshospitantin*, my responsibilities kept me in close proximity to the composer, artistic team, and performers throughout the roughly six-week rehearsal process. During this period I realized that my unique vantage point presented an unparalleled opportunity to study the realization of a new opera at Vienna's leading *stagione* house.

I documented my experience, conducted interviews, and researched source material in the hopes of creating an account that would serve two functions: as a record of the piece's conception and execution, and as a basis from which to draw meaningful dramaturgical analysis. In the interest of the latter of these two objectives, this work provides substantial historical and art historical contextualization for Bell and Ackroyd's adaptation of the *Harlot's Progress* narrative: identification of the sociopolitical and artistic dimensions of William Hogarth's 1731 series, and scrutiny of the extent to which these manifest in the 2013 opera. Further, I examine the piece's structure and dramaturgical parameters, predominant compositional gestures, and musical modes of communicating character and setting. The final chapter provides an account of the opera's critical reception upon its October 2013 premiere. The appendix catalogues exhaustive primary source material—including transcribed interviews, conceptual designs and statements, production and performance stills, and ancillary texts and images—in the ardent hope that this document might prove a useful resource for future productions of Bell and Ackroyd's opera.

## Acknowledgements

I am very grateful for the opportunity to work with the friendly, professional, and highly skilled team at the Theater an der Wien. I owe particular thanks to the admirable Mag. Anja Meyer, whose diligent and graceful artistic management of the *Harlot's Progress* production provided a welcoming atmosphere to the entire team. (Anja, you are a marvel of competence and cookery; thank you for taking me on as your *Produktionshospitantin* and sous-chef.)

To Iain Bell I am especially grateful. Without his generosity of time and unflagging willingness to assist my research, this paper would not have been possible.

My procurement and analysis of materials for this work was greatly assisted by the efforts of Raphael Schluesselberg, Sybille Gädeke, Mikko Franck, Dr. Karin Bohnert, Sabine Seisenbacher, and Werner Kmetitsch. For their editorial and logistical support during the writing process, I would also like to thank Dune Johnson, Chanda VanderHart, and James and Daphne Kryshak.

Finally, I must also extend my deep appreciation to Ass.-Prof. Dr. Isolde Schmid-Reiter for her patient and insightful advising.

# 1. Introduction

In April of 1733 the young British painter and engraver William Hogarth released a revolutionary series of six prints depicting the downfall of a young woman to the ravenous vice of early eighteenth-century London. The cycle, wryly entitled *A Harlot's Progress*, achieved unprecedented success, owing largely to the contemporary confluence of two social trends: on the one hand, a rediscovery of Protestant morals and an effort to impose them upon perceived social ills; and on the other, the emergence of an English middle class whose members were largely subject and witness to the increased consumerism that preyed upon society's most vulnerable individuals. Hogarth could not have chosen a more poetic protagonist as the embodiment of this ideological intersection, as prostitutes represented simultaneously the perpetrators of amoral behavior and the victims of an amoral system:

“As the eighteenth century progressed, male heterosexuality was increasingly seen as uncontrollable, and prostitution an unfortunate but necessary consequence of the male sex drive. Prostitutes themselves were more often considered to be helpless victims, rather than the seductive predators of earlier times.”<sup>1</sup>

This speaks to a characteristic that makes Hogarth both a product of and commentator on his own age, his work documenting the birthing pains of a new middle class in proto-industrial capitalist Britain of the early eighteenth century.

However, restricting the contemporary relevance of the *Harlot* cycle to a literal transposition of its themes in the present day (reading the *Harlot's Progress* prints, for instance, as pure criticism of a society which endorses and engages in sex slavery and exploitation of poor women) would do a disservice to the compellingly complex undercurrent of emerging middle class values which shape the content, execution, and appropriation of Hogarth's work. The widespread reinterpretation of his prints in particular—as everything from staged performances to small collectibles such as tea sets and ladies' fans<sup>2</sup>—illustrates the same mentality of consumerism

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<sup>1</sup> Hurl-Eamon, Jennine. “Policing Male Heterosexuality: The Reformation of Manners Societies' Campaign Brothels in Westminster, 1690-1720” in: *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Summer 2004), p. 1019.

<sup>2</sup> The unprecedented popularity of the *Harlot* images and characters combined with the ease and speed of their reproduction (both original and plagiarized) resulted in a mass craze for *Harlot*-themed performances, artwork, and consumer items during the early 1730s. Among these, the women's handheld *Harlot's Progress* fans (see Appendices 7.2 and 7.3) represent perhaps most strikingly the internal contradiction of this “Harlot-o-mania”: under the acceptable guise of reformist social critique,

that brings about the downfall of many of his characters. It is this simultaneous representation of and commentary on the burgeoning identity and moral values of a beset middle class that has secured Hogarth's enduring relevance. Moreover, the nature of its medial production reflects a persistent universality of this story. According to historian David A. Brewer,

"The sets of printed images that we call *A Harlot's Progress* are thus not merely reproductions of the no longer extant painted *Harlot's Progress* (destroyed in a fire in 1755); in a significant sense, they are each *A Harlot's Progress*. Despite the existence of autographic originals, Hogarth's graphic work functions as if it were actually allographic, as if the images themselves were somehow distinct from any of their particular material manifestations. *A Harlot's Progress* continues to exist no matter what happens to any given six pieces of paper bearing those images, much less to the putatively original six canvases."<sup>3</sup>

Far from being a singular tale of one specific individual, the narrative's continuous reproduction and resetting testifies to its broader critical applicability and dramatic appeal.

It is in this spirit of timeless relevance that British composer Iain Bell began his efforts to bring the *Harlot's Progress* to the stage roughly 280 years after its conception. As the demanding title role would be premiered by celebrated German coloratura soprano Diana Damrau, Bell embraced the dual challenge of showcasing her voice, stamina, and dramatic expressiveness through the opera's aesthetic and musical characteristics while contributing meaningfully to the *Harlot's* long historical heritage. The production that premiered at Vienna's Theater an der Wien in October 2013 under the direction of Jens-Daniel Herzog represents a complex reflection on Hogarth's unique critical perspective, a renegotiation of traditional operatic and tragic forms, and a fascinating study in transmedial adaptation. Moreover, it presents a rare opportunity to investigate the dramaturgical characteristics of one narrative in both

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these cheap collectibles both reference and enable a taboo sexual coquetry. In the words of David Brewer, "...such a fan could be used for precisely the same sort of seduction and flirtation as that engaged in by the Harlot herself, with the come-hither gaze she directs out of plate 3 of Hogarth's original series at the viewer. [... But] while the outlines of Hogarth's images are reproduced fairly faithfully upon the fan, their order is haphazard and the final plate (the funeral of the Harlot) completely omitted. The visual effect of the fan, even when fully open, is then one of scenes from the life of a harlot, which happen to draw upon images then in circulation, rather than episodes depicting a harlot's progress from naiveté through ruin to death." See: Brewer, David A. "Making Hogarth Heritage" in: *Representations*, No. 72 (Autumn, 2000). Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Brewer, David A. "Making Hogarth Heritage" in: *Representations*, No. 72 (Autumn, 2000). Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. p. 28.

print media and operatic performance, and the extent to which the similarities and differences in storytelling reflect the priorities of both artist and audience.

These questions will be analyzed and discussed at length in this work, set against the sociopolitical and artistic context of Hogarth's original series. What follows is an account of the developmental history of the *Harlot's Progress*—as it progressed from William Hogarth, through the works of numerous later adaptors, and, finally, into the hands of Iain Bell and librettist Peter Ackroyd. In addition to providing documentation of the opera's 2013 world premiere production (through ancillary materials and a survey of critical reception), this work will assess the degree to which Bell and Ackroyd's *A Harlot's Progress* retains and renegotiates the dramaturgical dimensions of its source, both in the piece's dramatic structure and its musical aesthetic.

## 2. History of the Piece

Between 1731 and 1732 the relatively unknown silversmith and artist William Hogarth painted a series of images that would become the most successfully reproduced and broadly popular fictional narrative ever seen by the British public.<sup>4</sup> His initial creation—a singular light-hearted painting of a well-to-do London prostitute in the moments before her arrest—saw such immediate success that Hogarth used this impetus to create a full six-image series. It portrayed the life cycle of a harlot: from her arrival as a countryside innocent, entrapment by a known procuress, installment as the kept woman of a wealthy merchant, discovery with her criminal lover, sentence in Bridewell prison, deterioration through disease, and ultimate death. The series was entitled *A Harlot's Progress*, and, in the words of Hogarth's contemporary, artist George Vertue, it "captivated the Minds of most People, persons of all ranks & conditions from the greatest Quality to the meanest."<sup>5</sup> The appeal of the paintings drew hundreds to Hogarth's studio, prompting the artist to apply his substantial engraving experience to the images' broader distribution. According to Vertue in the sole contemporaneous commentary on the sensation of the series' success, it "had the greatest subscription—& public esteem that any prints ever had."<sup>6</sup>

In Hogarth's own estimation, the explanation for his phenomenal success (which he promptly repeated in three further series) lay in a unique new graphic formula never before attempted "by any other man [...] in any country or age"—a "novel mode, viz. painting and Engraving modern and moral subjects."<sup>7</sup> This new dramaturgy of graphic representation certainly contributed to the unprecedented rate at which the series was embraced and transformed by other artists in a range of other media, and this will be addressed at further length, especially as concerns the *Harlot's* role onstage. The subject matter itself, however—the tragic fate of a woman treated as a commodity—proved to be of particular critical relevance in the British metropolis of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and contributed greatly to the piece's enduring success. As a contextualization of the complex topical issues addressed by *A Harlot's Progress*,

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<sup>4</sup> Dabhoiwala, Faramerz. "The Appropriation of Hogarth's Progresses" in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (Winter 2012), p. 577.

<sup>5</sup> Vertue, George. *Note Books*, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1930-1955), 6:192.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:58.

<sup>7</sup> Ireland, John. *A Supplement to Hogarth Illustrated* (1798), pp. 27, 3.

the following chapter will provide a brief overview of the personal and sociopolitical influences that shaped the artist and his work.

## **2.1. William Hogarth and British Capitalism of the Early 18<sup>th</sup> Century**

In order to comprehend the significance and impact of William Hogarth's most popular work, it is first necessary to understand its creator and the dynamic environment that shaped him.

### **2.1.1. Biography of the Artist**

The early 19<sup>th</sup> century Hogarth biographer Reverend John Trusler begins his account of the artist with his birth and early education:

“William Hogarth was born November 10, and baptised Nov. 28, 1697, in the parish of St. Bartholomew the Great, in London; to which parish, it is said, in the *Biographia Britannica*, he was afterwards a benefactor.”<sup>8</sup>

Owing to his father's failed investment in a Latin-speaking coffee shop venture and ensuing stint in debtor's prison, young Hogarth's early instruction seems to have been primarily a pragmatic one (as what Trusler terms a “mechanic”<sup>9</sup>) before he was apprenticed during his teenage years to a silversmith by the name of Ellis Gamble. While in Gamble's employ, young Hogarth was tasked with the execution of lettering, decorative scenes, and portraits of the works' wealthy commissioners upon silver plate: an exercise which gradually led to his understanding of the basic principles of drawing and a “talent for caricature”.<sup>10</sup> Eventually, according to Trusler, “He felt the impulse of genius, and [...] it directed him to painting, though little apprised at that time of the mode Nature had intended he should pursue”.<sup>11</sup> Even in the earliest stages of his career it seems depicting satirical content held a particular fascination for the artist; Trusler recounts an incident during Hogarth's apprenticeship that

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<sup>8</sup> Trusler, Rev. John. *The Works of William Hogarth: In a Series of Engravings With Descriptions, and a Comment on Their Moral Tendency*. London: Jones and Co., 1833. p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

serves as “the first indication of the talents with which Hogarth afterwards proved himself to be so liberally endowed”.<sup>12</sup>

“He set out one Sunday, with two or three companions, on an excursion to Highgate. The weather being hot, they went into a public-house; where they had not long been, before a quarrel arose between some persons in the same room; from words they soon got to blows, and the quart pots being the only missiles at hand, were sent flying about the room in glorious confusion. This was a scene too laughable for Hogarth to resist. He drew out his pencil, and produced on the spot one of the most ludicrous pieces that ever was seen; which exhibited likenesses not only of the combatants engaged in the affray, but also of the persons gathered round them, placed in grotesque attitudes, and heightened with character and points of humour.”<sup>13</sup>

Hogarth’s attention to the representation of character—especially as expressed in the extremes of the tragic and the ridiculous—soon became his distinct aesthetic. In fact, Trusler argues that it was this keen critical eye for character expression that set Hogarth apart from his artistic contemporaries:

“On the expiration of his apprenticeship [in 1720], [Hogarth] entered into the academy in St. Martin’s Lane, and studied drawing from the life: but in this his proficiency was inconsiderable; nor would he ever have surpassed mediocrity as a painter, if he had not penetrated through external form to character and manners. ‘It was character, passions, [and] the soul, that his genius was given him to copy.’”<sup>14</sup>

Yet, financial necessity required Hogarth to accept intermittent jobs furnishing decorative plates and frontispieces for various publications. Commissioned portraiture also proved a lucrative employment for him during the early 1720s once it became known that he possessed a unique faculty for capturing a subject’s character. Born of a blend of the young artist’s financial dependence upon commissioned portraits and his own passion for the comic grotesque, Hogarth’s style quickly developed into a unique blend of biting critical satire couched in a deftly realistic rendering ability. While he had exercised his talent for more sober likenesses on a commission by the Wanstead Assembly early in his career,<sup>15</sup> Trusler includes an account of a disagreement more indicative of Hogarth’s penchant for cheeky irreverence:

“A curious anecdote is recorded of our artist during the early part of his practice as a portrait painter. A nobleman, who was uncommonly ugly and deformed, sat for his picture, which was executed in his happiest manner, and with singularly rigid fidelity. The peer, disgusted at this counterpart of his dear

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<sup>12</sup> Trusler, Rev. John. *The Works of William Hogarth: In a Series of Engravings With Descriptions, and a Comment on Their Moral Tendency*. London: Jones and Co., 1833. p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

self, was not disposed very readily to pay for a reflector that would only insult him with his deformities. After some time had elapsed, and numerous unsuccessful applications had been made for payment, the painter resorted to an expedient, which he knew must alarm the nobleman's pride. He sent him the following card:—'Mr. Hogarth's dutiful respects to Lord —; finding that he does not mean to have the picture which was drawn for him, is informed again of Mr. Hogarth's pressing necessities for the money. If, therefore, his lordship does not send for it in three days, it will be disposed of, with the addition of a tail and some other appendages, to Mr. Hare, the famous wild beast man; Mr. H. having given that gentleman a conditional promise on his lordship's refusal.' This intimation had its desired effect; the picture was paid for, and committed to the flames. Hogarth's talents, however, for original comic design, gradually unfolded themselves, and various public occasions produced displays of his ludicrous powers."<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, it was not long after this incident that Hogarth's recognition as a promising young artist of considerable talent was definitively established. He sufficiently impressed the painter, Sir James Thornhill, to win both his professional respect and permission to marry his daughter, Jane, in 1730,<sup>17</sup> and Hogarth's reputation and esteem spread over the course of the months following his wedding. In 1731, his release of a painting depicting a harlot at her morning toilette—entitled *Apprehended by a Magistrate*—sparked sufficient public interest to justify Hogarth's creation of a complete narrative surrounding this character. He painted a further five images (the original piece now the third in the series of six), and these he immediately engraved and sold as a subscription.<sup>18</sup> More than twelve hundred subscribers submitted their names for prints,<sup>19</sup> and thousands more bought up the countless copies and imitations sold in a broad variety of other forms. Further serial works—*A Rake's Progress*, *Industry and Idleness*, and *Marriage-à-la-Mode*—as well as a number of individual works followed this success, and Hogarth garnered praise as both a graphic and dramatic genius:

"He may be said to have created an entirely new species of painting, which may be termed the moral comic; and may be considered rather as a writer of comedy with a pencil, than as a painter. If catching the manners and follies of an age, living as they rise—if general satire on vices,—and ridicule familiarised by strokes of Nature, and heightened by wit,—and the whole

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<sup>16</sup> Trusler, Rev. John. *The Works of William Hogarth: In a Series of Engravings With Descriptions, and a Comment on Their Moral Tendency*. London: Jones and Co., 1833. p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Paulson, Ronald. *Hogarth: His Life, Art and Times*, 2 vols. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971.

<sup>19</sup> Trusler, Rev. John. *The Works of William Hogarth: In a Series of Engravings With Descriptions, and a Comment on Their Moral Tendency*. London: Jones and Co., 1833. p. 3.

animated by proper and just expressions of the passions,—be comedy, Hogarth composed comedies as much as Molière.”<sup>20</sup>

The artist achieved such incredible popular appeal in his day, and his work was so sought after by collectors of every social class that the unprecedented market for reproductions of his work (most of them without his consent or profit) ultimately necessitated the implementation of England’s early copyright laws.<sup>21</sup> The range of reference and adaptation of his works into other medial forms is impressive, including but not limited to theater plays, ballad opera, prints by other artists, and literary narrative.

The long list of derivations of Hogarth’s work also includes a curious popular song, the origin of which serves as an example in miniature of the artist’s critical wit and the social relevance of his chosen subject matter. Publishing under the pseudonym of “Young D’Urfey”, the balladeer and playwright Theodosius Forrest—a friend of Hogarth’s—opens his “Collection of Original Songs” with his own musical setting of a piece he entitles, “The Roast Beef of Old England. A Cantata. Taken from a celebrated Print of the ingenious Mr. Hogarth.”<sup>22</sup> The piece, inspired by Hogarth’s 1748 painting and subsequent print of *The Gate of Calais, or The Roast Beef of Old England*, alternates between recitative and ballad numbers sung in turn by the characters introduced in the graphic. They are hungry onlookers, slaving over a sizeable and centrally placed portion of English beef and bemoaning the torments of a stereotypically French diet (“Soop meager, frogs, and sallad”[sic]).<sup>23</sup> Forrest even goes so far as to elaborate on Hogarth’s inclusion of a remorseful Jacobite in the print’s lower right corner, whose support of the Stuart King, James II, and forced exile in France meant that he might never again taste British “beef, the bonny, bonny beef.”<sup>24</sup> While anti-French sentiment was rampant during the 1730s and 1740s, the incident that had spurred Hogarth’s personal ire was his arrest and imprisonment in the Paris bastille in 1748 on dubious espionage charges after he was observed

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<sup>20</sup> Trusler, Rev. John. *The Works of William Hogarth: In a Series of Engravings With Descriptions, and a Comment on Their Moral Tendency*. London: Jones and Co., 1833. p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Dabhoiwala, Faramerz. “The Appropriation of Hogarth’s Progresses” in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (Winter 2012), p. 582.

<sup>22</sup> Brewer, David A. “Making Hogarth Heritage” in: *Representations*, No. 72 (Autumn, 2000). Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. p. 21.

<sup>23</sup> Forrest, Theodosius [Young D’Urfey]. *Ways to Kill Care. A Collection of Original Songs. Chiefly Comic. Written by Young D’Urfey*. London: 1766, pp. 1-7.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

sketching the Calais defensive ramparts.<sup>25</sup> In fact, the artist is careful to include in the finished work a reference to its inception, and describes in his own autobiographical notes the “Picture wherein [he] introduced a poor highlander fled thither [to France] on account of the Rebellion year before, browsing on only scanty French fare, in sight [of] a Sirloin of Beef, a present from England, which is opposed [to] the Kettle of soup maigre,” adding with some pride, “my own figure in the corner with the soldier’s hand upon my shoulder is said to be tolerably like.”<sup>26</sup> While this biographical anecdote escapes mention in Forrest’s cantata, the derived piece does reveal the extent to which Hogarth’s graphic work constantly disseminated and transformed contemporaneous sociopolitical commentary through a range of medial forms. Moreover, it illustrates the degree of its integration into the national identity and heritage of England as a whole. David A. Brewer is careful to note this unique role in his study, “Making Hogarth Heritage”:

“Through dozens, perhaps hundreds, of seemingly slight appropriations [as befell *The Gates of Calais*], the graphic work of Hogarth (and to a lesser extent his paintings) became ingrained in English culture such that by the early nineteenth century, Charles Lamb could approvingly cite a gentleman ‘who being asked which book he esteemed most in his library’ placed Hogarth second only to Shakespeare.”<sup>27</sup>

As Hogarth’s broad popularity increased in the decades following his death in 1764, the public estimation of his work became thoroughly imbued with a sense of quintessential “Englishness”. Indeed, as Brewer cites,

“...in 1860 a columnist for the *Cornhill Magazine* described Hogarth as ‘the Philosopher who ever preached the sturdy English virtues that have made us what we are’ and [...] by 1874, a cheap reprint of John Ireland’s *Hogarth Illustrated* could proclaim Hogarth ‘the most thoroughly national painter in the roll of English artists,’ ‘essentially English—brave, straightforward, manly; never pandering to fashion or fancy.’”<sup>28</sup>

The conflation of Hogarth with English virtues—further, the extrapolation of such virtues to a national scale—owes much to the sociopolitical environment in which his art was conceived and gained public appeal. Especially in his prints of a satirical nature, which couch some of the most caustic criticism of his day, Hogarth creates a graphic representation of a society undergoing incredible change, forced to reassess

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<sup>25</sup> Einberg, Elizabeth and Judy Egerton, *The Age of Hogarth: British Painters Born 1675-1709*, Tate Gallery Collections, II, London 1988. Catalog entry: N01464, *O The Roast Beef of Old England* (*The Gate of Calais*) 1748.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Brewer, David A. “Making Hogarth Heritage” in: *Representations*, No. 72 (Autumn, 2000). Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. p. 21.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

its values amidst the genesis of a new middle class. As these works comment on the morality and actions of British social politics during the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, a brief historical contextualization will facilitate a deeper insight into the meanings couched in the plates of his *Harlot's Progress*.

### **2.1.2. Development of a New British Capitalism**

At the close of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the government of England underwent a shift in power that would, in turn, force a fundamental rebalancing of British society. What began as a struggle to wrest the throne from Catholic control under King James II ultimately resulted in what would later be termed the “Glorious Revolution”: a period between 1688 and 1689 that witnessed the establishment of Protestant rule under James’ daughter Mary and her husband, William of Orange, the passage of a Bill of Rights reflecting the political ideas of John Locke, and the renegotiation of the balance of powers between sovereign and Parliament. For the first time in British history, the conditions of a monarch’s claim to the throne were subject to parliamentary negotiation prior to his crowning, and this resulted in unprecedented power concessions. Not only would the powers of the sovereign be severely limited in favor of broader parliamentary rights, the conditions placed on William’s rule also stipulated the right to free speech in Parliament without fear of retribution, the requirement that parliamentary representation be refreshed through regular elections, and—notably—that the monarch could not, without the express agreement and enactment of Parliament, levy new taxes or muster or maintain standing armies.<sup>29</sup> The welfare and defense of the state was now largely in the hands of career politicians. Moreover, that state took on the defense, representation, and significant debts of Scotland under the Acts of Union in 1707,<sup>30</sup> which—after roughly twenty-five years of nearly continuous war and upheaval—only worsened Britain’s tenuous financial situation. Limited in its ability to levy taxes, the government turned to a syndicate of successful London merchants and bankers (a group that would later incorporate as the Bank of England), offering to sell an issue of government debt. The situation was so dire, in fact, that the future Bank of England was able to stipulate the punishing terms of a £4000 annual management fee and an exorbitant

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<sup>29</sup> England. The Bill of Rights 1689. Parliament of Great Britain. Enacted 16 December 1689.

<sup>30</sup> England. An Act for a Union of the Two Kingdoms of England and Scotland 1707. Parliament of Great Britain. Enacted 1 May 1707.

8% interest rate on the £1.2 million loan.<sup>31</sup> Of course, the servicing of this monumental loan required armies of merchants and educated bankers and financiers, newly vested with an unprecedented role in British government, and—much like their counterparts in Parliament—often serving their own priorities before those of their office and engaging in all manner of illicit behavior in order to remain entrenched there. During these early days of British proto-industrial capitalism, where politicians could be purchased and votes were a new national currency, abuses of power far outstripped any legislation that might prevent them. According to historian Simon Schama, Parliament quickly polarized into two parties—the Whigs and the Tories—who were

“...diametrically opposed, not just on the policies of the day, but about the entire political character of the nation and the upheaval of 1688 that had created it. The Whigs and Tories were not just two parties who, when the barracking was done, could meet up for a drink and a bawdy joke. They went to different taverns, different coffeehouses, different clubs. They were two armed camps. And the artillery barrages that flew between them were often red-hot. A quarter of a million votes were at stake in elections—more than twenty percent of the adult male population—and nothing was spared to grab them. Money, drink, libels, gangs of toughs; this was all out war at the hustings. Tories accused the Whigs of being fanatics, the dregs of the populace, atheists, Commonwealth men; Whigs accused Tories of being willing tools of the Jesuits and the French. Since the revolution had said that there should be an election every three years, this guaranteed an awful lot of politics.”<sup>32</sup>

It is hardly a coincidence that the figure ultimately capable of navigating this storm of political infighting was not a king or religious figure, but a former Member of Parliament and Paymaster General: Britain’s first unofficial Prime Minister, Robert Walpole. Not religious convictions, but financial interests motivated Walpole’s leadership, and the British economy experienced an unprecedented economic boom. This period spanned the reigns of both King George I and King George II—from Walpole’s appointment to the posts of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1715 to his resignation in 1742—and can be characterized by low taxes, a decline in national debt, and an abeyance of armed conflict, both at home and abroad: socio-political conditions that are particularly favorable to increased personal wealth and speculation. Of course, this monetary speculation often came at a cost largely borne by the poor and disenfranchised. Increasing fortunes allowed

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<sup>31</sup> Francis, John. Ed. I. Smith Homans. *The Bank of England. Its Times and Traditions From 1694 to 1844*. New York: Office of the Banker’s Magazine, 1862. p. 41.

<sup>32</sup> Schama, Simon. *A History of Britain*. BBC, 2000-2002. Documentary series. Part 10, “Britannia Incorporated,” 16:00’.

Walpole and his wealthy allies in Parliament to build monumental country estates, buy up and repurpose massive swathes of land, and even relocate or demolish villages in order to carry out their aesthetic whims.<sup>33</sup> Long-established small landholders were forced to sell their properties as the ruling class converted them into profitable strip farms, and many of these displaced individuals had little other recourse but to search for employment in the growing cities. Such a figure is the central character of Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress*; and, as suggested by the indefinite article chosen for the title, Moll's story is not unique. Rather, she is merely representative of the waves of disenfranchised and impoverished masses who descended upon London in the first decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Here, in Europe's fastest growing capital city, the nation's most deject poverty and most monumental wealth existed side by side. During this period, when a full ten percent of England's population came to seek opportunity in London, contemporary accounts by foreigners marvel "at the noise, the hectic throngs packing the streets, the tireless hucksterism, the glittering greediness of it all."<sup>34</sup> The city became an intersection of desperate poverty and ostentatious new wealth, of overpopulation and economic elitism: an environment where daily survival depended upon securing one's own share at another's expense. This dynamic human drama presented a fascinating subject to the young William Hogarth, who embraced the moral questions raised by the new human marketplace with a unique aptitude for couching biting social commentary in bawdy humor.

The artist had demonstrated his concern with the implications of England's developing proto-industrial commerce and dealings in human capital as early as 1721—more than ten years prior to his inception of the *Harlot's Progress* series—in an engraving entitled *Emblematical Print on the South Sea Scheme*. The print parodies the economically devastating crash of the South Sea Company, as commemorated by a fictional column (on the right side of the image) bearing deliberate resemblance to the Monument to the Great Fire of London. To underline this analogy to London's 1666 Great Fire, Hogarth has inserted the characteristic skyline of St. Paul's Cathedral (the construction of which was facilitated by the fire's clearing of the majority of Central London's slums) and an inscription on the base of the column, reading "This monument was erected in memory of the destruction of

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<sup>33</sup> Schama, Simon. *A History of Britain*. BBC, 2000-2002. Documentary series. Part 10, "Britannia Incorporated," 26:00'.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 29:00'.

the city by the South Sea in 1720". The center of the print is dominated by a large merry-go-round, topped by the image of a goat and a sign posing the question "Who'll[I] ride[?]" . Its figures represent the diverse spectrum of investors taken in by the scheme, and include (from left to right) a common prostitute, a clergyman, a shoe-shiner, a hag, and a fat nobleman. Below them the crowd jostles to secure their own positions on this financial wheel of fortune, while in the left foreground a group made up of a Catholic priest, a Jewish rabbi, and a Puritan minister cast lots. These three religious personages and an Anglican priest (kneeling, center right) conspicuously ignore the torture of two allegorical figures: Honesty, broken on the wheel by Self-Interest (center), and Honour, scourged by Villainy (right). Celebrated Hogarth scholar Ronald Paulson further identifies the short, deformed pickpocket (center left) as a caricature of the "Great Poet" Alexander Pope, whose inclusion he cites as a "cheap shot" at his "much-touted financial success, his profits from his *Homer* subscription, his Roman Catholicism, and his supposed Jacobitism."<sup>35</sup> The fat victim of this thief may be a likeness of the dramatist John Gay (of *The Beggar's Opera* fame), as "the build and features correspond to contemporary portraits, and the alphabet slate tied to his waist could refer to an anti-Catholic *chronique scandaleuse* of 1720 in which Pope is said to be Gay's tutor." Paulson adds, "Although Pope was rumored to have made money from South Sea investments, the only reason for his picking Gay's pocket would be to steal his poetic ideas."<sup>36</sup> In addition to Hogarth's typical insertions of chiding critique aimed at well-known public contemporaries, the print is conspicuously and thoroughly imbued with religious commentary: namely, the assertion that the real tragedy of the South Sea Bubble is that Christian virtues have been trumped by speculative greed. The accompanying verse further underlines this point, condemning "all Religions" for "Kneel[ing] down to play at pitch and Huggle", thus leaving "Their flocks [to] go Astray." Hogarth implores the English public to open their eyes to the human cost of the pursuit of capital:

"See here ye Causes why in London,  
So many Men are made, & undone  
[...]  
The woeful Cause ye in these Times  
Honour, & honesty, are Crimes,  
That publickly are punish'd by  
Self Interest, and Vilany;  
So much for monys magick power

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<sup>35</sup> Paulson, Ronald. *Hogarth: "The modern moral subject": 1697-1732*. Vol. 1. Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 1991. p. 71.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

Guess at the Rest you find out more.”<sup>37</sup>

This attack is an early expression of what would become a recurrent thematic concern for Hogarth: the moral consequences of society’s apparent willingness to purchase commercial success with human virtue.

To infer that Hogarth directly equates wealth with corruption and poverty with virtuousness would be a poor oversimplification, however. As a larger contingent of the British public developed personal wealth that situated them firmly within the new middle class, a renegotiation of this antiquated moral trope became necessary. According to early modern British Atlantic cultural historian Catherine Molineux, “the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth centuries witnessed a debate between classical republican notions of luxury as corruption and a newer, modernist discourse that de-moralized luxury in the process of naturalizing commerce.”<sup>38</sup> As the growing middle class sought to reconcile their financial success with their—mostly Christian—morality, British popular art became busily concerned with a redefinition of virtue. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century art historian Frederick Antal credits the revolutionary renegotiation of the relationship between wealth and moral goodness to factors that were unique to Britain during this period:

“It was the middle-class mentality behind Hogarth’s art, a mentality which, in the first half of the eighteenth century, was possible only in England (before the courtly reaction under George III), which in the second half accelerated and helped to develop the art of the bourgeoisie on the continent.”<sup>39</sup>

Now, at the hands of the new middle class, wealth might be seen as a product of hard work. Further, taking out credit had become commonplace, and was now associated less with the vice of speculation than with the strength of one’s name. Credit was virtue transformed into a tradable currency, its value levied by the honor of the holder’s reputation. Of course, borrowing against one’s honor was a dangerous trade. An outstanding debt of as little as two pounds could justify detention in debtor’s prison,<sup>40</sup> and for those unfortunates who might resort to crime for their survival, punishment could range from detention in the work house to public execution. But in a corrupt legal system where justice—just like everything else—

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<sup>37</sup> See Appendix 7.6.

<sup>38</sup> Molineux, Catherine. “Fashionable Slaves: Moral Corruption in Eighteenth-Century London” in: *ELH*, Vol. 72, No. 2, Essays in Honor of Ronald Paulson (Summer, 2005), p. 496.

<sup>39</sup> Antal, F. “Hogarth and his Borrowings” in: *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Mar., 1947). New York: College Art Association, 1947. p. 48.

<sup>40</sup> Schama, Simon. *A History of Britain*. BBC, 2000-2002. Documentary series. Part 10, “Britannia Incorporated,” 30:50’.

was for sale, public discourse eventually turned to address issues that the moral middle class could no longer afford to ignore. In the words of historian Simon Schama,

“London’s consumer culture was Mephistopheles, winking an eye, crooking a finger, and proffering credit. [...] ‘Who were the real criminals?’ was the cry in the coffee houses, in the streets, and in the newspapers of London. Everywhere you looked, the line between the law enforcers and the lawbreakers seemed arbitrary. In 1725, the Lord Chancellor was convicted of embezzling 80,000 pounds. People had had enough. In the 1730s, satires and essays, and poems and pictures documented a rising wave of revulsion at the world Walpole had brought into being—a sense that beneath all the platitudes about peace and stability lay squalor and corruption. A walk through London, for example, was a walk over prostrate bodies, big and little. Infants whose mothers were unable, or sometimes unwilling, to raise them were abandoned on the streets. But there came a time when someone was tired of stepping over half-dead babies found in the gutter to do something about it.”<sup>41</sup>

This was the excuse Britain’s middle class needed to redeem their depleting sense of Christian virtue. During this period, the first of England’s “Societies for the Reformation of Manners” were founded:<sup>42</sup> organizations conceived by newly wealthy middle class moralists to combat the (rather loosely defined) social evils of profanity, immorality and general lewdness. The early 18<sup>th</sup> century also saw the birth of foundling hospitals and charities for the poor and infirm, similarly funded by the burgeoning bourgeoisie. Philanthropy was nothing new, of course, but this was the first time that it was approached as an investment; businessmen hired respected artists and popular writers to draw public attention to the sins that plagued modern society. It was a “campaign of conscience,” conceived as a counterattack against “a hideous evil in what was supposed to be a Christian modern metropolis.”<sup>43</sup> A mission of this scale required a new breed of propaganda—one that spoke directly to the concerns of the English middle class in a way that was simultaneously familiar and novel, that both embraced the established values of hard work and Christian charity while addressing wholly modern issues. Antal argues that Hogarth led the charge in what would become a wave of provocative, socially focused artists and writers whose work redefined public consciousness during the Enlightenment era:

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<sup>41</sup> Schama, Simon. *A History of Britain*. BBC, 2000-2002. Documentary series. Part 10, “Britannia Incorporated,” 30:00’

<sup>42</sup> Hurl-Eamon, Jennine. “Policing Male Heterosexuality: The Reformation of Manners Societies’ Campaign Brothels in Westminster, 1690-1720” in: *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Summer 2004), p. 1020.

<sup>43</sup> Schama, Simon. *A History of Britain*. BBC, 2000-2002. Documentary series. Part 10, “Britannia Incorporated,” 36:00’

“Hogarth was probably the most original of all the eighteenth-century middle-class artists in Europe. The position of the English middle class was itself unique. Far from outstripping the rôle of the Dutch bourgeoisie in the seventeenth century, it had become the most powerful and highly developed in Europe, dominating world trade. Furthermore, during Hogarth’s lifetime, in the first half of the eighteenth century, the heyday of her democracy, England occupied a place apart, with constitutional and civic liberties quite exceptional in an absolutistic and aristocratic Europe. And it was in Hogarth’s lifetime, too, that the ideological strength of her middle class reached its zenith in Locke, Defoe, the *Spectator*, Richardson and Fielding, who were to become the unrivalled models for the continent. Yet antipathy for the visual arts, implicit in seventeenth-century Puritanism, had hitherto precluded the very existence of a bourgeois art or artistic tradition. So an entirely new art had to be created—and this was to be mainly the work of Hogarth—in line with the new philosophy, literature and journalism, setting forth the utilitarian and, at the same time, empirical outlook of this class. The necessity for good moral conduct and strenuous work, vital to the existence of the middle class, was the idea underlying Hogarth’s principal works, his large cycles, to the expression of which the artist applied a wealth of observation hitherto unheard of. These works, as cheap engravings, usually costing a shilling or so apiece, reached an even wider public than did the great journalistic invention of the age, the literary periodicals.”<sup>44</sup>

While the visual arts may have been antithetical to Puritan values of the previous century, the legacy of this tradition proved useful to Hogarth in other ways: most conspicuously, perhaps, in enabling him to identify the hypocrisy and corruption of entrenched authority. This ability he paired with the aesthetic and expressive irreverence of “the Restoration spirit, which particularly delighted in audacious burlesque and parody and which, at the time of the young Hogarth, was still flourishing.”<sup>45</sup> During the early period of his work (especially the 1720s), this cheeky bawdiness and preoccupation with “burlesques and parodies” and “salacious matter”<sup>46</sup> seems to have dominated Hogarth’s artistic production—an admission that Antal accredits to the artist’s youth and the predominance of a broader “transitional period” out of Restoration-era trends:

“Restoration culture, with its sparking, often cynical wit, its strongly dissolute side, undoubtedly left a certain mark not only on the youthful Hogarth [...], but on most intellectuals of the early eighteenth-century middle class. At that time, the cultural heritage of the Restoration period, that is of the aristocracy, could not be entirely ignored, otherwise one would have been faced with almost a complete void; for until very recently, the Puritan middle class had taken practically no notice of art or the theatre, which it summarily considered the most outstanding cultural emanations of the early eighteenth century, one can

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<sup>44</sup> Antal, F. “Hogarth and his Borrowings” in: *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Mar., 1947). New York: College Art Association, 1947. p. 36.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* p. 39.

<sup>46</sup> Antal, F. “The Moral Purpose of Hogarth’s Art” in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 15, No. 3/4 (1952). p. 175

usually detect in them ironical, witty, sometimes even 'vulgar' elements from the former aristocratic culture. It was in general the realism of this 'immoral' culture which was seized upon by Hogarth [...]."<sup>47</sup>

While his treatment of the various component elements of his works is original, Hogarth cannot be credited with inventing each of them out of whole cloth. His genius, rather, lies in his ability to selectively recombine the useful aspects of a range of established traditions and aesthetics into a complex, yet cogent, topical argument. Not only did he choose themes that were uniquely in-tune with the concerns of those around him, he executed them in a form that was inherently consumable. This proved an appropriate medium indeed for the subject of his first cycle: the predation, both physical and moral, of a young innocent by the rapacious proto-industrial capitalism of 1730s London.

## **2.2. William Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress* Series**

While praise of William Hogarth's stylistic richness and representational acuity is certainly not undeserved, it is perhaps the artist's choice in subject matter for his first series of engravings that contributed most to his immediate commercial success upon its release in 1732. In truth, as the new British middle class attempted to find a moral foothold in the growing morass of urban capitalism, *A Harlot's Progress* was able to condense and address themes that were already burgeoning social concerns. In the words of art historian Horace Walpole<sup>48</sup> in his four-volume compendium, *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, Hogarth's success can be credited to both "the familiarity of the subject, and the propriety of the execution."<sup>49</sup> Indeed, the "subject" would have been significantly more familiar than one may initially presume; from a perspective of almost 300 years after the *Progress*' first release, many of its references to specific individuals and events are not immediately apparent. On one hand, the series reveals a "growing contemporary obsession with female victimization, libertine impunity, and the uselessness of punishment";<sup>50</sup> it is a

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<sup>47</sup> Antal, F. "The Moral Purpose of Hogarth's Art" in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 15, No. 3/4 (1952). p. 175

<sup>48</sup> Horace (or Horatio) Walpole, Fourth Earl of Orford (1717-1797), was also the son of England's first Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole (1676-1745).

<sup>49</sup> Walpole, Horace. *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, 4 vols. (1765-1771), 4:76.

<sup>50</sup> Dabhoiwala, Faramerz. "The Appropriation of Hogarth's Progresses" in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (Winter 2012), p. 578.

graphic narrative depiction of the origin and downfall of a prostitute, and criticizes a society that would first compel its weakest members to behave amorally and then predate upon them. But on the other hand, the series is composed of a richly informative iconography, full of complex references to real personages and their illicit public misbehavior. These cheeky topical references to individuals and incidents—all of which would have been well known to the London public—manifested as a bawdy, irreverent sensationalism, and greatly contributed to the piece's immediate appeal. The inclusion of these contemporary historical references in the *Harlot* narrative will be addressed at greater length below, as will the stylistic influences that Hogarth employed in their execution.

### 2.2.1. Historical Influences

In the decades preceding the first release of *A Harlot's Progress*, public attitude regarding prostitution was dominated by a narrative of male victimization. Popular cautionary tales of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries often depicted virtuous young men entrapped by the sexual connivances of immoral women.<sup>51</sup> Especially in the estimation of the growing Reformation of Manners movement, this danger was pernicious and ever-present; lurking around every corner were prostitutes who would prey upon helpless young male patrons. According to the exhaustive rhetoric of these publications, once these “lewd wretches” had chosen their victims—young men who might easily be “corrupted and enticed to wickedness”—they would “pick their pockets and infect them with venereal

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<sup>51</sup> In her investigation of early eighteenth century policing practices of male sexuality, historian Jennine Hurl-Eamon includes references to *The Prentices Answer to the Whores' Petition* (London, 1668), which describe[s] the whores as standing “at your doors...Poxed and Painted / Perfum'd with Powder... / You with your becks and damn'd alluring looks / Are unto men just like to tenter hooks.” She also includes *The Crafty Whore: or...they ensnare and beguile youth...* (1658) and Peter Aretine's *Strange News from Bartholomew-Fair, or, the Wandring Whore Discovered...* (London, 1661), in which “four whores discuss how they rob their customers.” Further, *An Auction of Whores... Worth the reading of all Single Men and Batchelours* (London, Printed for N. H., 1691) contains the warning that harlots might “put one hand in your Cod-piece, and another in your Watch-pocket.” *The Devil and the Strumpet...* (London, Printed for E.B. near Ludgate, 1700), portrays “filthy and lustful Prostitutes” as being in the service of the devil, and *The Lady's Ramble: or, the Female Nightwalker* (London, 1720), includes the lament of a whore's customer, who describes himself and all of her victims as “Confoundedly Blind; / As not avoid your Delusions and Charme, / This brings still upon us such damnable pains: / Such Troubles and Plagues.” Further, Hurl-Eamon includes mention of an issue from January 1697 of the *Nightwalker* by John Dunton, which warns that the man who engages in business with “Nasty Trulls...is in danger of having his Pockets pick'd and being Pox'd into the Bargain.”

disease.”<sup>52</sup> The prisoner catalogues of London’s jails are filled with accounts like those of Hannah Howard or Elizabeth Pigg, who were incarcerated for “being a Notorious Idle Lewd woman having...Ruined Severall young Gent men.”<sup>53</sup> And though arrests of clients were far less frequent than arrests of prostitutes, those accused were—pursuant to the reforms of the Manners societies—required to stand trial in the criminal courts rather than those of the church for the first time in British legal history.<sup>54</sup> Of course, of the men who were prosecuted, there were plenty who embraced the narrative of the prostitute as a sexual predator, as “this defence allowed men to escape or lighten their punishment”.<sup>55</sup> One might conclude that the subsequent drop in the rates of male incarceration for this crime during the early years of the 1730s may have resulted from the harsher punishments introduced to deter offenders during the previous decades. However, Hurl-Eamon posits another hypothesis—one more reflective of the simultaneous shift in popular discourse about the responsibility of the prostitute for her client’s guilt. As the growth of Britain’s new middle class increasingly chipped away at the long-held associations of wealth with virtue and poverty with vice, the unforgiving Puritanical stance of the Reformation of Manners societies became antiquated and unrealistic. Moreover, an increasingly powerful segment of London’s populace was developing a more nuanced and sympathetic understanding of the nature of poverty and the poor. The same sentiment that motivated the establishment of London’s first orphanages and charitable hospitals now begged a reassessment of preconceptions concerning prostitution. During this period, Hurl-Eamon argues, male patrons were convicted far less frequently because “as these women began to be seen as victims, plying their trade out of desperate economic need, rather than lust, their arrests became more and more distasteful.”<sup>56</sup> Further, she hypothesizes that the disbanding of the Reformation of Manners societies during the 1730s and 1740s was “not because [prostitutes’] male clients had so many sympathizers,” but rather because public

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<sup>52</sup> Hurl-Eamon, Jennine. “Policing Male Heterosexuality: The Reformation of Manners Societies’ Campaign Brothels in Westminster, 1690-1720” in: *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Summer 2004), p. 1026.

<sup>53</sup> MJ/SR1979 Calendar of Prisoners, 8 Jan 1701/2. Cited in: Hurl-Eamon, Jennine. “Policing Male Heterosexuality: The Reformation of Manners Societies’ Campaign Brothels in Westminster, 1690-1720” in: *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Summer 2004), p. 1026.

<sup>54</sup> Hurl-Eamon, Jennine. “Policing Male Heterosexuality: The Reformation of Manners Societies’ Campaign Brothels in Westminster, 1690-1720” in: *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Summer 2004), p. 1028.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1025.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1028.

sentiment had turned against arresting prostitutes.<sup>57</sup> It is hardly a coincidence that Hogarth's first thematization of the life of a prostitute—a piece that premiered to resounding public acclaim—was unveiled precisely at the cusp of this shift in public opinion. With his *Harlot's Progress*, the artist was able to tap into a larger paradigm of rethinking the nature of amoral behavior and an increased awareness of the conditions that create it. His protagonist was permitted a personality and compelling backstory, and culpability for her downfall is shared with the circumstances and characters around her. Women who were charged with prostitution still faced legal consequences (usually a sentence in a work house), but the general public assignation of blame had largely shifted from the whore to the whoremonger. In fact, in the year prior to the *Harlot's* debut, this trend was borne out in two prodigious public spectacles, as

“...an angry group of spectators killed Mother Needham, an infamous procuress, when she was put in the pillory in 1730, and in the same year Colonel Charteris—a notorious whore monger who was popularly dubbed ‘the Rape-Master General of Great Britain’—was attacked and beaten by the mob when spotted in Chelsea with two young women.”<sup>58</sup>

Just by including these two well-known miscreants, Hogarth composes for his heroine a setting that predisposes her to similarly illicit behavior. But the artist goes further; he includes as his cast of characters a virtual Who's Who of London crime. These are

“...infamous real-life personages: the rapist rake, colonel Francis Charteris, and his pimp; the infamous brothel keeper Mrs. Needham; the highwayman James Dalton; Captain Macheath, the hero of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*; the zealous magistrate Sir John Gonson...”<sup>59</sup>

His grotesque caricatures even cite a menagerie of contemporary quack doctors, including: the oculist, Chevalier Taylor; Dr. “Spot” Ward, whose touted pills were said to have killed as many as they had cured; and Dr. Misaubin, a French fraud who held enough of Hogarth's contempt to justify a second appearance in a later series (Plate V of *Marriage-à-la-Mode*).<sup>60</sup> Much scholarship has been dedicated to the detailed identification of these personages through their accessories, physical characteristics,

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<sup>57</sup> Hurl-Eamon, Jennine. “Policing Male Heterosexuality: The Reformation of Manners Societies’ Campaign Brothels in Westminster, 1690-1720” in: *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Summer 2004) p. 1028.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 1026.

<sup>59</sup> Dabhoiwala, Faramerz. “The Appropriation of Hogarth's Progresses” in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (Winter 2012), p. 578.

<sup>60</sup> Baum, Richard M. “Hogarth and Fielding as Social Critics” in: *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Mar., 1934). p. 30.

and peculiarities of dress<sup>61</sup>—clues that would have prompted the contemporary viewer to draw upon his own familiarity with the recognizable icons of public corruption. According to Hogarth biographer Reverend John Trusler, these references to real individuals were instrumental in swiftly establishing the artist's success. He cites the inclusion in Plate III of a certain British judge, the outspoken supporter of the Reformation of Manners societies and “scourge of Gin Lane,” Sir John Gonson:

“The third scene of ‘The Harlot's Progress’ introduced [Hogarth] to the notice of the great: at a Board of Treasury (which was held a day or two after the appearance of that print), a copy of it was shown by one of the lords, as containing, among other excellences, a striking likeness of Sir John Gonson, a celebrated magistrate of that day, well known for his rigour towards women of the town. From the Treasury each lord repaired to the print-shop for a copy of it, and Hogarth rose completely into fame.”<sup>62</sup>

But Hogarth's narrative is not merely a lampoon of real-life figures. Rather, the artist places at its center the eponymous protagonist: a composite of known criminals and a fictional character of his own creation. He names her “Moll”<sup>63</sup> (an established euphemism for “whore” or “prostitute” whose usage is documented as early as 1604),<sup>64</sup> and through her actions is able to “thread a recognizable storyline between realism and allegory.”<sup>65</sup> Scholars disagree on the exact provenance of the name “Hackabout”, citing two possible contemporary inspirations who share the surname. Hogarth scholar Barry Wind (among others<sup>66</sup>) postulates that the name references the documented prostitute Kate Hackabout, arguing that this hypothesis is supported by a minute detail found in Plate III.<sup>67</sup> Wind calls the viewer's attention to the pocket watch held by the title character, pointing out that, while the time indicated appears

<sup>61</sup> This proved a recurrent theme for Hogarth, who turned again to criticism of fraudulent medicine in 1736 with his engraving, *The Consultation of Physicians, or The Arms of the Undertaker's Company*, in which he also caricatures a number of the same individuals. For more on Hogarth's criticism of quack doctors, see: Dabhoiwala, Faramerz. “The Appropriation of Hogarth's Progresses” in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (Winter 2012); Baum, Richard M. “Hogarth and Fielding as Social Critics” in: *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Mar., 1934); and Erwin, Timothy. “Parody and Prostitution” in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (Dec. 2005).

<sup>62</sup> Trusler, Rev. John. *The Works of William Hogarth: In a Series of Engravings With Descriptions, and a Comment on Their Moral Tendency*. London: Jones and Co., 1833. p. 4.

<sup>63</sup> In fact, some Hogarth scholars—among them, British Restoration and eighteenth-century scholar Timothy Erwin—argue that the artist gave his protagonist the name “Mary”. See: Erwin, Timothy. “Parody and Prostitution” in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (Dec. 2005)

<sup>64</sup> “moll, n.” *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1989. OED Online. Oxford University Press. Aug. 27, 2014.

<sup>65</sup> Erwin, Timothy. “Parody and Prostitution” in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (Dec. 2005), p. 679.

<sup>66</sup> See also: Dabhoiwala, Faramerz. “The Appropriation of Hogarth's Progresses” in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (Winter 2012), p. 578.

<sup>67</sup> See Appendix 7.1.

at first glance to be just before noon, a closer look reveals that the numbers are actually backwards:

“...the time on the watch face has been read as 11.45. However, it has not been recognised that Hogarth, for some reason, failed to account for the reversal of the engraving process. Accordingly the time is actually 12.15, a time with special significance. The *Grub Street Journal* of 6 August 1730 informs us that among the group of harlots arrested between ‘12 noon and 1 o’clock’ was ‘the famous Kate Hackabout (whose brother was lately hanged at Tyburn), a woman noted in and about the Hundreds of Drury.’ There is no doubt that Hogarth was inspired, in part, by the actions of the real Hackabout and thus appropriated the name for his fictional anti-heroine. Hogarth’s intention to capitalise on the notoriety of Hackabout is thus made clear, not only by the letter to M. Hackabout which protrudes from the dresser drawer, but also by his attention to a specific time between 12 and 1 o’clock.”<sup>68</sup>

While this case is compelling, it has also been argued that the name may refer to the famous highwayman Francis Hackabout, who was arrested, prosecuted for theft, and hanged in 1730.<sup>69</sup> Incidentally, during the same legal sessions in which Francis Hackabout was sentenced to death for “stealing a wig and a little money,” the infamous South Sea Bubble profiteer, Colonel Francis Charteris, was convicted of rape and sentenced to the same fate.<sup>70</sup> He didn’t ultimately share it, of course; Charteris’ wealth and considerable governmental influence garnered him a pardon from Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole himself. But Hogarth refused to let the notorious “Rapist Rake” off so easily, and depicts him in Plate I of *A Harlot’s Progress* as a predatory lecher, fondling himself in a doorway (right) while he witnesses Moll’s arrival in London.<sup>71</sup> This detail is strong evidence that Hogarth was actually drawing upon both real-life Hackabouts in his selection of the name, as it facilitates a second dimension of social criticism. While Charteris may have escaped the hangman’s noose, he cannot evade the artist’s burin, which condemns in equal measure the illicit behavior of an individual and the corrupt system that enables it.

### 2.2.2. Adaptations of the *Harlot* Narrative

Though Hogarth’s style and content dominated the graphic arts in England long after his death—both in legitimate works inspired by his artistic insights and in fraudulent

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<sup>68</sup> Wind, Barry. “Hogarth’s Fruitful Invention: Observations on *Harlot’s Progress*, Plate III” in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 52 (1989). London: The Warburg Institute, 1989. p. 267.

<sup>69</sup> Erwin, Timothy. “Parody and Prostitution” in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (Dec. 2005), p. 679.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

copies meant to capitalize on his popularity—none of his works was the object of so many reproductions, adaptations, and references in its time as the *Harlot's Progress* series. The initial popularity of these engravings can, of course, be credited to their ingenious topical relevance, both in content and medium, and in the relationship between these two: the series addressed the moral and social concerns of a growing middle class while simultaneously appeasing their aspirational aesthetic tastes in an inherently consumable format. Immediately following the release of *A Harlot's Progress* in 1732, a wave of counterfeiters and imitators seized the opportunity to profit from its immense popularity, in varying degrees of fidelity to the original work. Realizing its “theatrical possibilities”, producers quickly slapped together “actual stagings of the prints”: showings of the broadside panels by a narrator, who would “present the prints in fairly rapid sequence with covering patter”.<sup>72</sup> In London, these shows would be presented onstage for the crowds of “metropolitan viewers with ready access to the theaters”, whereas outside of the city they took the form of “itinerant peepshow[s]”, which would travel through the provinces, “offering country folk the opportunity to see the Harlot [...] turned into a stagy, if not literally staged, narrative.”<sup>73</sup> Historian David Brewer suggests that such narration would likely consist of loose descriptions of the images, enhanced by the showmen’s own theatrical “novelizing” of the actions that are suggested to transpire between them.<sup>74</sup> Considering its origin as a series of images, it is curious that the *Harlot* story did not subsequently materialize as a “tableau vivant” (a then-popular theatrical form in which a two-dimensional image would be recreated by costumed actors onstage); rather, it was immediately adapted to the medium of ballad opera, appearing as multiple adaptations throughout London as early as 1733.<sup>75</sup> This dramaturgical leap (and the speed with which it was accomplished) testifies to both the inherent dramatic character of the piece and its incredible popularity. The paying public wanted to see all they could of the hapless protagonist, and opportunistic producers were eager to provide it to them. These stagings, much like the rudimentary narrations that had preceded them, usually attempted to fill in the gaps between Hogarth’s images, supplementing the story with additional details of character or intrigue that might distinguish the production from its competitors. In addition to presenting audiences with novel content (for which they were more likely to pay), this

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<sup>72</sup> Brewer, David A. “Making Hogarth Heritage” in: *Representations*, No. 72 (Autumn, 2000). Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. p. 42.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

practice had the added effect of circumventing the few regulations concerning copyright of intellectual property that did exist at the time. By focusing on the implied action between the popular prints, such productions suggested that Hogarth's tale was merely a "starting point—common to all, but desperately in need of supplementation through the invention of further details."<sup>76</sup> This was accomplished by integrating elements of the work into a new, "larger narrative in such a way as to strip it of its authority and recast it as simply part of the repertoire of source material available and common to all."<sup>77</sup> Citing period advertisements, Brewer argues that the countless "shews" put on in the many market squares and smaller theaters throughout greater London were particularly guilty of this practice:

"Thus, for example, a dramatization of *A Harlot's Progress* offered at both Southwark and Bartholomew Fairs in 1733 was advertised as highlighting 'the Diverting Humours of the Yorkshire Waggoner,' a figure who never actually appears in the progress (although his wagon is visible in plate 1)."<sup>78</sup>

Such productions were vastly popular with the paying public. One adaptation of the narrative, a pantomime written by Theophilus Cibber and entitled *The Harlot's Progress*, was so successful, in fact, that sales records of its run in "Potter's theater in Haymarket" in February 1733 document a reorganization of the more expensive loge seats in order to accommodate a larger standing area: "On account of the great Demand for Places, the Pit and Boxes will be laid together at 5 [shillings] each."<sup>79</sup> Unfortunately, other than occasional snippets of text and some advertising material, little survives of these early, unauthorized dramatizations, making the construction of a complete dramaturgical trajectory of the piece impossible. Brewer postulates, however, that it is one of the legitimate adaptations<sup>80</sup> that serves as the most complete and representative example of the ways in which Hogarth's work was brought to the stage.<sup>81</sup> This anonymous piece, which was completed in 1733 (though, curiously, never performed), was titled *The Jew Decoy'd; or the Progress of*

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<sup>76</sup> Brewer, David A. "Making Hogarth Heritage" in: *Representations*, No. 72 (Autumn, 2000). Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. p. 40

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Cited in: Anonymous. *The Harlot's Progress, The Rake's Progress* (MS., CA. 1778-1780) Conway, William E. et. al., Eds. Library of Alexandria, 2009. Introduction.

<sup>80</sup> Such adaptations were produced in the so-called "patent theaters," which would both acknowledge the author's intellectual ownership of the material and pay him for its use. See: Brewer, David A. "Making Hogarth Heritage" in: *Representations*, No. 72 (Autumn, 2000). Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. p. 41.

<sup>81</sup> Brewer, David A. "Making Hogarth Heritage" in: *Representations*, No. 72 (Autumn, 2000). Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. p. 40.

a *Harlot*,<sup>82</sup> and was conceived “to shew / What has been done, the manner, when, and how, / Between the scenes of the ensuing piece.”<sup>83</sup> The piece was distinct from, though heavily influenced by *The Decoy. An Opera.*, an adaptation of a similar name that was performed at the New Theater in Goodman’s Fields, London, in the same year.<sup>84</sup> Much like this and earlier unauthorized stage versions of the Harlot narrative, *The Jew Decoy’d* consists of three acts—based upon the first three plates of the series. Probably owing to the influence of the series’ earliest presentational style, *The Jew Decoy’d* also retains some of the dramaturgical characteristics of a rudimentary narrative format—the expository duties once performed by a showman pointing to prints is accomplished here by the added character of the “Time-Keeper” of the theater. This figure serves two functions: first, he delivers expository information concerning events that happen between the performed scenes, much as a chorus might; and second, his regular entrances provide an increased continuity throughout the piece. To this end, the dramatic trajectories of certain objects and characters are also augmented; some are added to scenes in which they do not originally appear, given backstories that increase their significance, or referenced at opportune moments to serve the piece’s overall continuity. Just one example of this dramaturgical tinkering can be seen in the Harlot’s watch. While Hogarth only includes this object in Plate III of the series (held by the Harlot, center left),<sup>85</sup> it is given a complex narrative arc in *The Jew Decoy’d*, introducing wholly new events and character motivations that are absent in the engravings. In the ballad opera, not only does the watch belong to the eponymous Jew (the Harlot’s benefactor in Plate II of the series), but it comes into the possession of Moll and her maid through theft—they decide to steal it from him as revenge for his infidelity to her (not pictured). Moreover, as Moll is arrested by the Magistrate (Plate III), the Jew—who has been waiting just outside her door—rushes on to reclaim the watch, thereby revealing to the authorities that she is guilty of both theft and prostitution. This second, more serious charge justifies her imprisonment (in Plate IV) in Bridewell “(the prison for persons of ill fame”) rather than Newgate (where thieves went).”<sup>86</sup> Augmentations

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<sup>82</sup> Anonymous. *The Harlot’s Progress, The Rake’s Progress* (MS., CA. 1778-1780) Conway, William E. et. al., Eds. Library of Alexandria, 2009. Introduction.

<sup>83</sup> Brewer, David A. “Making Hogarth Heritage” in: *Representations*, No. 72 (Autumn, 2000). Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. p. 40.

<sup>84</sup> Anonymous. *The Harlot’s Progress, The Rake’s Progress* (MS., CA. 1778-1780) Conway, William E. et. al., Eds. Library of Alexandria, 2009. Introduction.

<sup>85</sup> See Appendices 6.3. and 7.1.

<sup>86</sup> Brewer, David A. “Making Hogarth Heritage” in: *Representations*, No. 72 (Autumn, 2000). Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. p. 40.

such as these suggest that the artist's original narrative was considered insufficiently dramatic to be transported to the stage in its original form. Brewer, however, argues that *The Jew Decoy'd*, despite its endorsement by Hogarth, was also guilty of appropriating the central narrative of *A Harlot's Progress* as "common" and well-known to the public at the time. Hence, the Time-Keeper's winking introductory line, "*The Harlot's Progress*—Not a face I spy, / But knows the subject full well as I."<sup>87</sup> This impression was only enhanced by the piece's musical component. Following the model of John Gay's successful *Beggar's Opera* (1728), most of the stagings of the *Harlot* narrative from this period adapted and incorporated familiar English songs and ballads. There are 52 of these "airs" in *The Jew Decoy'd*,<sup>88</sup> many of which are slight re-wordings to fit the piece's general plot. English musical historian Edmond McAdoo Gagey defines such works as "plays that include songs, not mere opera librettos," arguing that the music is of relative unimportance as compared to the piece's dramatic qualities.<sup>89</sup>

Nevertheless, the integration of the additional medium of the popular tune contributed even further to the *Harlot's* mass appeal and illustrates the degree to which Hogarth's narrative both reflected and determined broader cultural priorities of his time. Now, by humming tunes that they already knew, consumers could tap into the same popular media as those who had paid for *Harlot* print subscriptions. According to modern social historian Faramerz Dabhoiwala, this was a profound development—one that represented a "constant dialogue within and between different media [that] helped to multiply tremendously the possible meanings of [the] work."<sup>90</sup> Whoever engaged in this particular consumerist trend was, in effect, "commodifying"<sup>91</sup> Hogarth's content, consuming it according to their own social, political, and cultural priorities (it is especially poetic, of course, that the object of this appropriation is a prostitute: a human victim of commoditization). Again in this regard, *The Jew Decoy'd* serves as an exemplary illustration of this process of cultural appropriation of Hogarth's material—namely, an attempt by its intended

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<sup>87</sup> Brewer, David A. "Making Hogarth Heritage" in: *Representations*, No. 72 (Autumn, 2000). Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. p. 40.

<sup>88</sup> Anonymous. *The Harlot's Progress, The Rake's Progress* (MS., CA. 1778-1780) Conway, William E. et. al., Eds. Library of Alexandria, 2009. Introduction.

<sup>89</sup> Gagey, Edmond McAdoo. "Ballad Opera." In: *Columbia University Studies in English and Comparative Literature*, 130.) New York: Columbia University Press, 1937. p. 259

<sup>90</sup> Dabhoiwala, Faramerz. "The Appropriation of Hogarth's Progresses" in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (Winter 2012), p. 583.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

audience to assert its legitimacy at the expense of others who might aspire to the same. While Hogarth provides hints that his protagonist's wealthy keeper (Plate II) is Jewish,<sup>92</sup> the ostentatious shift in focus of this adaptation is reflected in its new title, *A Jew Decoy'd*. According to historian Sophie Carter, this detail underlines the proposition that Moll's "new-found status [has been] granted her by one whose claim to legitimate authority and influence was understood to be as specious as her own, according to the prevailing logic of vehement eighteenth-century anti-Semitism."<sup>93</sup> By ridiculing the aspiration to upward social mobility in a character considered unfit and duplicitous, the recently established middle class was asserting their own position as hierarchical gate keepers, vested with some self-legitimized authority to deny access to others. But this also reveals an unspoken anxiety: a fear that the likes of prostitutes and Jews may be able to—economically, at least—"pass" among the ranks of established English aristocracy. As *The Jew Decoy'd* restricted its scope to the content of only the first three plates of Hogarth's series, the increased upward social mobility of the new proto-industrial capitalism would have taken center stage as the piece's central theme. The altered dramaturgy of this ballad opera adaptation taps directly into the momentous redefinition of class during the early eighteenth century that shaped the context of the original prints. So long as personal wealth was bound—as it had been for centuries—to privilege and an established aristocratic family heritage, those with wealth were safely ensconced beyond the reaches of upwardly ambitious social climbers. But as private wealth began to become untethered from familial legacy in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, both the entertainment and critical literature favored by the new middle class became increasingly concerned with delineating the separation between wealth and a sense of true entitlement to it—between those whose lineage lends them a sense of legitimacy, and those who might pretend to one. These warnings took the form of plays, pamphlets, poems, and countless cautionary tales written up in popular magazines, all warning of the dangers of situations in which social lines might be blurred.<sup>94</sup> Of course, the ultimate personifications of these duplicitous characters were the prostitute and the Jew, which we see as the central figures of *The Jew Decoy'd*. Other versions of Hogarth's cycle also thematize the "ability to

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<sup>92</sup> Carter, Sophie. "This Female Proteus': Representing Prostitution and Masquerade in Eighteenth-Century English Popular Print Culture. In: *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1999). p. 71.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

transcend and thwart social stratification”:<sup>95</sup> namely, two pirated versions of *A Harlot’s Progress*, produced as pamphlets, containing “lengthy verse which accompanied their imitations of the original plates to stress the Harlot’s meteoric rise in social status and affluence”.<sup>96</sup> Both of these works stress the danger that individuals who masquerade above their station pose to established social order, presenting the Harlot as opportunistic and shiftless, ready to manipulate her principles and even herself to gain advantage of a situation. In the 1733 appropriation, *The Lure of Venus*, the protagonist’s name “changes each canto, as she takes up and discards class specific variations of Moll, Mary, and Maria, constantly tailoring her person in an ambitious bid to escape her plebian origins and rural existence.”<sup>97</sup> Likewise, in a 1753 redaction of an earlier adaptation, *The Harlot’s Progress: Being the Life of the noted Moll Hackabout, in Six Hudibrastick Cantos*, the following verse accompanies a poor copy of Hogarth’s second plate:

“Now Moll was Mistress of her Trade,  
To Plays and Balls and Masquerade...  
...And from a printed Linen Gown,  
She wore the best of Silks in Town:  
And thus equipp’d, our Harlots they,  
Like Archer Aimwell in the Play,  
Did Different Persons Personate,  
To fling a Lure, or lay a Bait.”<sup>98</sup>

The emphasis placed on the element of deliberate deception (through references to “masquerade”, “personat[ing] different persons,” “lay[ing] Bait”, etc.) represents a significant departure from Hogarth’s original series. These versions conspicuously place blame for the Harlot’s descent on her own duplicitous actions rather than calling attention to an inherently corrupt system. Such narratives “exonerate [their] male audience from any significant social responsibility for urban prostitution”,<sup>99</sup> thereby forfeiting the reflective social criticism present in Hogarth’s engravings.

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<sup>95</sup> Carter, Sophie. “‘This Female Proteus’: Representing Prostitution and Masquerade in Eighteenth-Century English Popular Print Culture. In: *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1999). p. 71.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> *The Harlot’s Progress: Being the Life of the noted Moll Hackabout, in Six Hudibrastick Cantos*. London: J. Dowse, 1753. P. 33. Cited in: Carter, Sophie. “‘This Female Proteus’: Representing Prostitution and Masquerade in Eighteenth-Century English Popular Print Culture. In: *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1999). p. 71.

<sup>99</sup> Carter, Sophie. “‘This Female Proteus’: Representing Prostitution and Masquerade in Eighteenth-Century English Popular Print Culture. In: *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1999). p. 72.

This trend continued throughout the ensuing decades as the series was further appropriated and customized. Among such “full-blown reworkings and parodies” were

“*R[obert]’s Progress* and *Vanella’s Progress*, respectively satirizing the prime minister, Robert Walpole, and the mistress of the Prince of Wales, Anne Vane. Half a century later, they included *The Adventures of Harriet Heedless* (1780) and George Morland’s *Laetitia: or Seduction* (1786), which both updated the tale and, in keeping with later-eighteenth-century sensibilities, gave it a happier ending. Even more common was the recycling of particular details, as images on their own or as part of other compositions.”<sup>100</sup>

Such appropriations contain none of Hogarth’s sincerity, ruthless bluntness, or comic combativeness. Instead, especially in the late eighteenth century, they tend to contain a thinly disguised *Harlot* narrative that has been divested of its critical edge in the interest of an easily digested happy ending. One of these is George Morland’s *Letitia*, engraved in 1798, in which a young country innocent experiences the vices of the city before repentantly returning to her parents’ home. According to Frederick Antal, the cycle

“...is just a sugary transposition, with a happy end, of the ‘Harlot’s Progress.’ Though middle-class ideals are now mostly represented in a positive (not, as in Hogarth, largely in a negative) sense, this positiveness acquires, particularly in works destined for good society, an elegant, over-sweet, affected flavor which neutralizes the bourgeois tendency and makes it appear something of a hypocritical survival.”<sup>101</sup>

Through this conscious and unconscious appropriation, reuse, and dissemination of Hogarth’s ideas and imagery,<sup>102</sup> the series lost much of its biting critical humor and dark bourgeois fascination with the consequences of moral turpitude. Even those few interpretations that retained elements of social criticism largely redirected their venom at the heroine herself,<sup>103</sup> who was often portrayed as conspicuously complicit in her own downfall, her own misplaced and amoral ambitions directly responsible for her demise.

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<sup>100</sup> Dabhoiwala, Faramerz. “The Appropriation of Hogarth’s Progresses” in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (Winter 2012), p. 582.

<sup>101</sup> Antal, F. “The Moral Purpose of Hogarth’s Art” in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 15, No. 3/4 (1952). p. 194.

<sup>102</sup> Dabhoiwala, Faramerz. “The Appropriation of Hogarth’s Progresses” in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (Winter 2012), p. 582.

<sup>103</sup> One such adaptation takes the form of a six-stroph poem, written in 1812 by William Combe for publication with the *Harlot’s Progress* prints in Thomas Rowlandson’s *Tour of Doctor Syntax in Search of the Picturesque*. See Appendix 7.4.

While the sheer range of appropriations of Hogarth's *Harlot* series since its initial release in 1732 evinces the narrative's impressive interpretive flexibility, the most compelling of these derivations are those that—in the spirit of the series itself—reflect and respond to broader social, political, and cultural concerns of their day. So, how do the themes and characters of *A Harlot's Progress* find resonance with audiences in 2013? A Western, opera-going society is unlikely to be personally touched by the horrors of sex slavery and the madness of a death by syphilis. We are, however, embedded in a period in which the stability of the middle class is shifting, in an age when personal wealth belongs increasingly to the wealthiest in society<sup>104</sup> and a much greater percentage of the populace lives in pronounced poverty. Rather than a moral commentary on the actions of its central character, Bell's opera thematizes the relationship between sexuality and perception of female virtue, placing sexual and moral struggles front and center. Moreover, the medium of through-composed opera provides Bell with a complex and nuanced expressive format—one in which the *Harlot* content has never before been set. These dramaturgical and musical characteristics, as well as the piece's progression from conception to performance, will be addressed in the following chapter.

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<sup>104</sup> This is especially true in Britain and the United States, where just 10% of the population owns 53.3% and 75.4% of total wealth, respectively. See: *Credit Suisse Global Wealth Databook*, 2013. p. 146.

### 3. Iain Bell's *A Harlot's Progress* Opera

In October of 2013, Vienna's Theater an der Wien presented the world premiere of *A Harlot's Progress*: an opera in six scenes by the young British composer, Iain Bell, and the renowned British writer and historian, Peter Ackroyd. The piece represented a number of notable firsts: not only was this history's first fully operatic setting of Hogarth's *Harlot* series, it was also the 32-year-old composer's first opera, the writer's first foray into the medium of opera libretto, the Theater an der Wien's first English-language commission, and the theater's first live main stage web stream transmission. Under the direction of Jens-Daniel Herzog and baton of Mikko Franck, the opera's six performances<sup>105</sup> received an enthusiastic critical response from audiences and reviewers alike (which will be addressed in further detail in Chapter Four). Overwhelmingly noted for its thrillingly fast-paced action, orchestral dynamism, and dramatically demanding vocal roles, the piece was championed as a modern candidate for inclusion in the operatic canon and played to mostly sold-out audiences throughout its run. The development and realization of Bell's *A Harlot's Progress* will be discussed at length in the following sections, with particular attention to the opera's transmedial adaptation, unique dramaturgy, and complex musical language.

#### 3.1. Conception and Realization

##### 3.1.1. Theater an der Wien Commission

While acclaimed for the intensity and dynamism of her performance as the opera's titular tragic protagonist, the German soprano Diana Damrau had, in fact, taken up an integral role in the earliest stages of the opera's development far before its theatrical realization. The process of bringing Hogarth's *Harlot* to the stage had begun more than seven years earlier as a creative relationship between performer and composer. The first of what would become a series of collaborations premiered in 2007 at the European Music Festival in Stuttgart, with Damrau's performance of

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<sup>105</sup> Between 13 - 27 October 2013

Bell's original song cycle, *Daughters of Britannia*. According to Bell, the piece was written specifically for Damrau with the express intention of providing her with an opportunity to apply her characteristic performative range. As he recounted in an interview in October of 2013:

"*Daughters of Britannia* is a song cycle with five songs, each depicting a different British mythical or historical heroine—so Morgause, Guinevere, Lady Godiva—each one a different personality, and just to encompass her different personalities. And that was in Stuttgart, and she later called that out with Moll."<sup>106</sup>

A second song cycle followed shortly thereafter; *Day Turned Into Night*—based upon diary extracts and love letters written by Queen Victoria about her deceased husband, Prince Albert—was premiered by Damrau at the Munich Opera Festival in 2008. After a series of fruitful collaborations, the proposal of an opera seemed the next logical step:

"...then she asked for another song cycle, and then I did an orchestral song cycle for her, and then the next progression was an opera. And I didn't hesitate when she asked."<sup>107</sup>

Finding compelling subject matter, however, proved a task that required more lengthy consideration. Literature offered little promising material due to its generally untheatrical structure, and plays from the British canon seemed too unwieldy to adapt to the operatic form. In Bell's words,

"I spent some time, actually, thinking about theme. I spent a lot of time looking at British literature—so, the Romantic literature of Austen, the Brontës—nothing. For instance, I don't feel a novel makes a great opera anyway, since I think they're far too big—I think far too many characters, far too long dramatic arc. Novellas are a different issue. With 200 pages, you're talking the same dramatic track that gets built, but with a [novel] I don't think it works. And Shakespeare, no—again, I don't feel that every play needs to be made into an opera. I think that sometimes a play is just a wonderful play, you know, and a book is just a wonderful book. So I was kind of hitting my head against the wall, thinking of what to look for."<sup>108</sup>

Ultimately, the answer came in graphic, two-dimensional form at the Tate Britain's William Hogarth exhibition in early 2007:

"Then a friend of mine—as happenstance, as all these things are—invited me to go to the Tate Britain in London. There was a Hogarth exhibit, and obviously I knew about *The Rake's Progress* through Stravinsky, and I knew about *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street*, so I thought, 'Yeah, OK, of course I'll go.' And I—I saw the *Harlot's Progress*, and I'd never known of it before. And I think very few people actually do in our circles—it's been eclipsed musically

<sup>106</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 18 September 2013.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

by the *Rake*, I feel. People just don't know it's there. [...] So I see this series, and I think, 'This is it.' [...] I call Diana up immediately, and I say, 'I've got our pictures.' [...] So she said, 'We'll do this. Yes, we'll do this.'"<sup>109</sup>

A second instance of chance further cemented the collaboration; at the time, Bell happened to be reading Peter Ackroyd's *London: A Biography*. Its richly descriptive historical content and treatment of the city as not just a setting but as a fully developed character in itself prompted Bell to contact the author regarding the creation of the libretto:

"I thought the opportunity might be right. So I emailed his agent, and began a few email exchanges, and he was on board. So that's how it happened. He wobbled a little bit, because he wasn't sure he knew what writing an opera was. I knew he'd written poetry, and I knew he'd written novels as well as factual, biographical things. With a little reassurance—and I let him look at some other libretti. English translations of *Traviata* and *Lucia [di Lammermoor]*, but also all of the Britten repertoire, *Manon* as well, *The Rake's Progress*—just so he would know what he would be compared to. [...] So then, when he said, 'Yeah, I'm going to do this,' we met, and we very quickly had the same idea of what we wanted to do."<sup>110</sup>

As the Theater an der Wien boasts a long legacy of producing world premiere works, the historic *stagione* house presented an ideal location for the developing project. Under the direction of Intendant Roland Geyer, Bell and Ackroyd were offered a commission to present their new *Harlot's Progress* as part of the 2013/2014 season. A remount of the 2008 production of Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* would lead up to the new opera, to be premiered on Sunday, 13 October 2013.

### 3.1.2. Transmedial Adaptation

Shaping a dramatically compelling opera from a six-image graphic narrative presented a unique set of considerations for the composer-librettist team during the eighteen-month period of the piece's development. As noted in Section 2.2.2., this was not the first time that Hogarth's content had seen adaptation for the stage; indeed, during his lifetime the artist witnessed the prolific appropriation of his content to a range of performative genres, including the nascent ballad opera, pioneered by Händel and Pepusch. He drew frequent allusions to the similarities between his artistic form and other story-telling media,<sup>111</sup> especially that of theater, even

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<sup>109</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 18 September 2013.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Paulson, Ronald. "The Harlot's Progress and the Tradition of History Painting" in: *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn, 1967). p. 70.

commenting famously “my picture is my stage and men and women my players.”<sup>112</sup> As has been documented at length by Ronald Paulson, Hogarth clearly aligned himself with the aesthetic principles championed by the London daily periodical, *The Spectator*, in which ideal operatic practices are delineated in a polemic by magazine co-founder Joseph Addison:

“An Opera may be allowed to be extravagantly lavish in its Decorations, as its only Design is to gratify the Senses, and keep up an indolent Attention in the Audience. Common Sense however requires, that there should be nothing in the Scenes and Machines which may appear Childish and Absurd. [...] Musick, Architecture and Painting, as well as Poetry and Oratory, are to deduce their Laws and Rules from the general Sense and Taste of Mankind, and not from the Principles of those Arts themselves; or in other Words, the Taste is not to conform in the Art, but the Art to the Taste. Musick is not design’d to please only Chromatick Ears, but all that are capable of distinguishing harsh from disagreeable Notes. A Man of an ordinary Ear is a Judge whether a Passion is express’d in proper Sounds, and whether Melody of those Sounds be more or less pleasing.”<sup>113</sup>

Of particular note in this treatise is the emphasis placed on the subordination of form to function: the endorsement of artistic manipulation of an extant medial form in the interest of greater expressive capability. Considering that Hogarth had accomplished precisely this renegotiation of established form in the graphic world with his *Harlot* series, it follows that his enthusiasm for ballad opera was largely based on the medium’s characteristic manipulation of extant forms. Eighteenth-century English cultural scholar Timothy Erwin points out that this interest in the increased expressive potential of mixed artistic forms found expression in Hogarth’s own writings.<sup>114</sup> Moreover, the artist was keenly aware of the necessity to balance the connotative and denotative in artistic expression, finding music a particularly powerful connotative device in this regard. According to Erwin,

“As an art-form music is inherently less denotative than painting or poetry, and it may well have proved attractive to Hogarth on that account alone. [...] the mixed and novel art form [...] may have appealed to him as a fresh canvas would, or better, as the vehicle of a composite form to be rehearsed and performed in the mind of the auditor like a melody.”<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Antal, F. “The Moral Purpose of Hogarth’s Art” in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 15, No. 3/4 (1952). p. 192.

<sup>113</sup> Paulson, Ronald. “The Harlot’s Progress and the Tradition of History Painting” in: *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn, 1967). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967. p. 78

<sup>114</sup> Erwin, Timothy. “William Hogarth and the Aesthetics of Nationalism” in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 3/4 (2001), p. 403.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

Achieving a similar balance between connotative and denotative content—between implied, suggested nuance and the expressly spoken exposition—drove the collaboration of Bell and Ackroyd in shaping their through-composed opera. As Bell recounted in an interview in September 2013, this necessitated an establishment of dramaturgical priorities in the earliest stages of the process:

“We met before every scene, and talked about the dramatic arc of every scene, and plotted it. He would then write his draft, send it to me, I would send him rewrites, suggestions...”<sup>116</sup>

Bell was deeply aware that the chief danger posed by any imbalance in connotative and denotative content would be an unwelcome deceleration of the forward momentum of the piece. Asked to express his prime concern regarding the opera’s libretto, he emphasized the importance of consistent dramatic action:

“[What I find most beneficial in a libretto is] that there are no moments when someone is sitting down, telling you how they feel. I can’t stand that. Maria Callas, one of the greatest dramatists onstage in the middle of the century, loved *Tosca* but hated ‘Vissi d’arte’, the big aria, because she said it held up the action. Because she’s just saying—she’s talking about being a pious woman, and how she always gives to charity, why is this happening to her? It’s not important. It’s just not important. It’s the most gorgeous aria you can imagine, but it stops up everything. [...] So I just can’t bear anything where someone’s just talking about something that isn’t—not exposit[ory]—but isn’t giving us insight into the plot. I can’t stand it.”<sup>117</sup>

This composer’s preference for embedding exposition within an opera’s dramatic action represents a departure from previous incarnations of the *Harlot* narrative; while ballad opera traditionally alternates between expository action (typically vested in the format of *secco recitativo*) and moments of atmospheric or emotional elaboration (delivered as arias, duets, ensembles, or other musical numbers), Bell expressly prefers to furnish characterization through a constantly moving plot. Rather than stopping the action to offer his characters’ commentary upon it, Bell embeds their thoughts and emotional responses in the overall fabric of the piece—both in their own musical language and that of their orchestral accompaniment. In accordance with Hogarth’s own aesthetic priorities, Bell eschews established operatic convention in the interest of achieving a heightened degree of dramatic expression:

“I, as a dramatist of sorts, don’t like arias for the reason that I feel like they stop action. So the arias I do have, the one aria ‘Come riddle me, riddle my ree,’ is an insight. It’s not how she actually feels; it’s much deeper than that.

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<sup>116</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 25 October 2013.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

‘Poor little thing’ [by] Kitty—it’s an insight—and that’s about 90 seconds long. I don’t like anything, *anything* that holds up action because I have a very short attention span myself. I can’t bear long [arias]. Puccini had the right idea. It’s three minutes long. [...] You can’t [stop the exposition]. It can’t [stop]! [...] I like that to be within the music, too. For instance, Diana’s mad scene, when she was learning it, she was like, ‘I don’t have any time to rest, vocally.’ But look at the audience. They’re not breathing by the time she’s [dead]. So it works. Everything continues from [the beginning] without any letup at all. She even—in scene four, when the curtain comes up—she’s in exactly the same position as she is in when the curtain comes down in scene three. So it’s a continual trajectory.”<sup>118</sup>

The building of both narrative and character through a consistent and unrelenting series of actions is conspicuously evident in Hogarth’s original source material, and indeed characteristic of his work as a whole. Constant references to the primacy of the story above a piece’s other dramatic elements<sup>119</sup> and a predominance of linear, progressive plotlines in the artist’s series and prints have led generations of Hogarth scholars<sup>120</sup> (chief among them, Ronald Paulson) to define his style as inherently “literary.” The allusion even extends to frequent descriptions of the artist as an “author” and the process of viewing his work as “reading”.<sup>121</sup> While it bears noting that this term must refer to an understanding of the literary genre that predates the late eighteenth-century advent of the novel, the characterization is a misleading one. What is meant, in fact, is that Hogarth’s prime concern was the creation and exposition of a story, and that he possessed a unique capacity to apply imagery as stand-alone narrative exposition. Without the help of a clarifying text, Hogarth was able to tell a complete story in pictures—not by applying the conventions of the extant literary tradition, but rather, by vesting his images with the expository power of words. According to comics and sequential art scholar Roberto Bartual,

“Before Hogarth, narrative transitions depended heavily on the words printed below or above the panels of the strips, and more often than not the images were mere illustrations. Hogarth’s pivotal role in the tradition of picture stories has to do with the fact that he paved the way for his successors by developing a purely visual language to establish a narrative discourse. Unlike the

<sup>118</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 25 October 2013.

<sup>119</sup> Paulson, Ronald. “The Harlot’s Progress and the Tradition of History Painting” in: *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn, 1967). p. 70.

<sup>120</sup> See: Erwin, Timothy. “William Hogarth and the Aesthetics of Nationalism” in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 3/4 (2001), p. 384.

<sup>121</sup> Paulson, Ronald. “The Harlot’s Progress and the Tradition of History Painting” in: *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn, 1967). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967. p.

broadstreet strips, his images did not depend anymore on words, but worked the way words do.”<sup>122</sup>

Indeed, modern historians of the comic book format credit Hogarth as the grandfather of the form, citing (along with the dissemination of his work across social classes, his use of caricature, and his application of symbols to characterize his protagonists and reinforce narrative) his appeal to the viewer’s own imaginative participation in filling in the events implied between the prints. Each of the six images of *A Harlot’s Progress* is infused with a complex structure of symbols and visual cues, and the connective narrative tissue between them relies upon the inferential impulse of the viewer. What scholars have come to refer to as the “literary” nature of Hogarth’s work is, more precisely defined, its ability to relate a “temporal story in a spatial genre.”<sup>123</sup> As Paulson himself admits, Hogarth never used the term “read” to describe the viewer’s interface with his images, though he does frequently refer to himself as their “author”—a differentiation that strongly suggests that he more likely “thought of his pictures in terms of a stage representation—a succession of scenes, with lines spoken and gestures—rather than a book.”<sup>124</sup> Whereas image sequences published prior to *A Harlot’s Progress* tend to rely heavily upon text for their exposition, Hogarth’s articulation of causality and metaphor by means of indexical and symbolic signs<sup>125</sup> largely replaces the need for extensive textual narration. Moreover, Hogarth applies both the images themselves and the space between them in the telling of his story, affecting a narrative fluidity less characteristic of static images and more associated with the forward momentum of performance. Early attempts at staging the *Harlot* narrative testify to the piece’s inherent theatricality (described above, in Section 2.2.2.). However, these eighteenth-century presentations and ballad operas can be delineated from Bell and Ackroyd’s *Harlot’s Progress* in one particularly notable way: whereas these early appropriations tend to “narrativize” Hogarth’s story, filling in the spaces between the images with additional content (mostly elaboration on character through songs),<sup>126</sup> Bell and Ackroyd’s opera largely maintains the dramaturgical character of the original series. Figures are

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<sup>122</sup> Bartual, Roberto. “William Hogarth’s *A Harlot’s Progress*: the beginnings of a purely pictographic sequential language” in: *Studies in Comics*, Vol. 1, No. 1., 2010. p. 84.

<sup>123</sup> Paulson, Ronald. “The Harlot’s Progress and the Tradition of History Painting” in: *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn, 1967). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967. p. 75

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 73

<sup>125</sup> Bartual, Roberto. “William Hogarth’s *A Harlot’s Progress*: the beginnings of a purely pictographic sequential language” in: *Studies in Comics*, Vol. 1, No. 1., 2010. p. 97.

<sup>126</sup> Brewer, David A. “Making Hogarth Heritage” in: *Representations*, No. 72 (Autumn, 2000). Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. p. 39.

characterized through their actions rather than their arias. Scenes are punchy and functional, largely restricted to crucial expository information. Rather than elaborating upon the lead-up to or consequences of individual plot points, the piece's narrative arc restricts itself to crucial moments of action, and the responsibility to connect the dots between them rests with the viewer. This mindful incorporation of the priorities of Hogarth's series, evident in the shared medial characteristics of the *Harlot* source material and its transmedial adaption by Bell and Ackroyd, can be further identified in the opera's dramaturgy.

### 3.2. Dramaturgy

In keeping with the structure of Hogarth's original series, Bell's *Harlot's Progress* is divided into six scenes, each correlating to the dramatic content of the original images and depicting *in toto* the unidirectional descent narrative of the piece's titular character. The piece's eponymous harlot, Moll Hackabout, arrives in London on a coach from Yorkshire in scene one, met by a crowd of the city's merchants and market-folk. Blinded by her amazement at the wealth and assortment of goods around her, Moll does not realize that she has already become a commodity herself; she is taken in by the famous procuress, Mother Needham—masquerading as her distant cousin—and quickly sold to the lecherous St. John Lovelace (Bell and Ackroyd's composite of Hogarth's caricature of the "Rapist Rake," Sir Francis Charteris, the wealthy Jew of Plate II, and the arresting magistrate of Plate III, Sir John Gonson). Scene two reveals Moll installed as Lovelace's kept woman with Needham's former lackey, Kitty, appointed as a watchful maid. Despite Kitty's warnings, Moll persists in her increasingly careless affair (again, Bell and Ackroyd consolidate her anonymous lover in Plate II with Hogarth's reference to the notorious highwayman, James Dalton, in Plate III). Ultimately, Lovelace discovers her infidelity, and she and Kitty are expelled to the streets. The scene ends with Dalton's assurances that he will provide for them both—a prospect which Kitty considers dubious. Scene three opens in a "squalid garret in Drury Lane"<sup>127</sup> where Moll has become a working prostitute. Kitty assists her in covering the first of her syphilis spots as she prepares for a night of customers. Here, Bell and Ackroyd depart from

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<sup>127</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot's Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 3.

Hogarth's pictures, inserting a scene between Dalton and Lovelace in which the former is beaten by Lovelace's hired muscle and followed back to Moll's hovel. Just as Dalton returns, bloodied and furious from his encounter with Moll's former keeper, she reveals that she is pregnant. Dalton questions the child's paternity, becomes agitated by Moll's "gaudiness",<sup>128</sup> and forces himself upon her sexually as Kitty opines Moll's fate from the corner. The scene ends as Lovelace and his thugs (rather than Hogarth's magistrate, Sir John Gonson) burst through the door, framing Dalton for leading them to Moll, and arresting her on charges of prostitution. She and Kitty are hauled away, screaming. After the intermission, scene four sees Moll and Kitty beating hemp in Bridewell prison with other offenders. Though a coach back to Yorkshire has been arranged by her distant family and is waiting outside, Moll's increasing mental derangement and dedication to the fantasy of a new life with Dalton and their child motivates her to stay. Mother Needham, who has also been arrested based on Kitty's testimony, insists to Moll that her lover has been hanged, provoking a fight. This revelation incites Moll to begin early labor, at which point she is ejected from Bridewell, accompanied by Kitty. As scene five opens, Moll has suffered a complete mental break. Her newborn daughter (given the name Emily in the opera) is principally cared for by Kitty, as Moll's fits have become frenzied and violent. She hallucinates Dalton's return and relives her first terrifying sexual deflowering: a rape scene, inserted by Bell and Ackroyd between scenes one and two. Finally, exhausted by her emotional outbursts and the physical ravages of syphilis, Moll retires to a corner, rocking herself to sleep with a lullaby before ultimately dying alone. Attending her wake, in scene six, are "a drunken coterie of prostitutes and their clients,"<sup>129</sup> including the self-satisfied St. John Lovelace and self-righteous Mother Needham, who insist that Moll was the sole author of her own fate. Despite Kitty's protests, Needham wrests Moll's child from her arms, and her plans to continue the cycle with Emily are made clear as the curtain falls.

Regarded as a whole, the dramaturgy of the opera suggests two complimentary structural shapes: that of a direct and unrelenting descent, and that of a repetitive and worsening cycle. The first of these describes the dramatic journey of the titular character, whose unidirectional trajectory from virtue to corruption is both inevitable and complete. Over the course of six scenes, Moll's transformation takes her from

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<sup>128</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot's Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 222.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

innocent country naïf to a dying syphilitic prostitute, passing in descending order through all of the stages of prostitution along her way.<sup>130</sup> Even her death does not halt the relentless downward slope of her moral and physical descent; her corpse is defiled and ridiculed, and the only certainty for her progeny is that it will experience a fate worse than hers. Bell and Ackroyd's choice to meaningfully include this character—and, notably, to change its sex to a girl—unlocks an additional dimension to the general gestalt of the piece's dramaturgy. By stipulating that Moll's final and singular legacy remaining after her death is her daughter, Emily, who is quickly seized by the same procuress who ushered her fallen mother into prostitution, Bell and Ackroyd twist the final scene of their opera back around on itself. We easily imagine the story beginning again: yet another *Harlot's Progress*, with yet another harlot. In Bell's words:

"Our intention to portray [the cyclical ending] was even inherent and visible—in fact, we [titled] it *A Harlot's Progress* and not *The Harlot's Progress* because we—Peter Ackroyd and I—were very sure that this was just one of many. So, not 'the' harlot—she wasn't just one in particular; she was 'a' harlot, and the cycle continues. It continues with her daughter. [...] We didn't want to just isolate this as just one single event, but rather, this is what happened to them. The cycle continues. That's in the plot summary I wrote: 'The cycle continues.' Because it does."<sup>131</sup>

Indeed, the precise moment at which the narrative slope becomes a cycle can be identified in the fourth musical interlude, titled "Come Down, Night" situated between scenes five and six. Bell accompanies his heroine's descent with an increasing atonality that reaches its extreme in the moments before her death, and is immediately succeeded by the opera's lengthiest tonal passage:

"[In scene five] you just see a lot more chromatic writing; you just see a lot more of that kind of 'crunching' in different layers. So it's not just these notes are chromatic to one another; it's that they're chromatic to [others as well]. And then you've got another tone underneath it, which is stretching it out, so it just becomes a lot more complicated. I wouldn't say 12-tone, but it's arch-atonality at some points. [...] And it just becomes more and more atonal to complete Moll's degradation, and then when she dies, you have the most tonal piece of music, which is the [Interlude IV] strings—because the cycle is

<sup>130</sup> "According to Henry Mayhew's nineteenth-century survey *London Labour and the London Poor*, there were eighty thousand prostitutes working in the capital during the later eighteenth century, divided into three classes. Kept women, or 'seclusives,' were installed in private apartments by a wealthy friend; 'prima donnas' kept themselves by relying on a revolving retinue of admirers; while the poorest sort, streetwalkers, either dwelled as 'convives,' or fellow-lodgers in brothels, where they were charged extortionate rents, or plied their trade in temporary quarters, an arrangement that allowed them to keep more of their earnings. [...] Most entered the profession during their late teens or early twenties, and more than half came from outside London. For five to ten years they risked disease, criminal prosecution, imprisonment in Bridewell, and early death." In: Erwin, Timothy. "Parody and Prostitution" in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (Dec. 2005), p. 677.

<sup>131</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 18 September 2013.

starting again—in ‘Come Down, Night’. That is the reset button. That’s what it is. And then in the final scene, it has the same tonality and harmonic space as scene one. [Tonality in this sense correlates to] her journey. Certainly the darker the journey, the darker the tonality becomes. When she’s dead, it’s the reset button.”<sup>132</sup>

As the composer notes, the musical character of the final scene returns to that featuring Moll’s arrival in London, reinforcing Needham’s assurances that the child will meet the same fate as her mother.<sup>133</sup>

Though the prevailing shape and tenor of the opera is unmistakably tragic, it would be a poor oversimplification to characterize the work as pure tragedy. Like Hogarth’s original series, Bell’s *Harlot’s Progress* represents a compelling mix of comic, tragic, and moral elements: a complex and nuanced amalgam of “high” and “low” artistic impulses that defies strict dramaturgical categorization. Extremes of comic bawdiness and irreverent satire exist alongside an unflinchingly detailed tragic gravity, both in the service of moral didacticism. In order to further identify the opera’s alignment with each of these dramaturgical categories, the following sections will examine its comic, tragic, and didactic characteristics.

### 3.2.1. Comedy

A thorough assessment of the opera’s comic elements must, of course, include an examination of the dramaturgy of the piece’s source material. As concerns both medium and character, Hogarth’s original series falls into a classical definition of comedy: in accordance with Aristotle’s definition of the genre, the *Harlot’s Progress* presents characters of mean social standing, and does not attempt to represent them as “better than in actual life.”<sup>134</sup> And while the piece’s heroine clearly does not experience comedy’s requisite happy ending, the raucous and festive atmosphere of the series’ final scene, “Plate VI: *Her Funeral*”<sup>135</sup> can be read as a winking reference to this convention by the artist, who pointedly includes his protagonist’s coffin at the center of a party scene. Art historian Frederick Antal selects the second plate, *The*

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<sup>132</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 25 October 2013.

<sup>133</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot’s Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 427

<sup>134</sup> Aristotle. *Poetics*. Trans. S. H. Butcher, Ed. Richard Koss. Mineola: Dover Thrift Editions, 1997. p. 4.

<sup>135</sup> See Appendix 6.6.

*Quarrel*,<sup>136</sup> as particularly indicative of the series' inherent comedy, identifying its inspiration as a well-established work of comic theater:

"A typical stage-effect of suspended, momentary action is given in the second scene of the *Harlot's Progress*: the harlot is in the act of overturning a table (in order to distract attention and cover the secret exit of her lover) while dishes are flying in the air before the terrified gaze of her Jewish protector, her negro servant-boy, and her monkey. The work that inspired this effect is the (anonymous) illustration of the *Taming of the Shrew* in Rowe's famous Shakespeare edition of 1709, which Hogarth certainly knew: Petruccio is overturning a table and scattering at large the dishes, with Catherine, the servant, and the dog as frightened onlookers. Hogarth has, of course, vitalized the old, artistically weak model almost beyond recognition; the primitive quasi-baroque of the original has become a realist baroque, almost rococo pattern, vibrating with movement and expression. Yet the general layout, the disposition of the figures and even the individual motifs have been loosely followed."<sup>137</sup>

As Antal notes, Hogarth captures the action at its height, relying upon his viewer's ability to imagine the scene's consequential disaster. In fact, each of the plates contains this brand of comically suspended action. What is now Plate III of the series, *Apprehended by a Magistrate*,<sup>138</sup> features the protagonist indulging in a ridiculous parody of an aristocratic morning levee, lounging blissfully in the moments before her inevitable apprehension by authorities. Hogarth achieves the comic suspense of these moments by effectively outsourcing their completion to the mind of the viewer. Though Moll does not yet realize it herself, we see her on the precipice of her downfall—she exists for us simultaneously in both her moment of happy ignorance and in her disastrous consequence—and we find the juxtaposition of these two simultaneous and conflicting realities laughable. Much of Hogarth's work is marked by an urge to present these two extremes as united in singular dramatic moments. In the artist's own words, this fascination with dramatically polar motifs began during the earliest stages of his artistic training:

"The most striking motives that presented themselves, either comic or tragic, made the strongest impression on my mind..."<sup>139</sup>

The manipulation of this comic-tragic dichotomy would find extensive expression throughout his career, much to the chagrin of his established artistic contemporaries. The Royal Academy, which regarded itself as the entrusted guardian of the "fine

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<sup>136</sup> See Appendix 6.2.

<sup>137</sup> Antal, F. "Hogarth and his Borrowings" in: *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Mar., 1947). New York: College Art Association, 1947. p. 41

<sup>138</sup> See Appendix 6.3.

<sup>139</sup> Antal, F. "Hogarth and his Borrowings" in: *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Mar., 1947). New York: College Art Association, 1947. p. 47.

arts”, was outspoken in its disdain of Hogarth’s scope and aesthetic. They found his comic elements and socially low subject matter unbefitting of the elevated realm of “serious visual art” (a term defined, of course, by the characteristics of traditional history and tragic painting as it had been practiced and patronized for centuries exclusively by a wealthy aristocracy). As documented by historian David Brewer, the president of the Academy, Sir Joshua Reynolds, dismissed Hogarth’s work with the judgment that his genius was

“‘employed on low and confined subjects, [so] the praise which we give must be as limited as its object.’ [...] Reynolds condescendingly concluded, ‘it is to be regretted, that any part of the life of such a genius should be fruitlessly employed.’ One of the Academy’s first Professors of Painting, James Barry, went even further: ‘It may be reasonably doubted, whether the being much conversant with Hogarth’s method of exposing meanness, deformity, and vice...is not rather a dangerous, or, at least, a worthless pursuit.’”<sup>140</sup>

Further consternation was caused by his use of exaggerated caricature and “shockingly realistic”<sup>141</sup> representations of recognizable public individuals engaging in less than admirable behavior. These depictions went beyond the realm of the comic to satire, and represented an irreverent appeal to the ridiculing humor of a common public:

“Hogarth’s early parodies [...] retain something of the caustic tone of the Restoration, in spite of, even because of, their often popular tendency. Hogarth entered with zest into the spirit of [...] lively farces, ballad-operas and comedies, when he produced illustrations for them [...]. Hogarth’s great series, ‘A Harlot’s Progress,’ ‘A Rake’s Progress,’ ‘Marriage à la Mode’ [are] constructive and satirical at the same time, with their social and moral ideas [and] their material drawn from the heights and depths of middle-class life.”<sup>142</sup>

While the social class of the *Harlot’s Progress* protagonist disqualified her from a strict classical definition of tragedy, Hogarth bucked accepted artistic decorum by choosing to represent this “low” subject (the life of a prostitute) in the elevated tropes of traditional history painting. To describe the resultant style, the term “comic history painting” was coined in 1742 by Hogarth’s contemporary, Henry Fielding: a self-described writer of the new genre’s literary equivalent, “comic epic in prose”.<sup>143</sup> While the term doesn’t appear in any of Hogarth’s own writings, the artist was careful to

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<sup>140</sup> Brewer, David A. “Making Hogarth Heritage” in: *Representations*, No. 72 (Autumn, 2000). Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. p. 23.

<sup>141</sup> Erwin, Timothy. “Parody and Prostitution” in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (Dec. 2005), p. 679.

<sup>142</sup> Antal, F. “The Moral Purpose of Hogarth’s Art” in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 15, No. 3/4 (1952). p. 181.

<sup>143</sup> Paulson, Ronald. “The Harlot’s Progress and the Tradition of History Painting” in: *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn, 1967). p. 69.

mention his characteristic contemporaneity and unique blend of comic and moral elements in the *Autobiographical Notes* of his 1753 treatise, *The Analysis of Beauty*.<sup>144</sup> In this aesthetic essay, Hogarth attests that “true comedy” proves a more difficult art to execute than the tragic “sublime,” adding that the “subject[s] of most consequence are those that most entertain and Improve the mind and are of public utility” rather than those which strictly adhere to a higher social echelon.<sup>145</sup> Thus, he describes his newly invented expressive mode as an “intermediate species” between the established genres of “the sublime and the grotesque”.<sup>146</sup> Bell and Ackroyd’s opera similarly straddles these two extremes, its subject’s station and fate antithetical to its method of representation (an elite form that was, traditionally, the sole demesne of the court). While the *Harlot’s Progress* opera largely forgoes the specific satirical references to Hogarth’s contemporaries, it does maintain gestures of the artist’s caricatures and dark critical humor. In an interview in September 2013, Bell elaborated on how he and librettist Peter Ackroyd carried this particular brand of topical humor through almost three centuries and into the final piece. Their strategy involved eliminating topical satire of historical figures that did not serve a purpose “integral to the story”<sup>147</sup> (such as doctors Chevalier Taylor and “Spot” Ward, seen in Plate V: *Her Death*)<sup>148</sup> while emphasizing elements of dark comedy in the piece’s central characters. Bell explains,

“I was very careful not to create ciphers or caricatures themselves, but well-rounded characters. And it just so happens that Mother Needham was a real person, in real life. Elizabeth Needham was a real procuress, who was known to be so endearing and so lovely but also known to have a wicked temper if you crossed her—she was known for that. And she was killed in the stocks by being pelted with vegetables. (laughs) But that’s hilarious! But see, it’s the tragedy at the same time. And I tried to take that on board. And you know, in their fight scene—you know [in scene four]: ‘It was you who betrayed me, bitch—you bitch!’ I don’t know if you know the confrontation scene in *Maria Stuarda* by Donizetti, where he creates a fictitious meeting of Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I, and the furthest they get is ‘vile bastard.’ But this— (laughs) This takes it to the next octave, you know? (laughs)”<sup>149</sup>

As Bell is careful to point out, the process of transposing Hogarth’s particular brand of humor depends little on specific satirical references to contemporary individuals. Rather, Hogarth’s comedy rests upon the conflation of two extremes: in the example

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<sup>144</sup> Cited in: Paulson, Ronald. “The Harlot’s Progress and the Tradition of History Painting” in: *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn, 1967). p. 69.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 18 September 2013.

<sup>148</sup> See Appendix 6.5.

<sup>149</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 18 September 2013.

cited, the tragedy of a woman's death is juxtaposed with the ridiculous mode of her execution. The *Harlot's Progress* opera is filled with such moments, most of them achieved through a lightening quick alternation between acts of horrific gravity and bawdy, irreverent—and often sexual—humor. One such instance occurs in scene two, as Moll Hackabout manipulates the sexual urges of her wealthy keeper, St. John Lovelace. Bell and Ackroyd have foregone Hogarth's references to this character being a wealthy Jew in favor of fashioning a more fluid through-line; rather than recreating the type of snide anti-Semitic humor referenced in the original series, they grant him a depth of character and sustained motivation by combining the figure with two others.<sup>150</sup> His manner and bearing maintain Hogarth's critical satire of the entitled hypocrisy of the upper class, and his laughable sexual efforts in scene two make him the butt of the bawdy humor of the original (seen, for instance, in Hogarth's irreverent depiction of Colonel Francis Charteris masturbating in a darkened doorway in Plate I: *Arrival in London*).<sup>151</sup> The Lovelace character is often employed by Bell and Ackroyd in the opera's moments of simultaneous extremes, usually introducing the element of the "grotesque" to conflict with and heighten that of the "sublime".<sup>152</sup> Immediately following the tender passion and genuine affection of a love scene between Moll and James Dalton, Lovelace's unexpected return prompts Moll to sexually engage her keeper in order to conceal her lover's escape. What ensues is a laughable and derisory sex scene, punctuated with a suggestively pulsating rhythm from the strings, and ending in Lovelace's ejaculation and proud declamation, "There. It is done. Good English spunk!"<sup>153</sup> In turn, this moment of grotesque humor is immediately followed by Lovelace's fateful discovery of Moll's duplicitousness, and she and Kitty are forced to face the serious consequences of being ejected onto the street. This quick succession between extremes of tragic gravity and comic grotesque create the same laughable juxtaposition achieved in Hogarth's prints, and represent a strong departure from the traditional classification of tragedy.

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<sup>150</sup> Namely, the "Rapist Rake", Sir Francis Charteris, of Plate I, and the arresting magistrate, Sir John Gonson, of Plate III.

<sup>151</sup> See Appendix 6.1.

<sup>152</sup> Cited in: Paulson, Ronald. "The Harlot's Progress and the Tradition of History Painting" in: *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn, 1967). p. 69.

<sup>153</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot's Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 116.

### 3.2.2. Tragedy

Despite the preponderance of the piece's comic elements and the central figure's distinct lack of Aristotle's requisite social "magnitude",<sup>154</sup> *A Harlot's Progress* does exhibit many of the characteristics of tragedy. While a prostitute was hardly considered grave and consequential enough to merit tragic depiction according to the classical definition of the genre when Hogarth created the series in 1732, the nature and seriousness of her sufferings and the gravity and explicitness of their depiction places her story firmly within the parameters of tragedy. Moreover, Hogarth fashions the character of his protagonist with a degree of complexity atypical for the brisk levity of traditional comedy—in the words of eighteenth-century English literature scholar Richard Baum, "It has been justly observed of Hogarth's [...] characters that if we prick them sharply they will bleed."<sup>155</sup> That Moll Hackabout, a prostitute, is given the effortful depth of character exposition traditionally reserved for the lofty figures of classical tragedy represents a deliberate challenge to the definition of the genre. This richness of characterization will be addressed in greater detail in a following chapter;<sup>156</sup> that they are depicted with an emotional complexity at all distinguishes the *Harlot's Progress* from the traditional comic trope. As art historian Frederick Antal argues, Hogarth's representational style demonstrates a nuanced and multi-layered regard for his characters, allowing them comic moments while not detracting from their gravity:

"Hogarth [...] disapproved of representing people as black or white...[his] moral attitude is of a more secular, more social character, is combined with more sober humanity, good nature and humour, is full of understanding and tolerance, is more full-blooded, springs from knowledge of a far wider range of society (embracing the middle and lower sections, hitherto undiscovered) than that of the pointedly religious, sentimental, humourless (and snobbish) [...] believer in abstract principles and formulae. [...] ...gravity need not be dull, but can readily be associated with wit and humour. Hogarth practiced much the same in his art..."<sup>157</sup>

Further, Antal makes a point of noting the conspicuous development of a more sympathetic and naturalistic acting style in the immediate wake of Hogarth's artistic advances:

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<sup>154</sup> Aristotle. *Poetics*. Trans. S. H. Butcher, Ed. Richard Koss. Mineola: Dover Thrift Editions, 1997. p. 4.

<sup>155</sup> Baum, Richard M. "Hogarth and Fielding as Social Critics" in: *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Mar., 1934). p. 39.

<sup>156</sup> See Section 3.3.1.

<sup>157</sup> Antal, F. "The Moral Purpose of Hogarth's Art" in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 15, No. 3/4 (1952). p. 180.

"I would like to add, in parenthesis, that, in my view a parallelism similar to the one we are discussing also exists between Hogarth's development and that of English acting, a craft so near to Hogarth's heart and so important for his art. At first [he] evolved realism only within the comic genre, but when, in the early forties, Garrick introduced realism on the 'higher' plane of tragedy, he was attempting very much what Hogarth had already done in his sphere, first in some scenes of his cycles and later in his historical paintings. As a great creator of characters, Hogarth understood Garrick's similar gift, and it was precisely for the same reason, for his faithful, psychological delineation of individuals, that is for his realism, that Shakespeare himself was now appreciated. Hogarth's picture of 'Garrick as Richard III' (1745, collection Lord Faversham) is a rendering, adequately conceived, of Garrick's new, more natural manner of acting, which created in this rôle a tragic character of rich individuality, superseding the previous abstract, bloodthirsty monster."<sup>158</sup>

While this increased interest in a naturalistic performance style may have been spurred by Hogarth's novel representational aesthetic, the artist cannot be wholly credited with driving the trend. As discussed in Section 2.2.1., the same public interest that motivated the establishment of the Reformation of Manners societies during the early decades of the eighteenth century also spurred a reexamination of the parameters of social and tragic "magnitude".<sup>159</sup> The newly empowered middle class sought reflections of themselves, their concerns, and their moral values in their popular entertainment. And in an environment where class distinctions were increasingly blurred, the social standing of a protagonist mattered less than his or her empathic relatability. As previously discussed,<sup>160</sup> Hogarth's *Harlot's Progress* series coincided with a larger shift in public perception of prostitutes going from "powerful seductresses" to "victims, plying their trade out of desperate economic need, rather than lust".<sup>161</sup> The resulting sympathy that the viewer feels for the abjectness of Moll's situation reinforces the character's dramatic arc as a fall from virtue. Indeed, Bell and Ackroyd emphasize their protagonist's initial innocence through the commentary of other characters and the piece's dynamic musical language. It is what Mother Needham finds particularly marketable about Moll ("Your looks declare your innocence, nothing more fresh, nothing more dainty."<sup>162</sup>) and what Dalton identifies as her distinguishing feature from other women of her trade

<sup>158</sup> Antal, F. "The Moral Purpose of Hogarth's Art" in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 15, No. 3/4 (1952). p. 184.

<sup>159</sup> Aristotle. *Poetics*. Trans. S. H. Butcher, Ed. Richard Koss. Mineola: Dover Thrift Editions, 1997. p. 4.

<sup>160</sup> See Section 2.2.1.

<sup>161</sup> Hurl-Eamon, Jennine. "Policing Male Heterosexuality: The Reformation of Manners Societies' Campaign Brothels in Westminster, 1690-1720" in: *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Summer 2004), p. 1028.

<sup>162</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot's Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 55.

("Beside the drabs of this city you stand as a queen. You are diff'rent, so very diff'rent. Your gaze unsoiled, glance unstained. Never change, never change."<sup>163</sup>). But it is precisely the progress of soiling and staining Moll's virtue that is echoed in the orchestration. As Bell explained in an interview in September 2013, the purity of the musical *Leitmotiv* introduced in Moll's loving remark to Dalton, "You sweeten my days",<sup>164</sup> becomes steadily corrupted in measure with her downfall, and only musically resolves upon her death:

"It's just rising all the time, those four notes (sings): 'You sweeten...' [...] That motif gets fetid and dirty throughout the duration of the piece, but then comes back in its truest form [in Interlude IV, after Moll's death]. So, the theme remains the same, true to itself, but the context—the other notes around it—actually pollute it. So you can then have a base which is completely discordant—filth. A kind of sound-filth. Or you can have it much higher—repeated, but higher—at a discord with it. [...] That's noise pollution—having it played with another note just underneath it, so that it crunches as it's going up."<sup>165</sup>

By muddying the musical context surrounding this motif, Bell effectively orchestrates the perversion of his heroine's innocence by the circumstances surrounding her. The theme only reaches harmonic resolution in the brief interlude following her death. Likewise, the composer applies a similar musical gesture to signify and foreshadow Moll's dramatic trajectory at the beginning of the opera's overture:

"It's very early dawn. It's still dark. The orchestra plays a very slow, very deep theme and variations on part one of this: 'The morning of London' (sings)—'The morning of London.' But really low, really deep, really slow. This is then interfered with; this is then dovetailed with some really high-pitched strings, and glockenspiels and flutes. That's shards of sunlight coming through. But they're not just shards of sunlight—they're Moll Hackabout. They're her journey into London—they're clean, they're pure, they're unpolluted as yet. The orchestra then comes in, again playing deeply, but not as deeply as they were. They've gone slightly higher in pitch. They're playing part two of the chorus. So they're playing slightly higher, there's more movement to suggest that London is in a further degree of waking up. That's then dovetailed with another few chinks in the strings and flutes to portray more shards of sunlight—Moll as well—but now these chords aren't as clean as they were. They're already just slightly dirtied; there are notes that shouldn't belong in there. And this continues to happen four times—so, the orchestra then plays the third choral section, which is then higher, faster, more movement, more bustle. The strings with the high shards come in again, even filthier than they were before. And the fourth and final time, when we expect the chinks of sunlight to come in, the chorus comes in. Now what I wanted to suggest particularly—obviously the deep orchestra, and the orchestra itself—is that

<sup>163</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot's Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 98.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>165</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 18 September 2013.

London's waking up. The chinks of sunlight representing the sun and Moll—getting dirtier and dirtier—portray to me that even before she came here, her fate was sealed.”<sup>166</sup>

These passages, notated in the score as “glittering”,<sup>167</sup> reoccur once more: during the last few measures of the opera's final scene, likewise characterized by the glockenspiel's ringing B ♭ and high, ascending legato from the piccolo and flute. Now referring to Moll's daughter, the motif excludes any possibility of a hopeful ending; it reminds us that the downward spiral continues, as Emily's tragic fate is sealed just as her mother's was.

It is important to note, however, that while their downfall is certain—and reiterated by the orchestration, should we begin to doubt it—the characters themselves are not static. Bell and Ackroyd avoid creating an allegory of their protagonist by vesting her with a humanizing fatal flaw: the requisite *hamartia* that distinguishes tragedy from the more didactic form of the morality play. Moll has an internal ambition: she attests in the opening scene that she will do “anything”<sup>168</sup> for the luxurious life that Mother Needham describes to her, a statement set to a musical motif (D, B ♭, E ♯, E ♯) described by Bell as representative of “her compliance”.<sup>169</sup> This theme is characterized by a minor sixth leap (from D to B ♭) followed by a resolution that is two half-steps off of its impetus (from D to E ♯). It is foreshadowed in a lower form in Moll's entering line, as she marvels at the crowd of more faces than she has “ever seen” (C ♯, G, D, E ♭)<sup>170</sup>: this time, the leap is a diminished fifth, followed again by a resolution two half-steps off of the first tone. Bell's further musical manipulations of this motif reflect the effect of Needham's enticements on the protagonist. The procuress asks Moll if she “would like to be rich”, to be “dressed up in satins”, and if she “like[s] fine food”; Moll's responses—“I have dreamed of it” (C ♯, F ♯, C ♯, B) and “I've never tasted it” (E, G ♯, C, C)—move from a major fourth interval (C ♯ to F ♯) to major third (E to G ♯), gradually shifting upward toward the moment of her assent. What immediately follows is the gruesome consequence of her naiveté: she is overwhelmed by the avaricious chorus in an act of sexual violence that later haunts

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<sup>166</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 18 September 2013.

<sup>167</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot's Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 2.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>169</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 25 October 2013.

<sup>170</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot's Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 37.

her mad scene. Further, her ejection from Lovelace's keeping follows his discovery of her duplicity; she has deceived him about entertaining a lover, James Dalton, and harbors the ambition to escape with him, despite his pragmatic reminder, "You came to find luxury, you have it! Your belly is full, your linens are clean..."<sup>171</sup> Her wishes to be free of Lovelace's affections and alone with her lover are fulfilled in short order, and Moll's sudden reversal of fortune—or, *peripeteia*—dominates the dramatic trajectory of the rest of the opera.

But both Hogarth and Bell refuse to lay blame for Moll's downfall purely on the shoulders of their protagonist. While Moll possesses a reckless internal ambition, she is deliberately placed within a system that exhibits a malevolent will of its own. Moll's actions undeniably contribute to her downfall, but not to any greater degree than do the chilling predatory impulses of the city that surrounds her. It is not a prostitute's ambition or duplicity, but rather the unforgiving rapacity of proto-capitalist London that generates the piece's downward moral spiral. If we view the dramaturgical progression of the *Harlot's Progress* as a horizontal unfolding of an individual's descent, both Hogarth and Bell apply the chorus—composed of figures who are given their own individual characteristics and personalized backstories—as a vertical spectrum of possible outcomes for the protagonist within each plate. Hogarth scholar Ronald Paulson has noted this function of the ancillary characters in the original series, describing it as a

“...comparison and contrast, or ‘this leads to that’ [which] becomes ‘this like or unlike that,’ as in the scenes of a play. The structure of admonition or morality, which takes the form of crime leading to punishment, becomes one of definition of interpersonal relationships.”<sup>172</sup>

Thus, characters become simultaneously human and symbolic: they are both complex individuals with unique stories and, at the same time, personified representations of potential consequences for amoral actions. The “didactic effect of [such] examples of wickedness...leading to tragic consequences”<sup>173</sup> was identified in Hogarth's cycles by his contemporary, writer Henry Fielding, who argued that the artist's two *Progresses* were “calculated more to serve the cause of virtue, and the

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<sup>171</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot's Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 100.

<sup>172</sup> Paulson, Ronald. “Life as Journey and as Theater: Two Eighteenth-Century Narrative Structures,” in: *New Literary History*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Readers and Spectators: Some Views and Reviews (Autumn 1976). p. 50

<sup>173</sup> Antal, F. “The Moral Purpose of Hogarth's Art” in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 15, No. 3/4 (1952). p. 171.

preservation of mankind than all the folios of morality which have ever been written.”<sup>174</sup> Indeed, as Hogarth scholar Frederick Antal attests, these two cycles “would not exist and are unthinkable divested of moral teaching,”<sup>175</sup> and quotes the artist’s own description of his work in his attempt to identify its moral tenor:

“Hogarth himself not only wrote repeatedly about the moral effects of his works but spoke also of his ‘modern moral subjects’ as a ‘novel mode’: he naturally referred here to his own morality, that is, the by now developed middle-class morality, and was perfectly right in claiming to be the first to represent this in paintings and engravings. The vices which he mainly scourges in his cycles—vices which stand in the way of the new middle-class ethics of work—are debauchery, laziness, drunkenness, gambling and, typical of the new humanitarianism, cruelty in all its forms [...] [Late eighteenth-century essayist, Charles] Lamb equally clearly perceived that Hogarth’s cycles were real tragedies, in which tragic and comic were quite close as in everyday happenings. They are tragedies, we may add, which show how fate deals inexorably with those who consistently fail to conform with the new moral commands...”<sup>176</sup>

It bears noting that Lamb qualifies his identification of Hogarth’s works as tragedies with the stipulation that they show the consequences for behavior that does not align with a “new moral” code.<sup>177</sup> In fact, the designation of Hogarth as a moralist even appears on the artist’s tombstone in Chiswick, in a poetic inscription written by his close friend, the celebrated actor David Garrick:

“Farewell, great painter of mankind,  
Who reach'd the noblest point of art;  
Whose pictured morals charm the mind,  
And through the eye correct the heart.  
If Genius fire thee, reader, stay;  
If Nature touch thee, drop a tear:  
If neither move thee, turn away,  
For Hogarth's honour'd dust lies here.”<sup>178</sup>

If indeed the dramaturgy of *A Harlot's Progress*—whether tragic, comic, or a hybrid of the two—ultimately serves the elucidation of a “new morality” (as is argued by Fielding, Lamb, Paulson, Antal, and other Hogarth scholars<sup>179</sup>), identifying the values of this moral system is of vital importance to understanding the piece as a whole. As discussed at length in Section 2.1.2., Hogarth’s work of the 1730s must be

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<sup>174</sup> Antal, F. “The Moral Purpose of Hogarth’s Art” in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 15, No. 3/4 (1952). p. 171.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Cited in: Trusler, Rev. John. *The Works of William Hogarth: In a Series of Engravings With Descriptions, and a Comment on Their Moral Tendency*. London: Jones and Co., 1833. p. 6.

<sup>179</sup> Trusler, Rev. John. *The Works of William Hogarth: In a Series of Engravings With Descriptions, and a Comment on Their Moral Tendency*. London: Jones and Co., 1833. p. 5.

understood within the particular moral, social, and historical context of the early decades of the eighteenth century. According to Antal,

“...moralizing, praise of virtue and warning against vice, in English literature and art of the first half of the eighteenth century, had a specific significance far more emphatic than, and entirely different from, the generalized didactic purposes of the immediately preceding times.”<sup>180</sup>

The most successful forms of artistic expression during this period were no longer merely didactic, but did tap into the moral priorities of the growing bourgeoisie in new ways. Antal continues,

“This was the heroic and very positive age of the English middle class, the heyday of its ideological strength in philosophy and literature, when it created and formulated, following the Puritan moral revolution of the seventeenth century (the necessary corollary of its social and political revolution), a new morality with a Puritanism by now much humanized and less dour as its background. When dealing with this period, one cannot fail to realize how necessary to this social section, how deeply felt were its moral ideas: stress upon assiduous work to ensure personal success, need to resist temptation and vice, emphasis on good moral conduct, increasingly also on feeling and humanitarianism; upon these ideas its whole existence, in every sense, depended, and by them it differentiated its way of life from the extravagances of the aristocracy, immoral, brutal and parasitic, as they had survived from the Restoration period.”<sup>181</sup>

As other scholars have also noted,<sup>182</sup> the moral system represented in Hogarth’s work generally aligns itself with the theories of British Enlightenment philosopher John Locke, who argued for the social utility of virtue, the value of moral education, and man’s capacity for moral improvement.<sup>183</sup> A dramaturgy built purely upon these moral parameters ultimately comes to resemble a medieval morality play, with a central character whose downfall is presented for the edification of an audience by means of setting a bad example:

“A series typically begins with a change of situation for the harlot, rake, or newlywed couple who are its willful and unhappy protagonists; it involves them in predicaments where they are fully at liberty to make unconsidered choices; and it concludes six or eight scenes later with their inevitable disappointment and death. In their intricate detail the images reflect an insistence on the acute moral observation that was so important to Locke and his interpreters and that should have allowed the protagonists to choose wisely. [...] The narratives become vehicles of instruction and delight by

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<sup>180</sup> Antal, F. “The Moral Purpose of Hogarth’s Art” in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 15, No. 3/4 (1952). p. 170.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> See: Erwin, Timothy. “William Hogarth and the Aesthetics of Nationalism” in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 3/4 (2001).

<sup>183</sup> Antal, F. “The Moral Purpose of Hogarth’s Art” in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 15, No. 3/4 (1952). p. 170.

providing negative exempla and by virtue of their openness and innovation.”<sup>184</sup>

However, neither Hogarth nor Bell presents their protagonist’s fate as the just moral consequence for a singular misstep. Moll Hackabout’s choices early in the piece make her complicit in determining her own fate, but both Hogarth and Bell place these poor choices against a backdrop of a morally corrupt and pernicious environment. Thus, rather than providing us with a straightforward and unequivocal picture of the consequences of bad behavior, Hogarth and Bell present their protagonist as an imperfect—and, thereby, human—victim of a larger system. While Moll’s actions are hardly faultless, she is not the target of the piece’s criticism. Had she acted in a manner above reproach, her fate may well have been the same. This detail represents a strong departure from the traditional parameters of a morality play. Moreover, Moll does not experience the requisite moment of recognition—*anagnorisis*—that her actions have led to her demise. According to Ronald Paulson, Hogarth

“...shows his protagonists, far from finding themselves, completely losing themselves. The reverse of the spiritual autobiography, his ‘progress’ shows the closing off of awareness, as the Harlot’s or Rake’s models lead not to conversion but to self-annihilation.”<sup>185</sup>

There is nothing redemptive about Moll’s death—she learns nothing, and we are left, not with an easily discernable moral lesson, but with a sense of morose relief. This effect was quite deliberate, according to Bell:

“People have observed that the piece is almost too much for them, and that’s what I wanted! I didn’t want it to be polite. You know the *New York Times* guy [reviewer George Loomis] said, ‘He almost beat us into submission.’ And I wanted people to be moved by it, but I didn’t want them to be saddened. I wanted them to be relieved—for themselves, and for her—because they’ve just seen her go mad for thirty minutes. Bashing around, over to the door... [...] I wanted them not to feel so much sympathy. I didn’t need her to be overly sympathetic. I was calling for observation and participation, not for sympathy.”<sup>186</sup>

Indeed, this sense of relief is cultivated within the orchestration by a suspension of musical resolution. Bell’s opera is suffused with the ambitus of the tritone: a musical base that precludes the clear tonal resolution of a perfect fifth interval. As *Harlot’s*

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<sup>184</sup> Erwin, Timothy. “William Hogarth and the Aesthetics of Nationalism” in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 3/4 (2001), p. 394.

<sup>185</sup> Paulson, Ronald. “Life as Journey and as Theater: Two Eighteenth-Century Narrative Structures,” in: *New Literary History*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Readers and Spectators: Some Views and Reviews (Autumn 1976). p. 45

<sup>186</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 25 October 2013.

*Progress* répétiteur Raphael Schluesselberg explained in an interview with Iain Bell in October 2013:

“Raphael Schluesselberg: The thing is, the base for every scale is the clear fifth. That’s the base for every scale. And if you have a tritone as the base, you don’t have a clear fifth. So if you take the church scales, when you take it from C—from C to C, only the white keys, then you have C to G. When you take it from D, then you have D to A. When you take it from E, then you have E to E. But when you take it from B, then you have B to F—

Iain Bell: And it’s the only one.

RS: It’s the only one that doesn’t exist. Because you have B, C, D, E, F—and B to F isn’t a clear fifth, and the next would be a G, and G isn’t a clear fifth either. That’s why there is no clear fifth in this scale.

IB: And I’m quite obsessed by that interval.”<sup>187</sup>

The predominance of this musical ambitus throughout the opera reinforces the inherent irresolvability of the world into which Moll enters. Much in the way that Wagner builds an expectation for the resolution of his “*Tristan* chord” in Act II of *Tristan und Isolde* and thereby foreshadowing its final climax in the piece’s death scene, Bell applies a conspicuously harmonic cadence to Moll’s aria at the close of scene three:

“Iain Bell: Dramatically, I didn’t want the piece to resolve. If you have too many cadences, if you have too many resolutions in a piece, there’s a certain degree of dramatic resolution and relaxation. And I didn’t want that. I wanted them to be unrelenting. And the only real perfect cadence is the “of heath and hillside” at the end of Moll’s big aria. And then [Dalton] immediately comes in with, “What are you saying?” So she’s immediately contradicted anyway. And the audience doesn’t feel it, because [Dalton]’s beating up Kitty, and there’s too much action anyway.

Margarethe Satorius: It’s kind of like the “coitus interruptus” in [Act II of] *Tristan [und Isolde]*, actually—

IB: Yes! That’s what I wanted.

MS: —because they almost reach it—almost—and then it’s “Rette dich, Tristan!”

IB: That’s what I wanted.”<sup>188</sup>

Immediately following Moll’s death, the orchestration of Interval IV: “Come Down, Night” provides tonal relief from the drawn-out and excruciating suffering we have witnessed in scene five. But this moment of musical resolution is fleeting and

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<sup>187</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 25 October 2013.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

ephemeral. Bell's final scene—echoed in the Theater an der Wien production by Jens-Daniel Herzog's staging—presents us with a familiar character in miniature: the next *Harlot*, dressed just like the first. She enters timidly to the same musical and character landscape that greeted Moll's arrival in London just two hours previous, and the same destructive and endless cycle restarts. By concluding their opera with a reboot of the same narrative, Bell and Ackroyd unapologetically deny us dramatic resolution. Further, the final chord—a major triad (B, D#, F#) with an inverted A# base—is followed by the “Moll's a'cold” motif (D#, F#, E#), this time ending on a note (E#) that clashes with the major triad but forms a perfect fifth with the A#. <sup>189</sup> With this A# inversion, Bell effectively turns the chord on its head, subverting the root tone (B) with the base tone (A#):

The structure of these final two measures resembles an internal feedback loop, much like the cyclical nature of the piece as a whole. The viewer is denied a definitive ending to this story or harmonic resolution; the protagonist has been denied a tragic *anagnorisis* and evinces no moral lesson. Rather, Bell and Ackroyd deliberately leave their audience with the sensation that the piece remains open-ended. The action continues in our imagination—in keeping with Hogarth's outsourcing of dramatic continuity to his viewer<sup>191</sup>—and recognition of moral culpability is experienced not by the protagonist, but by the audience.

<sup>189</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot's Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd. 2013. Orchestral score. p. 428.

<sup>190</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot's Progress*, London: Chester Music, Ltd. 2013. Vocal Score. p. 265.

<sup>191</sup> See Section 2.2.2.

### 3.3. Music

Iain Bell's process of constructing the orchestral landscape of *A Harlot's Progress* draws heavily from the composer's exacting attention to character. As referenced in personal interviews<sup>192</sup> and in his own written program note for the opera's premiere production,<sup>193</sup> The composer's initial attraction to Hogarth's *Harlot* narrative lay in the dramatic potential of a "piece that follow[s] one character obsessively...[in which] you can really paint the characterization much more intensely".<sup>194</sup> This primacy of character manifests itself acutely both in a complex representation of its figures through identifiable *Leitmotive* and in the musical structure of the piece as a whole. Through the reiteration and manipulation of orchestral gestures, Bell provides subtle indications of the action's spatial and temporal setting. Further, the opera's few instances of orchestral silence also carry music-dramaturgical significance, calling attention to key moments in the protagonist's dramatic trajectory and affecting a renegotiation of the relationship between character and audience.

#### 3.3.1. Character

Much of the novel genius of Hogarth's *Harlot's Progress* can be ascribed to his application of aesthetic tropes and devices from the genre of history painting to the more pedestrian form of the popular print. As with comedy and tragedy, the method of character representation in these two styles of graphic art has traditionally served as a clear distinction between them.<sup>195</sup> Whereas historic figures and tragic heroes would be depicted with brows furrowed under the weighty concerns of national destiny or ill-fated love, characters of less social "magnitude"<sup>196</sup> would rarely be granted any desires or motivations that extended beyond the frame of the individual image. Hogarth's concern for "truthful and sincere expression of character",<sup>197</sup> however, represents a renegotiation of this convention; regardless of their social class, the artist depicts the internal workings of his figures—both lowly and lofty—in

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<sup>192</sup> See Appendix 1.1: Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 18 September 2013.

<sup>193</sup> See Appendix 2.: Bell, Iain. "Painting an Opera." Programme notes for premiere production of *A Harlot's Progress*, October 2013.

<sup>194</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 18 September 2013.

<sup>195</sup> Erwin, Timothy. "William Hogarth and the Aesthetics of Nationalism" in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 3/4 (2001), p. 386.

<sup>196</sup> Aristotle. *Poetics*. Trans. S. H. Butcher. Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 1997. p. 14.

<sup>197</sup> Erwin, Timothy. "William Hogarth and the Aesthetics of Nationalism" in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 3/4 (2001), p. 386.

equal measure. He devotes just as much gravity to Moll in *A Harlot's Progress* as to the recognized tragic figure of Sigismunda.<sup>198</sup> Though representative of two extremes in style, both works depict their respective heroines in one expressive moment that suggests a broader and more complex character trajectory. Within the aesthetic terminology of the early eighteenth century, this impulse would be labeled as the hallmark of grand history painting; from a contemporary perspective, we recognize a complex character psychology.

This aspect of the *Harlot* narrative has found modern expression in Bell and Ackroyd's devotion to the nuanced and deeply personal portrayal of individual motivations and processes—especially those of their titular character at her most raw and exposed in the moments before her death. The entire thirty-one-minute fifth scene is dedicated to Moll's descent into madness as a consequence of her syphilitic infection, during which the character's desires and interests refer increasingly to places, people, and memories that exist outside of the realm of the present moment. To further illustrate the inner workings of Moll's mind, Bell and Ackroyd even reintroduce a dead character (James Dalton, who appears to Moll in a vision), momentarily subverting the conventions of theatrical realism in the interest of pulling the audience deeper into her madness. In his 2013 essay "Painting an Opera" Bell reveals the primacy of character in his process of adapting Hogarth's narrative to the operatic medium:

"The characters in William Hogarth's art are brought to life in exquisite detail; complete back-stories are conveyed with just a wrinkle of a brow, the gesture of a hand or the fabric of an item of clothing. In a world of two-dimensional art, these are living, breathing three-dimensional personalities and I was determined to capture this musically."<sup>199</sup>

Thus, each of the characters in *A Harlot's Progress* are furnished with a distinct motivational through-line: Moll chases the appeal of luxuries and loves beyond her reach; Mother Needham seeks control over the human instruments around her in the interest of her own survival; St. John Lovelace is driven by injured pride, jealousy, and revenge after he has lost Moll; James Dalton, pressed by Lovelace's lackeys to betray her, chooses his loyalty to Moll over their bribery and threats; and despite her best interest, Kitty is driven by sad duty to stay with Moll through her deterioration

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<sup>198</sup> See Section 2.2.2. and Hogarth, William. *Sigismunda Mourning over the Heart of Guiscardo*. 1759. London: Tate Britain. Oil on canvas.

<sup>199</sup> Bell, Iain. "Painting an Opera." Programme notes for premiere production of *A Harlot's Progress*, October 2013.

and death, even trying to care for the child she leaves behind. Bell's attention to these individuated motivations manifests itself in unique musical characteristics, crafted by the composer to reflect the dramaturgical functions of his characters. Described at length by Bell in "Painting an Opera", these compositional gestures range from specific tonal progressions to broader tendencies toward particular tempi to preferences for melismatic or syllabic delivery.

Perhaps the opera's most extreme exemplar of this musical differentiation, St. John Lovelace is given "vocal and instrumental tics...including trills, staccato, and heavily accented phrasing along with small-scale parlour-room chamber-orchestration" indicative of his "restlessly alert mind".<sup>200</sup> In an October 2013 interview, Bell described his compositional decisions regarding this character and how these peculiarities can be manipulated over the course of the opera:

"Well, they all have a unique voice, but he particularly—I wanted to portray that he's so intelligent and so quick-thinking, and so removed from everyone else. He's in a class of his own, separate from everyone else. I did this by giving him extremely difficult rhythms and rhythmic patterns, because I wanted to portray this very very quick, whirling dervish brain. And not only are his rhythms difficult, but the rhythms of the orchestral part surrounding him will throw them off as well. So, not only is he going 7/8, 3/4, 2/4, 5/[8], he's got swirling oboes and flutes around him, portraying this intelligence and this speed, which are also playing not always on the beat. So, (sings) 'I was preparing for you, sir...' even Diana [Damrau, playing Moll Hackabout] takes it on when she's addressing him."<sup>201</sup>

While Moll Hackabout's line draws conspicuously from the "bel canto [tradition] and Mozart coloratura heroines including Lucia, Violetta, Gilda, Konstanze, and Amina",<sup>202</sup> Bell notes that her change in delivery during her interaction with Lovelace in scene two illustrates his influence upon her. This assumption of Lovelace's "breathless"<sup>203</sup> and abrupt manner of speaking evinces Moll's momentary attempt to perform a role that he expects of her—an attempt to quickly reestablish a masquerade.

Another conspicuous shift in character delivery, however, indicates a more genuine and fundamental change in motivation: as she develops a deep sympathy for Moll

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<sup>200</sup> Bell, Iain. "Painting an Opera." Programme notes for premiere production of *A Harlot's Progress*, October 2013.

<sup>201</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 25 October 2013.

<sup>202</sup> Bell, Iain. "Painting an Opera." Programme notes for premiere production of *A Harlot's Progress*, October 2013.

<sup>203</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 25 October 2013.

during the opera's second half, Kitty's vocal line comes to resemble the tonality and phrasing of the piece's title character:

"Kitty is ever the pragmatist. She is well-aware of the realities of London's dark underbelly so is thoroughly no-nonsense and very quick to temper. This side of her personality is portrayed in a mono-syllabic 'one-note-per-word', occasionally quasi-patter vocal line in complete contrast to Moll's more decadent, lyrical writing. Orchestrally, her personality is delineated by a light, brittle, rhythmic texture, often moving as fleetly as she does. The harmonic landscape is initially harsh with little warmth or bloom. By way of her growing exposure to Moll's idealistic romanticism, her gratitude for Moll's kindness and deepening sympathy for her plight several moments later emerge when this hard-faced guard is let down, notably at the end of Scene Three when she is powerless to do anything as Dalton rapes Moll, '*Poor little thing*' or as she is comforting Moll as they are ejected from Bridewell Prison in Scene Four, '*You have done your share for me*'. Here, the writing closely resembles Moll's with its melismatic sweep, high-lying pianissimo dynamics and long, legato phrasing. Though the severity and hopelessness of her situation has caused her to become even more brittle when speaking to others, the harsh quality of her mono-syllabic delivery has softened when she addresses Moll, often taking a rallying or playful tone as can be heard in Scene Three when she helps Moll prepare for her work, '*With the grace that your beauty confers...*' or in her kind nurturing of Emily throughout Scene Five."<sup>204</sup>

Thus, moments of emotional honesty—especially as relates to the opera's central figure—tend to be characterized by a more tonal vocal lyricism and legato, syllabic delivery.

This tendency is also quite evident in the character of James Dalton, whose vocal line and orchestral accompaniment Bell describes in dynamic terms. One minute, the character's nimble tempi and punchy delivery reflect the harsh realities of his surroundings, and the next, his genuine affection for Moll is expressed in a sensual lyricism:

"He knows London, the violence of its people and the darkness of its streets; they are his '*manor*', as he says. This violence remains a feature of his orchestral identity, constantly punctuated with dyspeptic brass/percussion and volcanic strings. Rhythmically, his metre is far more complex than the other characters; one moment it is in a simple 4/4 then in 7/8 then 5/4, all feeding this sense of unpredictability and dangerous spontaneity. This tension is consistent with a very high-lying baritone line, sitting in a most thrilling niche of Nathan's voice. All this is heard in the regaling of his Scene Two tale '*Alone in my thoughts outside Garraway's Coffee House*'. The only time his demeanour softens is with respect to Moll. It is her relative purity (relative to the other women of London) that has caused him to fall for her. At these moments his vocal lines become less spasmodic and the orchestra quietens to provide an

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<sup>204</sup> Bell, Iain. "Painting an Opera." Programme notes for premiere production of *A Harlot's Progress*, October 2013.

almost pastoral soundscape, as in Scene Two ‘*Beside the drabs of this city you are a Queen*’ and during Moll’s mad visions in Scene Five. These are both extended examples of his lyrical compassion, though other more fleeting examples exist. These often follow a dramatic barrage, thus requiring enormous vocal control and refinement, as in Scene Three during his argument with Lovelace. He is deeply moved by the thought that the old man struck Moll and momentarily reflects gently to himself ‘*You struck her beautiful face*’ in delicate head-voice, before once again returning to the hell-for-leather vocal tirade.”<sup>205</sup>

This conspicuous shift in tone offers a glimpse of Dalton’s character arc in miniature—though Moll has awoken in him an honest and affectionate gentleness, the realities of the London underworld compel him immediately back into the familiar violence of his fight for daily survival. His language shifts back to the crass spitfire of insults that Lovelace expects of this lifetime criminal, tumbling forth in a jerking progression of changing tempi:

The musical score snippet shows a character's vocal line with lyrics. The notation includes various time signatures (3/4, 5/8, 4/4, 2/4, 3/4) and dynamic markings (*mf*, *mf* *furious*). The lyrics are: "For - get it! She's all the bet-ter for it. She long sought to be rid of you, you mag-got! To feel a real man be - tween her thighs." The score is numbered 206 at the end.

This abrupt and unpredictable manner is continued throughout Dalton’s interaction with Moll, culminating in a violent rape scene followed by the climactic arrival of Lovelace with city authorities to arrest them. Dalton’s demise is assured; according to the mocking and vulgar jeers of Mother Needham, he is hanged shortly before the action resumes in scene four:

“Let me tell you this, Moll Hackabout. Your great love, James Dalton, is dead! Dead! Dead! He was led to the gallows by a whore like you, then stood

<sup>205</sup> Bell, Iain. “Painting an Opera.” Programme notes for premiere production of *A Harlot’s Progress*, October 2013.

<sup>206</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot’s Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 171.

beneath the rope and shat himself! No trace of your hero, no trace of your man! He was never so nimble as when he was hanging; how he danced!"<sup>207</sup>

He has died as he has lived: feeding the capricious whims of the bloodthirsty "hydra"<sup>208</sup> that is London itself.

It is those characters with the closest relationships to the city who are able to survive the action relatively unscathed. One of these is the "Journeyman": an amalgam of the Coachman (scene one), Officer (scene three), and Gaoler (scene four) who functions as an incarnation of the opera's setting. His is the unified face of these ancillary characters, considered by Bell to be "personifications of differing elements of London's nature".<sup>209</sup> Each of the Journeyman's three constituent roles represents a specific characteristic of the city, set by Bell to an overarching and distinctive musical through-line:

"The Coachman is a manifestation of the opportunistic face of the city, the Officer is the mercenary face and the Gaoler the sadistic. Though utterly involved in the action of the piece (always set against the existing orchestral landscape), as a quasi-totemic figure I was keen to make his vocal writing unlike any other character's, identified by very long vocal lines, operating outside of the same sense of time as the others therefore conferring upon him a removed or eternal perspective."<sup>210</sup>

Reminiscent of the "Time-Keeper" of *The Jew Decoy'd*,<sup>211</sup> the Journeyman is an embodiment of the spatial and temporal parameters of the piece's environment while also functioning as an individual character in the action onstage.

The only character to truly benefit from the action of *A Harlot's Progress*, Mother Needham is uniquely able to identify and manipulate profit from her surroundings. She commands the actions of the chorus in both scenes one and four (and stirs the prisoners into a frenzied catfight in scene four), channeling the rapacious will of the city to her own ends. Indeed, Needham introduces the four-note "London" *Leitmotiv* in her opening aria,<sup>212</sup> over which she sprinkles a mercurial array of musical gestures in a beguiling display of her restlessly calculating mind. According to Bell,

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<sup>207</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot's Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 299.

<sup>208</sup> Bell, Iain. "Painting an Opera. Programme notes for premiere production of *A Harlot's Progress*, October 2013.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> See Section 2.2.2.

<sup>212</sup> See Section 3.3.2.

“Needham’s lines are frequently peppered with effervescent trills and staccati over fairly light, faux-elegant parlour-room chamber-orchestration, all the while underpinned by the snarling ‘London’ drone lingering beneath the surface to add a layer of menace to her charming veneer. To ingratiate herself to Moll, her serpentine qualities are portrayed with snaking woodwinds and shimmering high strings. At this point her vocal line softens to become more lyrical; staccati and trills are replaced by sleek, legato phrasing and gentler dynamics.”<sup>213</sup>

Bell’s “serpentine” orchestration of Needham’s vocal line cements the symbiotic relationship between the individual character and the chorus she commands. Needham owes this authority—and her survival—to her ability to align her personal motivations with the ravenous needs of the city. She positions herself as a broker between the hungry mass and their prey, between the lecherous desires of her upper class client (St. John Lovelace) and the objects of his sexual attention, between demand and supply. Standing at the intersection of this exchange, Needham has harnessed the forces of the capitalistic city. Her personal trajectory depends upon and resembles that of the chorus, whose actions and vocal entrances she commands. They close in on Moll at her bidding in scene one,<sup>214</sup> and Bell has aligned the musical height of her wrath<sup>215</sup> against Moll and Kitty with the climactic angry attacks of the chorus of prisoners in scene four.<sup>216</sup> Further, just as the dramatic arc of the opera cycles back upon itself after the “reset button” of fourth interlude,<sup>217</sup> Mother Needham’s musical timbre in scene six returns to the sinuous, manipulative tone of scene one:

“...when [Needham] returns for her final appearance at Moll’s wake in Scene Six, it appears as if the ‘reset-button’ has been pressed. She is once again charming and playful, clothed in her familiar and ‘*oh, so elegant*’ string quartet and delicately snaking woodwinds as she flirts with Lovelace, absolves herself of any guilt in Moll’s downfall and luridly discusses the future prospects of Moll’s baby daughter, Emily.”<sup>218</sup>

As Bell intones in the careful orchestration of his opening overture, London’s inescapable and infectious corruption seals the tragic fates of both Moll and her innocent child. The figures that survive—indeed, thrive—are those whose regard of

<sup>213</sup> Bell, Iain. “Painting an Opera.” Programme notes for premiere production of *A Harlot’s Progress*, October 2013.

<sup>214</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot’s Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 59.

<sup>215</sup> Bell, Iain. “Painting an Opera.” Programme notes for premiere production of *A Harlot’s Progress*, October 2013.

<sup>216</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot’s Progress*. 2013. London: Chester Music, Ltd. 2013. Orchestral score. p. 293.

<sup>217</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 25 October 2013.

<sup>218</sup> Bell, Iain. “Painting an Opera.” Programme notes for premiere production of *A Harlot’s Progress*, October 2013.

human life as a saleable commodity aligns them with their unforgiving environment, whose motivations are indistinguishable from those of the seething mass of London itself. In this way, Bell and Ackroyd blur the line between setting and character, applying the city as both a spatial-temporal dimension and willfully motivated force in the form of the chorus.

### 3.3.2. Correlation Between Structure, Character, and Setting

Consisting of a brief overture, six progressive scenes, and four intermediary orchestral “interludes”, *A Harlot’s Progress* is a through-composed opera depicting the dramatic trajectory of its titular character from her arrival in London in 1730 until her death, at least nine months later. As is the case in Hogarth’s original series, the downward character arc of Moll Hackabout dominates the opera’s narrative; likewise, this descent is represented musically through increasingly atonal qualities in Bell’s orchestration, reaching a chromatic extremity in the final moments of her life. Bell describes the orchestration of scene five—in which his protagonist’s madness peaks before her death—in the following way:

“It just becomes highly atonal. So the singers, at that point, are singing against complete clashes. [...] You see a lot more chromatic writing; you see a lot more of that kind of ‘crunching’ in different layers. [...] It’s arch-atonality at some points. [...] Certainly the darker the journey, the darker the tonality becomes.”<sup>219</sup>

During this mad scene, Bell reintroduces established *Leitmotive* from earlier in the score to disorienting effect—though familiar, these musical gestures are repeated, inverted, manipulated into unresolvable tritones, and resolved in jarring chromatic intervals of seconds and sevenths,<sup>220</sup> mirroring Moll’s distorted mental state and pulling the viewer into her chaos. Ultimately, death proves the only release from Moll’s ravings; as she succumbs to syphilis and slips away, Bell grants us, too, a momentary tonal respite (Interlude IV: “Come Down, Night”) before quickly reestablishing the “same harmonic space as scene one”.<sup>221</sup> This tragic fate is foreshadowed in the piece’s overture<sup>222</sup> by the juxtaposition of “glittering” high strings, flutes, and glockenspiel<sup>223</sup> against the deep “swarming darkness” of the

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<sup>219</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 25 October 2013.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> See Section 3.2.2.

<sup>223</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 18 September 2013.

orchestra playing a derivative of the four-part choral opening “hymn”.<sup>224</sup> Ultimately, the pure, light tones of the winds and bells are overtaken and engulfed by the deepening chromaticism and accelerating tempi of the lower strings and brass, and—after an anticipatory tense pause—the chorus speaks. Their opening vocal line, “The morning of London is filled with the voices of buying and selling, it is the market where all come to bargain”<sup>225</sup> reiterates and restarts the inevitably tragic cycle introduced in the overture, cementing Moll’s downward trajectory before she ever sets foot onstage. Bell designates his chorus as “Londoners”<sup>226</sup>—and, more specifically in the prison of scene four, as “Inmates”<sup>227</sup>—thereby stipulating that they are simultaneously commentators on and participants in the scene as it unfolds before us. They describe the conditions of the marketplace—and, later, prison—in harrowing detail, then experience these conditions themselves as salespeople and prisoners. By defining their function as both environmental and dynamic, Bell applies his chorus as a curious dramaturgical hybrid: simultaneously constituting a setting and an autonomous character. Differentiation between these two functions comes as a musical cue in the chorus’ vocal line, as Bell explains:

“The chorus has particularly two functions. It’s participative when they’re market sellers, but there are moments which I score much more neumatically—like plainchant-ish—in unison; like, ‘trussed up and taken’, ‘the morning of London is filled with the voices’ are all on the same note. It’s those moments when I, myself, feel a time freeze. Not musically, but in the actual lapse of time. They’re addressing the audience directly, telling them what’s going on, rather than participating. Like, ‘the clashing of irons, the rattling of...’ etc. [...] So, that was my time freeze. But the music doesn’t have to stop. But I’m aware that the action for me is not taking place in [a way that] one second equals one second. We’re in a different continuum at that point. Even the beginning [of scene four], (sings) ‘Gaolers and gaoled...’ [is neumatic], until we get to (sings) ‘Newgate, the Clink, the Fleet and the Bench...’ because there, they’re telling us where we are, they’re telling us what’s going on, as opposed to doing it.”<sup>228</sup>

It is in these first vocal lines in scenes one and four that the chorus’ description is needed to establish the setting: at the beginning of each of the opera’s two acts, when the audience is either first sitting down or returning after the intermission. As Bell notes, these moments evince a manipulation of the opera’s temporal

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<sup>224</sup> Bell, Iain. “Painting an Opera.” Programme notes for premiere production of *A Harlot’s Progress*, October 2013.

<sup>225</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot’s Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 9.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>228</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 25 October 2013.

parameters, freezing the forward action of the piece in order to provide deeper expositional detail. According to the conventions of traditional opera dramaturgy, such moments usually convey the emotional exposition of an individual character in the form of an aria, or further expound upon shared sentiments in ensembles. By both describing and participating in the opera's action, the chorus—representative of the city itself—further resembles an individuated character: one capable of both constituting the piece's environmental parameters and enacting its will upon them. It bears noting that the composer's earliest conceptual work on the opera was influenced by librettist Peter Ackroyd's *London: The Biography*,<sup>229</sup> a historical tome that examines the British capital as a character in its own right. In his 2013 program notes to *A Harlot's Progress*, "Painting an Opera," Bell refers to the setting in almost human terms:

"Though there were six performers and a chorus on stage, all of whom would be differentiated by their own distinct musical language, to me it was of the utmost importance to begin with the characterisation of Hogarth's own muse; London—in its ever-shifting, convulsive, infectious and cynical glory. [...] It is my perception that London has molded those within its walls and wards... As such, I wanted the contagia of the city to emanate from the opera's first utterances as the dark, dangerous night slowly dissolves into dawn on Cheapside Market. [...] It was extremely important to me that London's presence be felt even when the action was not unfolding outside or in a location discernibly of the city."<sup>230</sup>

To this end, the composer conceived a four-note *Leitmotiv*, introduced in Mother Needham's opening aria on the words "stony-hearted stepmother of suffering."<sup>231</sup> This phrase, which finds application in Ackroyd's book as a metaphor for the city as a whole, originates in Thomas de Quincey's 1821 autobiographical work, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. De Quincey similarly apostrophizes the setting of his encounter with a young prostitute: "Oxford Street, stony-hearted stepmother! thou that listenest to the sighs of orphans and drunkenest the tears of children".<sup>232</sup> The alliterative and relentless quality of this phrase is further enhanced by Bell's setting in the forward-moving momentum of 2/4 tempo and choice of chord

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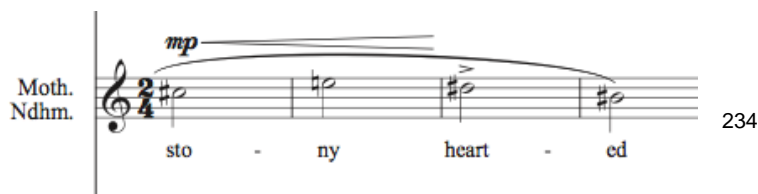
<sup>229</sup> Bell, Iain. "Painting an Opera." Programme notes for premiere production of *A Harlot's Progress*, October 2013.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot's Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 21.

<sup>232</sup> De Quincey, Thomas. *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater and Suspiria de Profundis*. Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1851. p. 59.

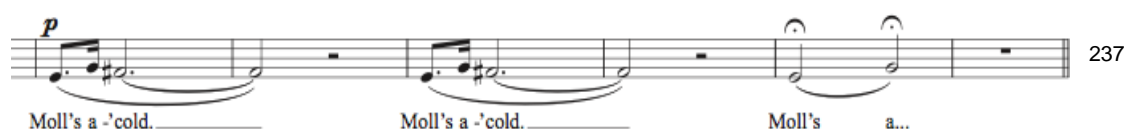
progression, which he describes as “encircling...with no resolution [and no opportunity for] any sigh or breath afterwards”<sup>233</sup>.



According to Bell, this progression forms a structural and thematic hub for the opera—heard in musical variations throughout—and indicative of the forces at work on his protagonist’s dramatic journey.<sup>235</sup>

“A four-note motif was therefore conferred upon the capital, heard throughout in constant modification from the first scene to the last. It is first intoned in Mother Needham’s ‘entrance aria’ on the words ‘Stony-hearted step-mother of suffering’ and features prominently to illustrate the key moments of Moll’s descent; her de-flowering, her being dragged to prison and finally infecting her so completely that it forms the back-bone of a great swathe of her mad-scene, culminating in her faltering dying whispers of ‘*Moll’s a-cold*’. The motif itself is circular in shape, uncomfortably discordant with no resolution suggesting the eternally poisonous, enveloping, embrace of the city.”<sup>236</sup>

Evident in a comparison with the “Moll’s a’cold” motif, the core of this tonal theme rests in the sequence of a minor third interval followed by a dissonant F#:



The halting of this progression in Moll’s final line affects an uncoupling of her temporal trajectory from that of the orchestra; the double bass is left alone to play a C pedal—reinforcing the purity of the C major chord, against which the F# stands out conspicuously—before moving into the repeating, four-part tonal resolution of “Come

<sup>233</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 18 September 2013.

<sup>234</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot's Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 21.

<sup>235</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 18 September 2013.

<sup>236</sup> Bell, Iain. “Painting an Opera.” Programme notes for premiere production of *A Harlot's Progress*, October 2013.

<sup>237</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot's Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 397.

Down, Night”.<sup>238</sup> Despite the protagonist’s death, the ubiquitous presence of London persists, ever active and ever hungry.

### 3.3.3. Dramaturgical Significance of Orchestral Silence

Set against an unrelenting musical landscape capable of exercising a will of its own, the opera’s rare moments of orchestral silence command attention to key points in its dramatic trajectory. Bell applies these pauses in order to channel the audience’s full attention to the vocal line of an individual character:

“I feel that in opera, silence—orchestral silence—is the most precious, precious, precious commodity. And I think you should only ever use that when you have something that really needs to be delivered. Something of momentous emotional import. [...] And...the audience go, ‘Okay, I need to listen to this.’”<sup>239</sup>

Viewed in succession, these incidences of orchestral silence constitute a distillation of the opera’s most decisive moments, including Moll’s voiced assent to her initial violation (“Anything”),<sup>240</sup> Kitty’s compassionate outcry after Moll’s physical assault by Lovelace (“Oh, you are bleeding”),<sup>241</sup> Dalton’s threatening command to Moll before he rapes her (“You’ll do as you’re told now. Lie down on the bed”)<sup>242</sup> and the sixteen measure passage—flanked by two grand pauses—that epitomizes Moll’s descent into madness in scene five.<sup>243</sup> This vocal line contains the character’s entire emotional and mental trajectory in miniature, from initial fearful suspicion, through her touching gestures of self-comfort, to a confused and defensive panic. Her questions and pleas are directed outward to an unseen aggressor voiced by the double bass; it penetrates her silence, delivering a jarring and forceful F# sixteenth note under her line, “Don’t *touch* me”:

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<sup>238</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot’s Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 397.

<sup>239</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 25 October 2013.

<sup>240</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot’s Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 58.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>243</sup> There is one further incidence of orchestral silence, set against Dalton’s “What are you saying, woman?” in scene three (see: Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot’s Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 213.) This, however, was inserted by the composer in “anticipa[tion of an] applause after [Moll’s] aria.” (See: Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 25 October, 2013.)



59 Freely

Moll

626

Why are you look-ing at me like that, like that? Why? Why? Why? Ahh.

accel. hold back

fp

635

Ahh. Ahh. Mmm (hummed) (fitfully)  $\text{♩} = 56$  p sub. Don't touch me, don't touch me.

D.B.

accel. hold back  $\text{♩} = 56$  f

244

This moment represents an overture to Moll's final mental break: a brief encapsulation of the character's journey before it is unspooled in harrowing detail over the following 109 measures. Further, the lengthy absence of orchestral accompaniment followed by its viscerally abrupt intrusion sets the orchestra in opposition to the protagonist. Moll's mental state has become derailed from the conditions and stimuli of her environment—she constructs elaborate fantasies for her child's future<sup>245</sup> and combats the phantom of her dead lover.<sup>246</sup> With Kitty's departure, the audience loses its functional barometer for reality onstage, and is left to gradually slip into Moll's worsening madness without a way to differentiate between her perception and objective theatrical reality. Not only is the line blurred between fact and fantasy, Bell's orchestration forces a renegotiation of the separation between actor and audience. Shortly before Moll's madness begins its final acceleration to her death, Bell includes a familiar three-note theme. Reminiscent of the "Emily" *Leitmotiv*,<sup>247</sup> it consists of a minor third<sup>248</sup> followed by a major seventh, and is played variously by the lead strings and harp:

<sup>244</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot's Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 378.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., p. 333.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., p. 338.

<sup>247</sup> Heard also in the line "daddy's girl," this theme consists of a minor third followed by a perfect fifth.

<sup>248</sup> While the viola, second violin, and harp play a minor third followed by a major seventh, the first violin instead plays a diminished third followed by a major seventh. See: Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot's Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 371.

The image displays a musical score for the opera *A Harlot's Progress*. The top system features the Harp (Hp.) and Moll's vocal line. Moll's lyrics are: "rock, rock, rock. to and fro. She throws down the swaddling clothes. A". The score includes staves for Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vlc.), and Harp (Hp.). The Violin I part is marked "2 soli" and "p". The Violin II part is marked "1 solo" and "p". The Viola part is marked "1 sola" and "p". The Violoncello part is marked "(1 solo)" and "p". The Harp part is marked "p". The score includes a rehearsal mark "57". The bottom system shows the Harp and Moll's vocal line. Moll's lyrics are: "crad - le? I had a ba - by once. Lit - tle ba - by, Lit - tle ba - by. A". The score includes staves for Harp (Hp.) and Moll's vocal line. The Harp part is marked "p". The Moll part is marked "p". The score includes a rehearsal mark "249".

249

While we have heard this motif before, this is the first time that Moll hears it—indeed, the first time that the protagonist acknowledges the orchestration as an external

<sup>249</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot's Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 371.

stimulus. It is in hearing the “Emily” theme that Moll is reminded that she has a child, and responds—initially in questioning confusion—with, “A cradle? I had a baby once.”<sup>250</sup> An information exchange is set up between protagonist and orchestra, signaling a breakdown of conventional structure at pace with the deterioration of her mental state. Until this point, the orchestra has provided insight into character and action through the application and manipulation of *Leitmotive*, but always for the benefit of the audience. With Moll’s acknowledgment of this musical cue, she confirms her presence within a world in which the audience participates. What we can hear, she hears as well. Performer and viewer now share one space—an uncomfortable proximity to which Bell calls further attention with Moll’s panicked secco question, “Why are you looking at me like that? Why? Why? Why?”<sup>251</sup> These appeals could just as easily be directed at her real observers—at us, the audience—as toward her imaginary aggressors. If we, indeed, inhabit the same world, we have just witnessed her repeated rape, physical abuse, sexual slavery, and mental deterioration, and yet have done nothing. Bell calls us out as bystanders in a crime, complicit with the rapacious city and its motley figureheads in our tacit consent. We are no longer powerless observers; rather, we join the masses of spectators who have seen, bought, reproduced, and commoditized the *Harlot’s Progress* narrative. We, too, are consumers of Moll Hackabout and her story.

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<sup>250</sup> Bell, Iain and Peter Ackroyd. *A Harlot’s Progress*. London: Chester Music, Ltd., 2013. Orchestral score. p. 371.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 377.

## 4. Critical Reception

Opening on 13 October 2013, the world premiere production of Iain Bell's *A Harlot's Progress* played at Vienna's Theater an der Wien to full and sold-out<sup>252</sup> audiences for the entirety of its successful six-show run. Immediate audience reception was notably positive, described by critics as "warm" and "enthusiastic", and offering an especially "triumphant reception" to German coloratura soprano Diana Damrau in the piece's titular role.<sup>253</sup> A handful of reviews<sup>254</sup> do make mention of some scattered booing at the piece's premiere. These, however, also cite that the "Buhrufe, die auf [Iain] Bell abzielten"<sup>255</sup> were isolated among the otherwise ardent applause.

Most reviews include a brief summation of the piece's commission and development process. Some of these erroneously cite *A Harlot's Progress* as conceived by the Theater an der Wien to provide a "weibliche Gegenstück"<sup>256</sup> to Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, tailored to fit into a season that had already been planned. The majority, however, do correctly identify Bell and Ackroyd's opera as an original commission that provided an opportunity for the theater to remount its successful 2008 production of the Stravinsky piece. Central in all accounts is the working relationship between Iain Bell and Diana Damrau, who critics describe variously as a "Muse,"<sup>257</sup> "künstlerische Partnerin,"<sup>258</sup> and "Geburtshelferin",<sup>259</sup> and credit as fundamental in getting the project off the ground:

"Bell, damals auf der Suche nach einem Thema für seine Oper, sah die Bilder 2008 in einer Ausstellung der Tate Britain, war begeistert und rief sofort seine künstlerische Partnerin Diana Damrau an, um ihr mitzuteilen, dass ihr zukünftiges Bühnenschicksal als syphilitische Hure fix sei. Damrau zeigte sich begeistert, ihr Agent kontaktierte einige Opernhäuser. Im Theater an der Wien feierte man gerade einen großen Erfolg mit einer Oper, die ebenfalls auf einer

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<sup>252</sup> Irurzun, José. "Iain Bell's *A Harlot's Progress*, An Opera to be Reckoned With" in: *Seen and Heard International*. 24 October 2013.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> See: Jarolin, Peter. "Wenn Gier und brutaler Sex in der Untergang führen: Iain Bells Oper 'A Harlot's Progress' überzeugt an der Wien auch dank Diana Damrau." In: *Kurier: Kultur/Bühne*. 14 October 2013.; Tošić, Ljubiša. "Eine Londoner Frauenvernichtung" in: *Der Standard: Kultur: Bühne*. 15 Oct., 2013.; Irurzun, José. "Iain Bell's *A Harlot's Progress*, An Opera to be Reckoned With" in: *Seen and Heard International*. 24 October 2013; Troger, Dominik. "Drastisch dräuendes Dirnen-Drama" in: *Oper in Wien*. 13 October 2014.

<sup>255</sup> Troger, Dominik. "Drastisch dräuendes Dirnen-Drama" in: *Oper in Wien*. 13 October 2014.

<sup>256</sup> Becker, Roberto. "Gutes Mädchen, böse Welt" in: *Online Musik Magazin*. 13 October 2013.

<sup>257</sup> Irrgeher, Christoph. "Zumba kommt in meiner Oper nicht vor" in: *Wiener Zeitung: Kultur: Bühne*. 10 October 2013.

<sup>258</sup> Ender, Stefan. "Der Komponist als Enthusiast" in: *Der Standard: Kultur: Bühne*. 11 October 2013.

<sup>259</sup> Irrgeher, Christoph. "Zumba kommt in meiner Oper nicht vor" in: *Wiener Zeitung: Kultur: Bühne*. 10 October 2013.

Hogarth-Bilderserie basiert: Igor Strawinskys *The Rake's Progress*. Intendant Roland Geyer gefiel die Idee, beide Opern nacheinander zu zeigen (was diesen Herbst [2013] geschieht), und die Sache war entschieden. Ein Zyklus mit Orchesterliedern Bells, 'The Hidden Place', wurde schon ein Jahr später am Haus aufgeführt, mit dem RSO Wien und Damrau als Solistin.<sup>260</sup>

The opera's development as a commission by the Theater an der Wien meant that Bell knew the precise parameters of his performance venue, orchestra, and vocal talents before beginning his composition: a detail referenced frequently in regard to the piece's roles being "tailor made"<sup>261</sup> for its performers. Reviews concerning the performance aspect of the production are overwhelmingly positive, with Damrau at the center of their praise. The German soprano receives particular acclaim for her "Mut zur Hässlichkeit, zur Selbstentäußerung"<sup>262</sup> and mastery of all of the "rasch wechselnden Variationen der Moll Hackabout [...] von ihren lyrischen Passagen bis zu dramatischen Ausbrüchen, Trillern und Kolaturen, Wärme und Fahlheit des Ausdrucks, am Ende ein Sterben in Wahnsinn, 20 Minuten lang".<sup>263</sup> While Ljubisa Tošić of *Der Standard* goes so far as to credit Damrau's "nie abebbend[e] Eindringlichkeit und Wandlungsfähigkeit"<sup>264</sup> for the success of the opera as a whole ("Was immer man jedoch Positives findet—die Oper wird von Diana Damrau am Leben gehalten"<sup>265</sup>), most reviewers praise Bell's ability to fashion a fitting vehicle for her performative strengths. Termed variously an "Einfrau-Show der Extraklasse"<sup>266</sup> and an "ihr in die Kehle komponiertes Virtuosenstück",<sup>267</sup> the piece was regarded unanimously (even by the few critics who did not mention Damrau's central role in the opera's realization) as a fitting showcase for the musical and dramatic talents of its central figure.

The opera's cast received predominantly positive reviews as an "exzellentes Ensemble",<sup>268</sup> which extended from specific praise of individual performers to a

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<sup>260</sup> Ender, Stefan. "Der Komponist als Enthusiast" in: *Der Standard*: Kultur: Bühne. 11 October 2013.

<sup>261</sup> Burianek, Stephan. "A Harlot's Progress premiered at the Theater an der Wien" in: *Torial*. 13 October 2013.

<sup>262</sup> Jarolin, Peter. "Wenn Gier und brutaler Sex in der Untergang führen: Iain Bells Oper 'A Harlot's Progress' überzeugt an der Wien auch dank Diana Damrau." In: *Kurier*: Kultur/Bühne. 14 October 2013.

<sup>263</sup> Wagner, Renate. "Theater an der Wien: A Harlot's Progress" in: *Der neue Merker*. 13 October 2013.

<sup>264</sup> Tošić, Ljubiša. "Eine Londoner Frauenvernichtung" in: *Der Standard*: Kultur: Bühne. 15 October 2013.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Becker, Roberto. "Gutes Mädchen, böse Welt" in: *Online Musik Magazin*. 13 October 2013.

<sup>267</sup> Wagner, Renate. "Theater an der Wien: A Harlot's Progress" in: *Der neue Merker*. 13 October 2013.

<sup>268</sup> Rothschild, Thomas. "Der Moloch Großstadt" in: *Faust Kultur*. 13 October 2014.

general commendation of the Arnold Schönberg Chor.<sup>269</sup> Many of these critiques note the demanding nature of the roles—both musically and physically—and the performers’ adeptness and dramatic skill in their execution. The most exhaustive and representative of these reviews is that written by Renate Wagner for the international online cultural platform, *Der Neue Merker*:

“Neben der Damrau hatte noch eine Sängerin an diesem Abend Opernglück: Tara Erraught, deren Wiener Debut an der Staatsoper mit einer ‘Cenerentola’ schief ging, die weder ihr noch dem Haus Ehre machte, hat mit der Kitty eine schöne, reich facettierte Rolle gefunden. Sie ist Molls Begleiterin von Anfang an—zuerst zynisch, dann beteiligt, am Ende tief erschüttert und der einzige Mensch, der Moll geblieben ist. Das macht sie (diesmal auch nicht von den Kostümen entstellt wie einst anno Glittenberg) darstellerisch wunderbar, singt es auch bemerkenswert, obwohl die Tessitura der Rolle für einen Mezzo sehr hoch erscheint. Nathan Gunn ist Molls Liebhaber, der in ihren Träumen wie ein eleganter Mephisto erscheint, in der Realität aber eine Schabigheit offenbart, die ihn als Kriminellen und Zuhälter ausweist: Die Rolle ist gut, aber nicht übermäßig ergiebig, und Gunn holt mit seiner Erscheinung und seinem Bariton eine Menge heraus. Der fiese Liebhaber Lovelace ist eindimensionaler, und vielleicht wirkt der Tenor des sich alt und widerlich gebenden Christopher Gillett darum so stark. Marie McLaughlin, einst ein großer Star, vor Jahren Glyndebournes Violetta, hat mittlerweile eine etwas reduzierte Stimme, ist aber immer noch eine schöne Erscheinung und gibt der Puffmutter etwas wie Grandezza. Nicolas Testé würde in einigen Nebenrollen kaum auffallen, ließe sein schöner Bass nicht doch immer wieder aufhorchen. Librettist und Komponist haben dem Chor eine besonders große Aufgabe zugeteilt—halb ‘Volk’, und da die Armen von der miesesten Sorte (wie sie die schwangere, am Ende befindliche Moll verhöhnen und demütigen, ist regelrecht schmerzlich), halb aber auch ‘Chor’ im höheren Sinn des Wortes, jene kommentierende Umwelt, vor der sich stets die einzelnen Schicksale abspielen. Den Mitgliedern des Arnold Schoenberg Chors (Leitung: Erwin Ortner) wird viel abverlangt, und sie bringen es.”<sup>270</sup>

Finnish conductor Mikko Franck also finds frequent mention for his “souverän”<sup>271</sup> direction of the Wiener Symphoniker,<sup>272</sup> though several critiques note a lack of nuance in dynamics:

“The Symphoniker, led by Mikko Franck, was played wonderfully but sometimes it needed to be reigned in a bit more so the singers could be heard.”<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Troger, Dominik. “Drastisch dräuendes Dirnen-Drama” in: *Oper in Wien*. 13 October 2014.

<sup>270</sup> Wagner, Renate. “Theater an der Wien: A Harlot’s Progress” in: *Der neue Merker*. 13 October 2013.

<sup>271</sup> Troger, Dominik. “Drastisch dräuendes Dirnen-Drama” in: *Oper in Wien*. 13 October 2014.

<sup>272</sup> Brug, Manuel. “Mädchen, die fallen, und Mädchen, die schießen” in: *Die Welt: Kultur*. 23 October 2013.

<sup>273</sup> VanderHart, Chanda. “Iain Bell’s *A Harlot’s Progress* enjoys a strong debut at Theater an der Wien” in: *Bachtrack*. 17 October 2013.

Bell expressed his concern regarding the orchestral volume in relation to the vocalists in an interview shortly before the opera's final performance, noting that this issue was partly due to the depth of the pit and the scheme of instrumentalists<sup>274</sup> within it:

"I'd written this piece to be played in a pit. And therefore, the dynamics would be at least two shades quieter because it's underground. [...] The tiny little half-meter overhang that we do have, the woodwinds are in, not the brass. [...] And this meant, conversely, that the singers had to sing [...] one fach more dramatically. So, Moll Hackabout at Theater an der Wien is a far more dramatic role than it would be in Chicago. [...] Diana's had to sing this role much darker than she would have if it was underground. I mean, they've all had to. [...] So, balance—that was the thing...but I was delighted with how it sounded, by and large."<sup>275</sup>

This comment from the composer was prompted by a question regarding Bell's impressions following the opera's premiere run. Asked how his experience with *A Harlot's Progress* had impacted his aesthetic and process as a composer, Bell responded:

"Yeah, I don't want to change this piece, but maybe audiences aren't ready to be bombarded with so much darkness. [...] And, the thing is, my process changed while writing it. I had a very close family death right in the middle of writing scene three [...] And so I'd already changed my technique midway through writing it anyway, which all of the critics noticed. All the critics noticed the same. [...] Everyone said it."<sup>276</sup> They liked—they think the first act is strong, but the second act is untouchable. [...] That's a great question, though: what you asked about how I would have changed anything. [...] Obviously I expected a teeny bit too much of the audience, in expecting them to immerse themselves in such darkness."<sup>277</sup>

The piece's pervasive "doom and gloom"<sup>278</sup>—which led many reviewers to characterize it as a bleak "Moritat"<sup>279</sup> for its unrelenting downward trajectory—leaves

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<sup>274</sup> See Appendix 5.17.

<sup>275</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 25 October, 2013.

<sup>276</sup> See: VanderHart, Chanda. "Iain Bell's *A Harlot's Progress* enjoys a strong debut at Theater an der Wien" in: *Bachtrack*. 17 October 2013.; Wagner, Renate. "Theater an der Wien: A Harlot's Progress" in: *Der neue Merker*. 13 October 2013.; Troger, Dominik. "Drastisch dräuendes Dirnen-Drama" in: *Oper in Wien*. 13 October 2014.; Tošić, Ljubiša. "Eine Londoner Frauenvernichtung" in: *Der Standard: Kultur: Bühne*. 15 October 2013.; Mus. "'A Harlot's Progress': London schluckt seine armen Mädchen" in: *Die Presse: Kultur*. 14 October 2013.; Burianek, Stephan. "A Harlot's Progress premiered at the Theater an der Wien" in: *Torial*. 13 October 2013.

<sup>277</sup> Bell, Iain. Personal interview. 25 October 2013.

<sup>278</sup> Fairman, Richard. "A Harlot's Progress, Theater an der Wien, Vienna – review" in: *Financial Times: Arts*. 15 October 2013.

<sup>279</sup> See: Becker, Roberto. "Gutes Mädchen, böse Welt" in: *Online Musik Magazin*. 13 October 2013.; Brug, Manuel. "Mädchen, die fallen, und Mädchen, die schießen" in: *Die Welt: Kultur*. 23 October 2013.; Jarolin, Peter. "Wenn Gier und brutaler Sex in der Untergang führen: Iain Bells Oper 'A Harlot's Progress' überzeugt an der Wien auch dank Diana Damrau." In: *Kurier: Kultur/Bühne*. 14 October 2013; Stürz, Franzisca. "Schonungslose Passion einer Hure" in: *Deutschlandradio Kultur*. 13 October 2013.

little room for dynamic character transformation, according to *Deutschlandradio Kultur*'s Franziska Stürz.<sup>280</sup> This assertion is further expanded by freelance journalist Stephan Burianek (writing for *Torial*) as a lack of emotional exposition:

“There is no mercy, no hope, no time for love. And hardly any time for any psychological penetration of the main characters as the plot rushes from scene to scene. Not much is done to provide the audience with what makes great operas work: empathy.”<sup>281</sup>

Bell and Ackroyd's character exposition is brisk, especially as compared with the numerous other operatic works referenced by critics as musically or dramaturgically similar to *A Harlot's Progress* (discussed below). However, both Stürz and Burianek are, perhaps, mistaken in their identifying a lack of character empathy as a departure from Hogarth's original source material. Hogarth's work is novel in its horizontal depiction of his central subject over time (in this case, through a series of six scenes) rather than a vertical representation of his protagonist in a climactic scene of epic love or loss (a convention more common in the genre of history painting). By employing a constant and swiftly moving dramatic action as character exposition (rather than, for instance, a *da capo* aria), Bell—like Hogarth—straddles the genres of tragedy and comic allegory. Nevertheless, many critics found it difficult to develop sympathy for the opera's characters<sup>282</sup> and expressed desires for more lyric, arioso pieces such as Moll's “To be back home again” passage in scene three.<sup>283</sup>

Of the reviews that do discuss the piece's dramaturgical parameters, several express some confusion regarding its comic dimensions. For the most part, critics identify an undercurrent of humour in Bell and Ackroyd's depiction—termed by George Loomis of *The New York Times* “a trenchantly witty tone”<sup>284</sup>—though many also assert that the opera's “pervasive bleakness”<sup>285</sup> bears little resemblance to the

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<sup>280</sup> Stürz, Franziska. “Schonungslose Passion einer Hure” in: *Deutschlandradio Kultur*. 13 October 2013.

<sup>281</sup> Burianek, Stephan. “A Harlot's Progress premiered at the Theater an der Wien” in: *Torial*. 13 October 2013.

<sup>282</sup> See: Stürz, Franziska. “Schonungslose Passion einer Hure” in: *Deutschlandradio Kultur*. 13 October 2013; Troger, Dominik. “Drastisch dräuendes Dirnen-Drama” in: *Oper in Wien*. 13 October 2014; Parker, Moore. “An exciting premiere” in: *The Opera Critic*. 24 October 2013.

<sup>283</sup> See: Troger, Dominik. “Drastisch dräuendes Dirnen-Drama” in: *Oper in Wien*. 13 October 2014; Irurzun, José. “Iain Bell's *A Harlot's Progress*, An Opera to be Reckoned With” in: *Seen and Heard International*. 24 October 2013.

<sup>284</sup> Loomis, George. “Bell's Bleak if Engaging New Opera” in: *The New York Times*: Music Section. 24 October 2013.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

“sly humour”<sup>286</sup> and “sharp-edged satire”<sup>287</sup> of Hogarth’s original series. On this account, reviews are conflicting (even to the point of a single review arguing contradictory points<sup>288</sup>); what unites them, however, is an impulse to identify the dramaturgical character of *A Harlot’s Progress* through comparisons to other pieces in the operatic canon. Critics juxtapose Bell and Ackroyd’s opera with a vast range of works—stretching from Orlando Gibbons’ early 17<sup>th</sup> century “The Cryes of London”<sup>289</sup> to George Benjamin’s 2012 *Written on Skin*<sup>290</sup>—the majority of their comparisons focusing on “das Schicksal von Frauen, die sich von Männern kaufen lassen”.<sup>291</sup> Massenet’s *Manon* (1884), Berg’s *Lulu* (1935), and Verdi’s *La Traviata* (1853) count among the most frequently referenced,<sup>292</sup> though occasional mention is also made of the protagonist’s dramatic and musical similarities with the lead female characters in Janáček’s *Jenůfa* (1904) and *Katya Kabanova* (1921),<sup>293</sup> Berg’s *Wozzeck* (1922),<sup>294</sup> Brecht and Weill’s *Die Dreigroschenoper* (1928) and *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (1930),<sup>295</sup> Shostakovich’s *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (1934),<sup>296</sup> Zimmermann’s *Die Soldaten* (1965),<sup>297</sup> and Turnage’s *Anna Nicole* (2011).<sup>298</sup> Some critics hone in on Bell and Ackroyd’s noteworthy application of the chorus, pointing to its function in works such as Britten’s *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946)<sup>299</sup> and Charpentier’s *Louise* (1900)<sup>300</sup> by means of contextualization.

<sup>286</sup> Loomis, George. “Bell’s Bleak if Engaging New Opera” in: *The New York Times*: Music Section. 24 October 2013.

<sup>287</sup> Nine, Keris. “Bell – A Harlot’s Progress” in: *Opera Journal*. 4 November 2013.

<sup>288</sup> See: Loomis, George. “Bell’s Bleak if Engaging New Opera” in: *The New York Times*: Music Section. 24 October 2013.

<sup>289</sup> Rothschild, Thomas. “Der Moloch Großstadt” in: *Faust Kultur*. 13 October 2014.

<sup>290</sup> Irurzun, José. “Iain Bell’s *A Harlot’s Progress*, An Opera to be Reckoned With” in: *Seen and Heard International*. 24 October 2013.

<sup>291</sup> Rothschild, Thomas. “Der Moloch Großstadt” in: *Faust Kultur*. 13 October 2014.

<sup>292</sup> See: Nine, Keris. “Bell – A Harlot’s Progress” in: *Opera Journal*. 4 November 2013; Troger, Dominik. “Drastisch dräuendes Dirnen-Drama” in: *Oper in Wien*. 13 October 2014; Brug, Manuel. “Mädchen, die fallen, und Mädchen, die schießen” in: *Die Welt*: Kultur. 23 October 2013; Burianek, Stephan. “A Harlot’s Progress premiered at the Theater an der Wien” in: *Torial*. 13 October 2013; Fairman, Richard. “A Harlot’s Progress, Theater an der Wien, Vienna – review” in: *Financial Times*: Arts. 15 October 2013.

<sup>293</sup> Parker, Moore. “An exciting premiere” in: *The Opera Critic*. 24 October 2013.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Rothschild, Thomas. “Der Moloch Großstadt” in: *Faust Kultur*. 13 October 2014.

<sup>296</sup> Nine, Keris. “Bell – A Harlot’s Progress” in: *Opera Journal*. 4 November 2013.

<sup>297</sup> Tošić, Ljubiša. “Eine Londoner Frauenvernichtung” in: *Der Standard*: Kultur: Bühne. 15 October 2013.

<sup>298</sup> Nine, Keris. “Bell – A Harlot’s Progress” in: *Opera Journal*. 4 November 2013.

<sup>299</sup> Troger, Dominik. “Drastisch dräuendes Dirnen-Drama” in: *Oper in Wien*. 13 October 2014.

<sup>300</sup> Reininghaus, Frieder. “Ganz schön verdorben: Die Uraufführung von Iain Bells ‘A Harlot’s Progress’ im Theater an der Wien” in: *Neue Musikzeitung* 14 October 2013.

Though references to Stravinsky's operatic treatment of Hogarth's *Rake's Progress* prints are frequent, musical and stylistic comparisons primarily appear in reviews of greater length. These tend to identify basic dramaturgical similarities between the cycles<sup>301</sup> before arguing a value judgement of one opera's superiority over the other. Those reviewers who prefer Stravinsky's treatment tend to aim their criticism at the *Harlot's Progress* libretto, proposing variously that Ackroyd and Bell either interpreted Hogarth's original content too literally<sup>302</sup> or lacked nuance in their interpretation.<sup>303</sup> Generally, however, the text of *A Harlot's Progress* is praised in terms such as "superb [...] a marvel of drama and concision"<sup>304</sup> and "raffiniert deftig, sehr bühnentauglich",<sup>305</sup> and its author referenced as a "historian and author",<sup>306</sup> "playwright and novelist"<sup>307</sup> and "London-Chronist"<sup>308</sup> of well-established renown.

Owing, perhaps, to *A Harlot's Progress* being Iain Bell's premiere operatic work, many reviewers attempt to identify the young composer's stylistic influences in order to articulate his musical aesthetic. Comparisons to Benjamin Britten and Igor Stravinsky occur most frequently,<sup>309</sup> with occasional mention of contemporary British

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<sup>301</sup> "Ob man bei Bells Werk an Strawinski denken wird? Immerhin geht es da wie dort um den Niedergang eines Individuums, verdorben vom düsteren Moloch London." From: Irrgeher, Christoph. "Zumba kommt in meiner Oper nicht vor" in: *Wiener Zeitung*: Kultur: Bühne. 10 October 2013.

<sup>302</sup> "Was macht Igor Strawinskis Oper 'A Rake's Progress', das ebenfalls auf einer Hogarth'schen Kupferstichserie beruht, für den Zuschauer interessant? Nick Shadow, der Teufel, mit dem das Libretto auf für das Publikum immer wieder überraschende Weise Gesellschaftskritik und Märchenmotive verknüpft. Was macht 'A Harlot's Progress' mit Fortdauer des Abends immer uninteressanter? Dass das Stück förmlich an der Hogarth'schen Bilderfolge klebt und Moll Hackabouts trostloses Prostituierten-Schicksal abläuft wie ein belletristischer Undercover-Aufklärungsroman: Für diese Londoner Sexarbeiterin gibt es kein Entrinnen – nicht einmal der Teufel schaut bei ihr vorbei." From: Troger, Dominik. "Drastisch dräuendes Dirnen-Drama" in: *Oper in Wien*. 13 October 2014.

<sup>303</sup> "The main difference between the Auden/Kallman/Stravinsky depiction of such a wretched descent and the Ackroyd/Bell treatment is subtlety. Whereas *The Rake's Progress* is an opera full of beautiful, delicate, and tragic moments as the protagonist falls victim to the devil within and without, *The Harlot's Progress* bluntly tells the audience how horrible it was to be poor in London in the 18th Century." From: Smith, Caitlin. "Sexist portrayal of poverty in *Harlot's Progress* at Theater an der Wien" in: *I Care If You Listen*. 30 October 2013.

<sup>304</sup> Irurzun, José. "Iain Bell's *A Harlot's Progress*, An Opera to be Reckoned With" in: *Seen and Heard International*. 24 October 2013.

<sup>305</sup> Mus. "'A Harlot's Progress': London schluckt seine armen Mädchen" in: *Die Presse*: Kultur. 14 October 2013; Musil, Stefan. "Londons neues Opernelend" in: *Tiroler Tageszeitung*: Kultur: Bühne. 15 October 2013.

<sup>306</sup> Nine, Keris. "Bell – *A Harlot's Progress*" in: *Opera Journal*. 4 November 2013.

<sup>307</sup> Irurzun, José. "Iain Bell's *A Harlot's Progress*, An Opera to be Reckoned With" in: *Seen and Heard International*. 24 October 2013.

<sup>308</sup> Jarolin, Peter. "Wenn Gier und brutaler Sex in der Untergang führen: Iain Bells Oper 'A Harlot's Progress' überzeugt an der Wien auch dank Diana Damrau." In: *Kurier*: Kultur/Bühne. 14 October 2013.

<sup>309</sup> See: Reininghaus, Frieder. "Absturz einer Geliebten ins gesellschaftliche Abseits" in: *Deutschlandfunk*: Kultur. 14 October 2013; VanderHart, Chanda. "Iain Bell's *A Harlot's Progress* enjoys a strong debut at Theater an der Wien" in: *Bachtrack*. 17 October 2013.

composer George Benjamin.<sup>310</sup> Some reviews forego an attempt to trace the specific stylistic gestures of other composers, instead labeling Bell's composition with abstract terms such as "neo-veristisch [...] naiv-schwelgerisch",<sup>311</sup> "asketisch",<sup>312</sup> "aufgeraute Retroromanik mit atonaler Glasur",<sup>313</sup> "meist tonal",<sup>314</sup> "grundsätzlich [von] geweitete Tonalität [vorgeherrscht]",<sup>315</sup> and "free tonal".<sup>316</sup>

"Iain Bells Musik entwickelt sich aus vielen Traditionen und versteht es vorzüglich, in freier Tonalität klangsinnlich auf textliche Emotionen zu reagieren und diese in einem für viele verständlichen musikalischen Konnex zu intensivieren."<sup>317</sup>

George Loomis of *The New York Times* also attempts to define the nature of Bell's tonality, noting that his orchestration "tempers the astringency of a modernist style with carefully judged sonorities and a fondness for melodic figures that through repetition give the music a quasi-tonal feeling."<sup>318</sup> A number of reviewers point to the "almost-constant growl from the low range of the orchestra"<sup>319</sup> punctuated by "Akzenten und Einwüfen von Holz, Blech, Schlagzeug und [...] Harfe",<sup>320</sup> combining to create an "uneasy dissonance"<sup>321</sup> that reaches its climax simultaneously with the dramatic and musical trajectory of the opera's central figure. Several critics point to the score's "lange"<sup>322</sup>, "elegant-abstrakte Linien für Stimme"<sup>323</sup> as indication of "an

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<sup>310</sup> See: Reininghaus, Frieder. "Absturz einer Geliebten ins gesellschaftliche Abseits" in: *Deutschlandfunk: Kultur*. 14 October 2013; Irurzun, José. "Iain Bell's *A Harlot's Progress*, An Opera to be Reckoned With" in: *Seen and Heard International*. 24 October 2013.

<sup>311</sup> Stürz, Franzisca. "Schonungslose Passion einer Hure" in: *Deutschlandradio Kultur*. 13 October 2013.

<sup>312</sup> Tošić, Ljubiša. "Eine Londoner Frauenvernichtung" in: *Der Standard: Kultur: Bühne*. 15 October 2013.

<sup>313</sup> Brug, Manuel. "Mädchen, die fallen, und Mädchen, die schießen" in: *Die Welt: Kultur*. 23 October 2013.

<sup>314</sup> Mus. "'A Harlot's Progress': London schluckt seine armen Mädchen" in: *Die Presse: Kultur*. 14 October 2013.

<sup>315</sup> Tošić, Ljubiša. "Eine Londoner Frauenvernichtung" in: *Der Standard: Kultur: Bühne*. 15 October 2013.

<sup>316</sup> For Bell's response to the assignation of the term "free tonal" to his music, see the personal interview from 25 October 2013 in Appendix 1.2.

<sup>317</sup> Wruss, Michael. "Die grausame Abwärtsspirale bis in den einsamen Tod" in: *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten: Kultur: Musik*. 15 October 2013. Stable

<sup>318</sup> Loomis, George. "Bell's Bleak if Engaging New Opera" in: *The New York Times: Music Section*. 24 October 2013.

<sup>319</sup> Smith, Caitlin. "Sexist portrayal of poverty in Harlot's Progress at Theater an der Wien" in: *I Care If You Listen*. 30 October 2013.

<sup>320</sup> Mus. "'A Harlot's Progress': London schluckt seine armen Mädchen" in: *Die Presse: Kultur*. 14 October 2013.

<sup>321</sup> VanderHart, Chanda. "Iain Bell's *A Harlot's Progress* enjoys a strong debut at Theater an der Wien" in: *Bachtrack*. 17 October 2013.

<sup>322</sup> Mus. "'A Harlot's Progress': London schluckt seine armen Mädchen" in: *Die Presse: Kultur*. 14 October 2013.

<sup>323</sup> Tošić, Ljubiša. "Eine Londoner Frauenvernichtung" in: *Der Standard: Kultur: Bühne*. 15 October 2013.

evident grounding in writing for the voice”<sup>324</sup> and a deftness in applying its underscoring to achieve dramatic effect. The result, according to José Irurzun of *Seen and Heard International*, is a musical aesthetic “much more accessible than that of some other contemporary composers...[one that] mirrors the drama of the libretto and holds the audience’s interest”.<sup>325</sup>

Reviews of the production elements of opera’s premiere mostly credit set designer Mathis Neidhardt and costume designer Sybille Gädeke for creating a fitting environment without interfering with the piece’s inherent drama. Described as “simple and striking”,<sup>326</sup> the “höchst solide Inszenierung”<sup>327</sup> received praise for achieving a balance of context and commentary. Gädeke’s costumes apply historicizing references thoughtfully, acknowledging the piece’s eighteenth-century origins while incorporating elements of contemporary designers such as Vivianne Westwood<sup>328</sup> in order to extrapolate the narrative’s sense of timelessness.<sup>329</sup> Neidhardt’s sets echo Hogarth’s graphic manipulation of vanishing points and encroaching horizons, depicting steadily enclosing walls and a progressive accumulation of filth:

“Besides the falling ash, each scene is marked by a new wall, progressively penning Moll into smaller and more depressing spaces. The fifth scene even resembles an animal stall, with wooden planks partially white-washed, a wire flap-door and a half-foot of black soot on the ground, calling to mind mud or worse.”<sup>330</sup>

According to *Die Presse*, these elements combined to provide Jens-Daniel Herzog with a “brauchbares Vehikel [...worauf er] lässt reichlich kopulieren und schlagen, leiden und sterben”.<sup>331</sup> While the director receives praise from George Loomis of *The New York Times* for “reinforcing” the opera’s own inherent “brutality” through his

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<sup>324</sup> Parker, Moore. “An exciting premiere” in: *The Opera Critic*. 24 October 2013.

<sup>325</sup> Irurzun, José. “Iain Bell’s *A Harlot’s Progress*, An Opera to be Reckoned With” in: *Seen and Heard International*. 24 October 2013.

<sup>326</sup> Fairman, Richard. “A Harlot’s Progress, Theater an der Wien, Vienna – review” in: *Financial Times: Arts*. 15 October 2013.

<sup>327</sup> Musil, Stefan. “Londons neues Opernelend” in: *Tiroler Tageszeitung: Kultur: Bühne*. 15 October 2013.

<sup>328</sup> See Appendices 1.3., 3., and 4.

<sup>329</sup> See: Troger, Dominik. “Drastisch dräuendes Dirnen-Drama” in: *Oper in Wien*. 13 October 2014; Ender, Stefan. “Der Komponist als Enthusiast” in: *Der Standard: Kultur: Bühne*. 11 October 2013; Wagner, Renate. “Theater an der Wien: A Harlot’s Progress” in: *Der neue Merker*. 13 October 2013; Burianek, Stephan. “A Harlot’s Progress premiered at the Theater an der Wien” in: *Torial*. 13 October 2013.

<sup>330</sup> VanderHart, Chanda. “Iain Bell’s *A Harlot’s Progress* enjoys a strong debut at Theater an der Wien” in: *Bachtrack*. 17 October 2013.

<sup>331</sup> Mus. “‘A Harlot’s Progress’: London schluckt seine armen Mädchen” in: *Die Presse: Kultur*. 14 October 2013.

“grimly efficient staging,”<sup>332</sup> criticism of Herzog pervades many of the *Harlot's Progress* reviews. His insertion of “Kopulationsszenen und Schmerzensausbrüchen,”<sup>333</sup> “Grausamkeiten und Grauslichkeiten,”<sup>334</sup> and “jede kleinste Möglichkeit sexueller Betätigung”<sup>335</sup> proved a polarizing aspect of the opera's premiere production:

“Doch muss am Ende unbedingt einer mit dem Holzsarg, in dem Moll liegt, kopulieren? Muss eine intensive Szene auch noch mit einem Rammel-Marathon am Bühnenrand ‘verziert’ werden? Herzog kann davon nicht genug bekommen.”<sup>336</sup>

Herzog's choice to show a male member of the chorus sexually debasing Moll's coffin in the final scene is cited by several critics as the final parting gesture of a cruel city to its latest fallen victim:<sup>337</sup>

“Aber Jens-Daniel Herzog war entschlossen, sich absolut keine Gelegenheit für Gewalttätigkeit, Coitus und Fellatio zu entgehen lassen—im letzten Bild müssen noch irgendwelche Kerle Anstalten machen, den Sarg von Moll zu vögeln, und ihrem alten Liebhaber, der hier eine Rede hält, macht ein junges Mädchen dabei zu eindeutiger Betätigung die Hose auf.”<sup>338</sup>

Several critics reference this incident in terms such as “degrading and unnecessary”,<sup>339</sup> “unrelenting [...] hectoring and monochrome”,<sup>340</sup> and Caitlin Smith of the digital magazine *I Care If You Listen* adds,

“The company provided no trigger warning for sexual violence either in its advertising material or house program; several people left the theatre hastily during the first act.”<sup>341</sup>

To a large extent, however, Herzog's “sometimes excessive crudity”<sup>342</sup> in his directorial choices was received as befitting the tenor and outlook of the piece.<sup>343</sup> Of

<sup>332</sup> Loomis, George. “Bell's Bleak if Engaging New Opera” in: *The New York Times*: Music Section. 24 October 2013.

<sup>333</sup> Stürz, Franzisca. “Schonungslose Passion einer Hure” in: *Deutschlandradio Kultur*. 13 October 2013.

<sup>334</sup> Wagner, Renate. “Theater an der Wien: A Harlot's Progress” in: *Der neue Merker*. 13 October 2013.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Tošić, Ljubiša. “Eine Londoner Frauenvernichtung” in: *Der Standard*: Kultur: Bühne. 15 October 2013.

<sup>337</sup> See: Becker, Roberto. “Gutes Mädchen, böse Welt” in: *Online Musik Magazin*. 13 October 2013.

<sup>338</sup> Wagner, Renate. “Theater an der Wien: A Harlot's Progress” in: *Der neue Merker*. 13 October 2013.

<sup>339</sup> Smith, Caitlin. “Sexist portrayal of poverty in Harlot's Progress at Theater an der Wien” in: *I Care If You Listen*. 30 October 2013.

<sup>340</sup> Parker, Moore. “An exciting premiere” in: *The Opera Critic*. 24 October 2013.

<sup>341</sup> Smith, Caitlin. “Sexist portrayal of poverty in Harlot's Progress at Theater an der Wien” in: *I Care If You Listen*. 30 October 2013.

<sup>342</sup> Irurzun, José. “Iain Bell's *A Harlot's Progress*, An Opera to be Reckoned With” in: *Seen and Heard International*. 24 October 2013.

<sup>343</sup> See: Troger, Dominik. “Drastisch dräuendes Dirnen-Drama” in: *Oper in Wien*. 13 October 2014; Reininghaus, Frieder. “Absturz einer Geliebten ins gesellschaftliche Abseits” in: *Deutschlandfunk*.

those reviewers who consider this application of “XXX-Handlungen”<sup>344</sup> simply a method of exposing the opera’s inherent humor and horror simultaneously, a different question arises: one of the narrative’s contemporary relevance. Writing for *Bach Track*, Chanda VanderHart labels the subject matter “tired and predictable,” asking where its moral lies:

“What can we take away from this story other than a fervent wish not to live in 18<sup>th</sup>-century London?”<sup>345</sup>

*I Care If You Listen*’s Caitlin Smith goes one step further, labeling Bell and Ackroyd’s opera—indeed, Hogarth’s original *Harlot’s Progress* series—a “sexist” resetting of the *Rake’s Progress* narrative:

“As the plot of The Harlot’s Progress paintings is very similar to The Rake’s Progress, so the downfall of the protagonist in Bell’s opera mirrors that of Stravinsky’s. Both this new opera asks: what would have happened, were Tom Rakewell a woman? The answer is (in order of appearance): sex, violence, sexual violence, pregnancy, syphilis, madness, and an agonizing death. [...] Watching Moll Hackabout be repeatedly raped on stage, as she suffered the madness of syphilis for the sin of wanting to be rich, did not evoke any inquiry about the nature of poverty as experienced specifically by women... [...] An opera based on a morality tale should further a social discussion. It is not enough anymore to merely regurgitate a tale exactly as a man three centuries ago thought it useful, especially when it was a man preaching about how women should live their lives. If we are to be shown someone’s wretched downfall, let there be a reason for this depiction: why is it useful for us to see this character’s terrible life? Good art can give us insight into the nature and causes of human suffering. Bad art simply goes through the motions of discomfort without asking why. In a story as oft-repeated in opera as this one, the bar is set very high. Unfortunately, all elements of this opera lacked the necessary depth to add anything to this conversation.”<sup>346</sup>

Smith’s faulty account of the origin of Hogarth’s two *Progress* series aside, this reading of the *Harlot* narrative as a criticism solely directed at the titular character discounts the novel genius of the artist’s biting social commentary and ignores reference—both in the paintings and in the operas—to public culpability for Moll’s fate. This is precisely where the piece’s contemporary relevance lies, as identified by Frieder Reininghaus (writing for *Die Neue Musikzeitung* and *Deutschlandfunk*), who

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Kultur. 14 October 2013; Jarolin, Peter. “Wenn Gier und brutaler Sex in der Untergang führen: Iain Bells Oper ‘A Harlot’s Progress’ überzeugt an der Wien auch dank Diana Damrau.” In: *Kurier*. Kultur/Bühne. 14 October 2013; Loomis, George. “Bell’s Bleak if Engaging New Opera” in: *The New York Times*: Music Section. 24 October 2013.

<sup>344</sup> Troger, Dominik. “Drastisch dräuendes Dirnen-Drama” in: *Oper in Wien*. 13 October 2014.

<sup>345</sup> VanderHart, Chanda. “Iain Bell’s *A Harlot’s Progress* enjoys a strong debut at Theater an der Wien” in: *Bachtrack*. 17 October 2013.

<sup>346</sup> Smith, Caitlin. “Sexist portrayal of poverty in Harlot’s Progress at Theater an der Wien” in: *I Care If You Listen*. 30 October 2013.

also argues that the audience's enthusiastic approval may contradict the sociocritical intention of Hogarth's graphics:

“Repräsentiert sieht der Komponist deren Sound durch seine Art, eine ‘sechzigköpfige Hydra’ zu bedienen—mit diesem Ungeheuer meint Bell das Orchester, das ‘passenderweise aus dem Graben, dem Untergrund, heraus seinen Klang verströmt’. Der Wille zum Strömen bzw. Strömenlassen mag einerseits wesentlich den freundlichen Zuspruch des Premierenpublikums ausgelöst haben, andererseits ist er der Logik und Intention der Hogarth'schen Stiche diametral entgegengesetzt. Wieder einmal ein Missverständnis als Voraussetzung von Oper?”<sup>347</sup>

Reininghaus further argues that Bell and Ackroyd's opera roots itself firmly within the storyline of a specific eighteenth-century character and her environs, relying upon the audience's extrapolation to draw conclusions about the piece's issues in a contemporary context rather than including current-day Moll-equivalents onstage:

“Iain Bell wählte ein ausgesprochen delikates und gesellschaftlich fortdauernd brisantes Sujet. Es geht um Auf- und Abstieg einer jungen Frau vom Lande auf dem großstädtischen Liebesmarkt. Womöglich hätte es der historischen Kostümierung gar nicht bedurft, um vor Augen zu führen, dass eine Hure nicht von vorneherein eine Hure ist, sondern dazu gemacht wird. Oder um in Erinnerung zu rufen, dass es im Sex-Business manierlichere und brutalere Geschäftsformen gibt. Aber da die Oper nun einmal von Anfang an eine zutiefst historisch geprägte Kunstform ist, erscheint allgemein als akzeptabel, dass die ausgesungene und massiv orchestergestützte Verhandlung einer kurzen Glamourzeit der Miss Molly, ihr Abstieg auf den Straßenstrich, ihr Absturz ins gesellschaftliche Abseits und der triste Tod ohne Bezugnahme auf heutige Londoner oder Wiener Karrieren gestaltet wurde.”<sup>348</sup>

Several reviews voice similar wishes for a more ostentatious modernization of the main character—citing that “Molls Frauenschicksal aktueller ist denn je”<sup>349</sup> and is “keineswegs unzeitgemäß”<sup>350</sup>—and propose that her story be represented variously as a “verführte[s] Ostblock-Mädchen”,<sup>351</sup> that the modern equivalent of Mother Needham could be represented by the “Techniken des Internets”,<sup>352</sup> or that Moll's syphilis “leicht [...] durch HIV oder AIDS zu ersetzen [ist]”.<sup>353</sup> While “modernizing” production suggestions such as these also run the risk of specifying the opera's content beyond a broader applicability, the critics who propose them are tapping into

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<sup>347</sup> Reininghaus, Frieder. “Ganz schön verdorben: Die Uraufführung von Iain Bells ‘A Harlot's Progress’ im Theater an der Wien” in: *Neue Musikzeitung* 14 October 2013.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

<sup>349</sup> Troger, Dominik. “Drastisch dräuendes Dirnen-Drama” in: *Oper in Wien*. 13 October 2014.

<sup>350</sup> Stürz, Franzisca. “Schonungslose Passion einer Hure” in: *Deutschlandradio Kultur*. 13 October 2013.

<sup>351</sup> Wagner, Renate. “Theater an der Wien: A Harlot's Progress” in: *Der neue Merker*. 13 October 2013.

<sup>352</sup> Rothschild, Thomas. “Der Moloch Großstadt” in: *Faust Kultur*. 13 October 2014.

<sup>353</sup> Stürz, Franzisca. “Schonungslose Passion einer Hure” in: *Deutschlandradio Kultur*. 13 October 2013.

a deeper issue concerning the piece's contemporary relevance. As *Faust Kultur's* Thomas Rothschild points out, the *Harlot* narrative

“...lässt sich der Stoff von ‘A Harlot's Progress’ in die Tradition der Warnungen vor den Gefahren und Abgründen der Großstadt im Zeitalter der Industrialisierung orten, als Mahnung vor den Drohungen sittlichen Verfalls.”<sup>354</sup>

While it would be something of a forced syllogism to suggest that Bell and Ackroyd seek to criticize the early twenty-first century development of a new industrialism by addressing this subject matter in 2013, their main character does, no doubt, fall victim to a system with an eerie resemblance to that of early-industrial societies of today. Their criticism, like Hogarth's, is aimed at an environment in which people become commodities to be consumed, feeding an increasingly ravenous and indiscriminate social predation: one that emerges as a direct, visceral mass need to serve one's own interests—to eat or be eaten—in the desperate void of a greater social order. Moll's story is one of broad and flexible application, its universality deliberately underlined by the artistic decisions concerning the set and costumes in its premiere production at the Theater an der Wien, consistently reiterated in Bell's orchestration, and evinced by the persistence of Hogarth's narrative, still topical almost three hundred years after its inception.

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<sup>354</sup> Rothschild, Thomas. “Der Moloch Großstadt” in: *Faust Kultur*. 13 October 2014.

# Appendices

## 1. Interviews

### 1.1 Personal interview with Iain Bell, 18 September 2013. Conducted and transcribed by Margarethe Satorius.

Margarethe Satorius: What did the process look like between you and Peter Ackroyd?

Iain Bell: I'll go further back. I'd been working with Diana Damrau—well, I've known her for 9 years—and she's been singing my music since then. It's what started off as a small song cycle in Stuttgart—

MS: Was that the song cycle—

IB: "Daughters of Britannia"

MS: Exactly—right—

IB: "Daughters of Britannia" is a song cycle with five songs, each depicting a different British mythical or historical heroine—so Morgause, Guinevere, Lady Godiva—each one a different personality, and just to encompass her different personalities. And that was in Stuttgart, and she later called that out with Moll. I then wrote for another singer the writings of Queen Victoria, based on her own diary extracts and letters about her love for Prince Albert, her husband, from the day they met until the day after he died. And this—it was for mezzo-soprano—and I played it for Diana, which [*undecipherable*] before it was even premiered, which she premiered at the Munich Opera Festival in 2008, then she asked for another song cycle, and then I did an orchestral song cycle for her, and then the next progression was an opera. And I didn't hesitate when she asked. I spent some time, actually, thinking about theme—about what I would have. I spent a lot of time looking at British literature—so, the Romantic literature of Austen, the Brontës—nothing. For instance, well, I don't feel a novel makes a great opera anyway, since I think they're far too big—I think far too many characters, far too long dramatic arc. Novellas are a different issue. With 200 pages, you're talking the same dramatic track that gets built, but with a [novel] I don't think it works. And Shakespeare, no—again, I don't feel that every play needs to be made into an opera. I think that sometimes a play is just a wonderful play, you know, and a book is just a wonderful book. So I was kind of hitting my head against the wall, thinking of what to look for, and then a friend of mine—as happenstance, as all these things are—invited me to go to the Tate Britain in London. There was a Hogarth exhibit, and obviously I knew about *The Rake's Progress* through Stravinsky, and I knew about "Gin Lane" and "Beer Street", so I thought, "Yeah, OK, of course I'll go." And I—I saw the *Harlot's Progress*, and I'd never known of it before. And I think very few people actually do in our circles—it's been eclipsed musically by the *Rake*, I feel. People just don't know it's there.

MS: But when it premiered, of course, it was such a huge success—and then the *Rake* was after.

IB: So I see this series, and I think, "This is it." I always feel, personally, that the operas I enjoy the most are the ones that follow one character obsessively. [*undecipherable*] So you can see the real journey of a character—you can really

paint the characterization much more intensely when you're obsessed with Violetta, with Lucia—you can really characterize to a real specificity. And this was that. And I wanted to do a piece that would serve Diana dramatically as well—being the dramatic beast that she is—you've seen just through her marking occasionally, when she sings out—

MS: Especially the final scene before she dies, every time, before she dies, it gives goosebumps, even if she's marking.

IB: We had a piano Sitzprobe, and there were three or four in the room crying.

MS: Yeah—oh God, I believe it.

IB: But she sung out—so it was even more... So I see these, I call Diana up immediately, and I say, "I've got our pictures." But I had to make sure that no one else had done them, and no one else had, which was a gift—an absolute gift.

MS: A fresh source.

IB: Oh yes. And then I did some more research into the pictures—as you said, they predate the *Rake*—and they actually weren't written originally as a series. It was the third picture that was...

MS: ...so famous. Yeah—

IB: And I thought, "Well, I'll actually then depict the story of this woman." And it was the first ever comic strip.

MS: That's a good way to characterize it.

IB: I just think that it was the success of those, and the fact that they were being pirated so hugely, they led to the first ever copyright laws.

MS: Isn't that fascinating?

IB: So she said, "We'll do this—we'll do this," and it happened at the time that I was reading Peter Ackroyd's *Biography of London*, which is an outstanding, huge tome about the history of London to kind of contemporary, post-war and looking into the future. And I thought, Diana Damrau—and we're talking 2008/09—she was now a name, and she was a prima donna of many—at the Met, in Munich, and in Vienna particularly—I thought the opportunity might be right. So I emailed his agent, and began a few email exchanges, and he was on board. So that's how it happened. He wobbled a little bit, because he wasn't sure he knew what writing an opera was. I knew he'd written poetry, and I knew he'd written novels as well as factual, biographical things. With a little reassurance—and I let him look at some other libretti.

MS: That's interesting—so what other libretti did you give to him as—

IB: Well, English translations of *Traviata* and *Lucia [di Lammermoor]*, but also all of the Britten repertoire, *Manon* as well, *The Rake's Progress*—just so he would know what he would be compared to. As you know, they're completely different—

completely different beasts, intentionally so. And then, when he said, “Yeah, I’m gonna do this,” we met, and we very quickly had the same idea of what we wanted to do. I don’t feel personally that the Stravinsky piece is particularly in keeping with the spirit of Hogarth and the spirit of London. It could be anywhere—and that may have been his intention. But to me, Hogarth is about an unvarnished, raw, cynical humanism. But the most important thing is unvarnished—there is no veneer. And if you see a veneer, it’s the veneer that the middle class is showing off themselves. So we’re seeing them for what they are, for this façade. And I felt that the Stravinsky didn’t communicate that in the way I would have, had I done the piece. So we were very very keen to make it [*undecipherable*] very palpable—oh, like, Janacek times ten. That was what we wanted. We wanted it to be unrelenting; there’s a couple of little bits of dramatic respite with the Mr. Lovelace character with the sex scene when they’re [on the bed]? And then with the drinking song at the very very end. But, other than that, made by and large it’s pretty heavy. And that was the intention, because it wouldn’t be a long piece; it was only just over two hours. An audience can handle that.

MS: That brings up an interesting question, I think, in regard to the genre that you see this in. Because I’ve been watching the rehearsals, and reading your libretto, and looking at the engravings, and I think it’s interesting that there are a lot of tragic elements about it—undoubtedly—I mean, the gravity of the character’s fall, and the—

IB: —the syphilitic mad scene.

MS: Exactly. And how—

IB: —and the rape.

MS: Right. The rape, and that you see—unrelentingly, as you say—this descent into tragedy. And she can’t escape from it. And it’s got a lot of tragic elements from [French Classicism] and Greek antiquity—

IB: —Greek, definitely. With the chorus as well.

MS: Right! But at the same time, it’s got the humor and the kind of satirical wink of Hogarth.

IB: That’s what I wanted! I wanted it to be an observation and not a judgment.

MS: I mean, first off—just academically speaking—the elevation of her character is low. She’s essentially a—

IB: She was a seamstress. From York.

MS: Right, so she’s not someone of high noble birth. That disqualifies her from tragedy, technically speaking.

IB: It does in the true sense, yep.

MS: And in the engravings at least, he includes a lot of caricatures of people who were his contemporaries. So he's poking a lot of fun at these particular doctors, for instance—

IB: Gonson and—I've forgot their names because we didn't include them in the piece. Charteris is another one.

MS: Yeah—the two in scene 5.

IB: Yes. The doctors that are talking about her treatments. We chose not to include them because it was him doing that at the time rather than something that was integral to the story.

MS: So it was a little bit too specific for your purposes.

IB: Yep.

MS: But I think you're right—this sense, or the feeling, or the aesthetic of a bit of satire—

IB: Yes!

MS: —this is funny. There is humor in how dark this is.

IB: Yes! And that was—see, the Mother Needham character—I was very careful not to create ciphers or caricatures themselves, but well-rounded characters. And, I think it just so happens that as Mother Needham was a real person, in real life—Elizabeth Needham was a real procuress who was known to be so endearing and so lovely but also known to have a wicked temper if you crossed her—

MS: —and so like a predatory animal really—

IB: —and she was known for that. And she was killed in the stocks by being pelted with vegetables.

MS: *[laughs]*

IB: But that's hilarious! But see, it's the tragedy at the same time.

MS: Right.

IB: And I tried to take that on board. And you know, in their fight scene—you know, "It was you who betrayed me, bitch—you bitch!" It makes the... I don't know if you know the confrontation scene in *Maria Stuarda* by Donizetti, where he puts—he creates a fictitious meeting of Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I, and the furthest they get is "vile bastard." But this— *[laughs]*

MS: *[laughs]* This is like, "catty bitch!" And—

IB: Yeah—*[laughs]* This takes it to the next octave, you know? *[laughs]* But it was true, you know—you had these catfights. These were the opposite of unisex—these were co-ed prisons, where you had men and women in the prisons at the same time.

MS: It's just understandable, then, that—especially in your choral scenes, where you see a big mix of both genders onstage—that, then, you get that kind of fleshy bawdiness. I think that it calls for it, in many ways; and I think that, interestingly, your piece in many ways rejects the typical interpretation of these engravings as a “Lehrstück”—

IB: What is that?

MS: A Lehrstück is like a morality play—

IB: No, it's not. But Stravinsky did. Because it has the epilogue at the end.

MS: Exactly!

IB: Where they all say, “Well, if we were well behaved, this wouldn't have happened.”

MS: Or, you kind of get the same impression from *Don Giovanni*, where in the very tacked-on little scene at the end, it's like, “Well, this is what happens to bad people...”

IB: You see, but our intention to portray that was even inherent and visible—in fact, we put it *A Harlot's Progress* and not “The Harlot's Progress” because we—Peter Ackroyd and I—were very sure that this was just one of many. So not “the” harlot—she wasn't just one in particular; she was “a” harlot, and the cycle continues. It continues with her daughter.

MS: Right.

IB: So we didn't want to just isolate this as just one single event, but rather, this is what happened to them. The cycle continues. There's something that's in the plot summary I wrote, “The cycle continues.” Because it does.

MS: Right. Well, the kind of predatory animal that is London needs food. It needs to eat someone and spit them out.

IB: I also thought that every character within the piece is a product of London and their fight to struggle within London. Needham is a former prostitute, and—there was an aria that was cut, that was actually taken from the original “Harlot's Progress” opera.

MS: *A Jew Decoy'd*.

IB: Yep, from 1732? Peter included a few verses from that throughout the piece, and we only kept one. And there was an aria for Mother Needham, “At last, my youth and charms decayed like an old, experienced sinner/I follow the procuring trade, and train up young beginners.” And she was talking about that. But you know, her way of surviving in London is of dominating this coterie of women and of being a shrewd businesswoman. You see that in the staging that [Jens-] Daniel [Herzog] has done with her being with the chorus—you see her as, “This is my—” The chorus is always with her, as her minions. James Dalton is a product of his environment, in that he has to steal and he has to rob—he has to be violent—that's his way of succeeding.

Mr. Lovelace uses money; he's a successful businessman, and money is his way to dominate his surroundings. Moll and Kitty, and the other guys—well, I'll come to them—but Moll and Kitty are more tools rather than controllers, but they do what they can. And my concept of the multi-role—the bass role—he was a journeyman. He ended up being the coachman—he brings Moll in; he's the arresting officer—he carts her to prison; and in being the prison officer, he is then responsible for throwing her out. So I saw him as this...a journeyman who conveys her. I also chose a different way of scoring him.

MS: Oh yeah?

IB: We can go further into detail about...

MS: I would love to talk further in detail about the—

IB: —the vocal personalizations. But with him, because I saw him as this extra/out-of-time character—

MS: —kind of like the Time Keeper in the *Jew Decoy'd*?

IB: Yes!

MS: Kind of like an escort—

IB: Yes, yes! I saw him out of time—and therefore (and it also helps that we've got an amazing bass-baritone for it) his vocal lines are a lot slower. I took him out of time; he's got long-breathed phrases that I, singing along with him, even have to breathe half-way through. You know, I can't sing his lines. Because I wanted him to appear out of the action slightly.

MS: Interesting. I see a lot of similarities in some ways between his character and Kitty's—which may be surprising—

IB: In what way? Yeah, please tell me—because there are so many layers, I want to see—

MS: Namely, in that they both are kind of ushers between the audience and the action onstage. Kitty is more so—as you say—attached to Moll, but she also has this quality as a choral member in some ways. She comes out of the chorus in the staging from Herzog, for instance—

IB: Yeah—which is phenomenal—

MS: —and you have the sense that she almost is a tool within this tool chest that Needham pulls out and applies to this situation. And she accompanies Moll—

IB: —initially for capitalistic reasons—

MS: —right, according to Needham's wishes—and then develops some kind of heart or some kind of sympathy for her victim, essentially, and becomes in a way a representation of Moll's interests to us. She voices a lot of Moll's inner dialog, or

announces to us when Moll is in danger, when Moll maybe even herself doesn't realize it—

IB: Yeah, right—with the syphilis mark, for instance, or “Go with him, go—just go—go to York.”

MS: “You have to leave with him,” right. She's almost like a Teresias figure, in that she kind of sees what's happening onstage and the arc of what Moll's fate is going to be—

IB: Yep.

MS: —but can't necessarily communicate it to Moll, but she communicates it to us.

IB: Moll can't listen. Moll can't listen. She—to me, Kitty was the ultimate pragmatist. So she is—lots of her vocal delivery is very [*undecipherable*] because she's a quick thinker and lots of it is quick instruction. There are a few moments—like when she's dressing her at the dressing table—where I wanted to give her lyrical moments—and when she's witnessing the rape, where she can't do anything. But she is *the* pragmatist. She's with Moll because she's told, you know, she's going to make money for it. Then she develops a sympathy for her and also sees that her own future without Moll is completely hapless—

MS: Her lot is thrown in, in some ways.

IB: Right. She's got no other alternatives. She says it in the prison scene, “Where were you then? We had to dance for every filth that would have us. We had no choice,” when Needham accuses her of being a lesbian: “Do you want to drink from her dainty cup?” And I deliberately left it ambiguous as to whether she is or not, because she's accused of being that, so—because I hopefully see this having a dozen different productions in the future, that maybe that could be an interpretation.

MS: A play on that—kind of like an [*undecipherable*] romance thing—

IB: Yeah, you bet—yeah, yeah, yeah.

MS: I'd like to talk about Dalton a little bit too, actually—

IB: Please.

MS: His role I see in your opera as a much greater role than he plays in the engravings, obviously.

IB: Yeah, he was just a name. He was a known highwayman at the time, in that third picture. And she's only got his hatbox above the bed. “James Dalton”—that told the viewer that she was dicey, playing a dicey game. That's all we're to infer: that she hangs around with a notorious crowd. She also had a picture of Macheath in that picture, who was the thief from *The Beggar's Opera*, a very similar character. So, Peter Ackroyd and I knew we needed to create a love interest. We knew we needed to flesh out this character, because it can't just be that she's with an elderly fop. And he's not just an elderly fop, anyway—our Lovelace is far more than that.

MS: Well, in many ways—in at least four or five different ways that I’ve identified—he is the architect of her undoing. It’s because of him that she’s discovered; it’s because of him that her relationship with the Gonson-archetype, Lovelace, is brought to an end. He’s the one that brings Lovelace back to her and the reason why she ends up in prison.

IB: Pregnant.

MS: Yeah, obviously, that’s why—

IB: So we’re told.

MS: That’s what we’re told, is that that’s his child. It’s her love for him and his rejection of her that really sends her over the edge.

IB: Utterly.

MS: And, quite literally, in her vision, his coming to her and rejecting her again that really makes her snap.

IB: Yep. And initially presenting her with everything she wants to hear. Yep. So, with Dalton—he sees in her, initially, when she’s a courtesan—something that’s so very different from the sluts he sees on the street. He sees the wholesome girl, the country girl in her. And she sees an element of danger, and of fun, that she’s not getting with Lovelace. Let’s remember: she is not an innocent when she comes down to London. She has chosen to come down to London of her own will and volition, yet she gets duped. She was meant to meet with her aunt. She comes down of her own will, she’s inspired by the crowd and the “crinolines hanging”—she’s inspired by that. So she did have this element in her. She didn’t want to be in the sodden clothes, serving cows any longer. She says this. So he plays to this streak within her. He also tells her that he loves her, but I think she loves him a great deal more. He just sees someone who’s wholesome—more wholesome—than the hard-faced bitches he’s used to hanging around. But she sees a father to her children. [*undecipherable*] And on him, she projects then, when she wants to go back to London, all of these wholesome wishes that he’d projected on her, that he rejects completely. And he then becomes to her a projection of all of her dreams and her wishes, and also her self doubts. You know, for instance, in that final mad scene, and he comes to her and he says, “I’ve been away, I’ve been looking for a home for us,” and then he twists and says, “Actually, you’re dirty; and I don’t want anything to do with you.” So he then becomes a voice of—the dialogue. Her inner dialogue. Which is something that...I just find that so sad. And Nathan sings it just...

MS: Right. It just rips your heart out. You’re right. You know, I think there’s an identifiable kind of mini-progression of his character that happens just within her vision that almost mirrors—or amplifies, or crystallizes the progression of his character as a whole.

IB: I would say—well, I think that he’s more than a thug, because he does actually stand up for her when Lovelace offers to buy her back.

MS: And I feel like we believe him when he says, “Your beautiful face,” and “How could you do damage to her?”

IB: That's what I tried—he's not as invested in her as she is in him, but he is invested in her. And he's actually her pimp at this point—or something like that—while she's living with him, but he does have an affection for her, and I wanted to show that.

MS: If we could talk about how you do that musically, I would love for you to identify—

IB: I'd love to, please—have you got the score with you?

MS: I've got the score with me, yeah. You mention also the Journeyman... I have to give you a disclaimer: I am not musically trained. I'm a theatre dramaturg, and I'm trying to play catch up on kinds of musical gestures, but I've identified what I think are a couple of "Leitmotive"—

IB: Oh, there are several.

MS: And if I could get you to kind of usher me through those—

IB: Yeah, sure!

MS: I would love for you to show me where you see them.

IB: I mean, bearing in mind that this piece was so organically created that I'll not be aware of some of the ticks I may have developed—[laughs] No, honestly, because it came out so easily and so quickly.

MS: Yeah, you mentioned that you kind of did it in one big gushing go.

IB: Yep.

MS: How long did that take?

IB: This was my first opera...I moved house three times during it...

MS: Oh god.

IB: Yeah. Um...eighteen months? Including all—then I did *A Christmas Carol*, and that took me five and a half. So I'm now I'm moving from that into *Ripper*.

MS: Wow. You're exercised in churning out operas at this point.

IB: Yeah, I've got a year to write the next for Welsh National Opera. So, no—it's good! I can do it, and I was a little bit worried—again, I wrote *A Christmas Carol* so quickly, I thought, "Have I lost my quality control?" And then I get an email from Houston, from the guy who's the commissioner—Patrick Summers, who has been involved in 20 opera commissions in as many years...he knows his shit—and he was like, "This piece is...I love it. I love it, we love it." So I was relieved.

MS: What a thrilling—

IB: I was relieved. He said, you know, “Have you thought about this? Have you thought about this? But I’ll leave it with you,” is literally what he said, wasn’t it? [to Michael Batten] It was just, you’ve got some suggestions, but no corrections.

MS: What a relief that must have—

IB: I didn’t realize...this quality control, I didn’t realize that it was in my contract and I wouldn’t be paid my second amount until it had gone through! [laughs]

MS: Oh god! [laughs]

IB: [laughs] That I had this whole obstacle I had to jump until like two days before! But fortunately... So, no—I’ve got quick. I’m that quick. [...] I asked Peter Ackroyd to be brief—I made lots of demands dramaturgically, which we can come to—because pacing is a huge thing for me. [...]

MS: So, more trips to the gym? [laughs]

IB: Oh, yeah, constantly! You know, that’s been our life. Writing operas has been early morning gyms, back— He [Michael Batten] has been amazing. And he’s been making my meals for me, because I had— What happened with *Christmas Carol* is that I was going to be—2015 it was going to have its premiere, and I had 18 months to write it. I was going to start on the first of January this year. 27<sup>th</sup> of December, just [undecipherable]—I had an email from Houston on 27<sup>th</sup> of December, when no one contacts anyone ever, after Christmas, saying, “Could you do it a year earlier?”

MS: An entire year!

IB: Well, they can’t show it in June!

MS: That’s right!

IB: It’s *Christmas Carol*! [laughs] So—I said yes! You know, I’m thirty-two. I can do it. But it just meant that having his support was paramount in that—he just fed me. And just did everything I needed to facilitate this. Because I knew I wanted to get it done before—well, I said, “Let’s give it a year.” So five and a half months.

MS: That’s remarkable.

IB: I don’t—you know, it happens. I’m not boasting, but it happens.

MS: I can understand that if you feel compelled by something to either write or compose, it’s a process of—not expulsion, but—expression...

IB: No, it is. Excretion.

MS: Excretion is a good term for it. But, at the same time—god forbid, you know, you come to a point when it’s not coming naturally—

IB: Never—in my whole life as a composer—I’ve never had a dry date. In my life. Never. And I say to myself sometimes, “This is coming too easy.” Sometimes—like with *Christmas Carol*—I would have like two minutes in a day. Two minutes of music

in a day! And I thought, “I don’t know where this is coming from.” One thing, though, dramaturgically, going straight from the *Harlot*—nearly straight into *Christmas Carol*—is that the *Harlot* ends in the same place that *Christmas Carol* begins. So you have this cynical darkness at the end of the *Harlot* that is Ebenezer Scrooge. And then I was able to journey to a place of redemption at the end. So actually, they were wonderful bookends to one another.

MS: So it wasn’t the dark ending for you, necessarily—it was something that brought you, at least, as a composer, back out of the—

IB: It completely did! Utterly! *[laughs]* Utterly did. And I was really worried that I would tire of living Christmas. But I didn’t—because it wasn’t a story about Christmas; it was a story of redemption, and it was fun to evoke Christmas, and it just became a little *[undecipherable]*. And it just so happened that England had snowfall in April, so I’m having all this Christmasy weather around me—

MS: Yeah, that helps! *[laughs]*

IB: *[laughs]* Yeah!

MS: Putting you in the spirit! *[laughs]*

IB: *[laughs]*

MS: Yeah, I’m super curious to see your *Christmas Carol*—

IB: Simon Callow is directing; do you know Simon Callow? Huge, huge actor—Hollywood, theatre—he’s a big, big Dickens specialist as well; he’s done *A Christmas Carol* onstage and he’s directed loads of operas.

MS: Exciting. It must be interesting to get an actor’s perspective on the directing...how, so far, has the process been with Daniel?

IB: Well, what happened originally—initially it was David McVicar. [...] And there were lots of obstacles that were presented in order to secure him, and as a justification for not, then, being contracted. So, they then said, “Can’t get him.” Dates, finally, were the reason. But it’s cool, because that led to this going. And I thought, “Shit. A German director.” *[laughs]* And I really did—I was worried. His aesthetic is very kitsch, up to now—wonderfully aesthetic in that Richard Jones—I don’t know if you know of his work—very 1950s, very similar to that. Wonderful, but I didn’t know whether he would be the guy to put up the world premiere, so I flew out to Munich to meet with him, and beforehand created a mood board of images that I had in my mind. Not that—I didn’t want to create any kind of Diktat, but just wanted him to see what I was seeing as my mind’s aesthetic while creating the piece. And I said that to him: “This is just what I’m seeing, so you know where I’m coming from.” And it just so happened to be literally the same thing—

MS: You two were thinking the same thing.

IB: No, the two were one board. What you’re seeing is what I—a kind of Tim-Burtonesque, twisted, Vivienne-Westwood-esque take on the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which is what we’ve got.

MS: Those elements of the present wrapped up into this—

IB: With obscure kind of—with unusual staging. Yes, I wanted an abstract staging, because I don't want the first production to be—to look like *A Rake's Progress* set, to look like the *Puritani* set...I didn't want it to just look like the *Rosenkavalier* costume department being...

MS: ...remounting something—

IB: It's lazy. That's for—no offense—a provincial American house to do, if they ever did it. Or a college. That's—that's lazy.

MS: It's low-budget.

IB: And conservative. And I wanted this to be everything but conservative. But, if you noticed, that rape scene in the piece is probably the most...provoc—dark thing I've ever seen on any opera stage. I was shocked when I saw how Daniel had staged it. To the core. And yet, everyone is fully clothed. And I think that says a lot about the integrity of the piece and the choices Daniel's made. So really, in answer to your question, the collaboration with Daniel has been... I gave him this mood board, and he's just come back to me with something that I can't believe the integrity and depth. And I knew that it was a dark piece, but he has superimposed a layer of darkness that just utterly adds to what I'd wanted. Because I don't want it to be easy. It can be made easy for the next staging, if they kind of ignore certain things, and the rape takes place in another room. The Lovelace romping in scene two can be him chasing her around the room, then catching her and tickling her. It can be done—

MS: Whatever his perversions are.

IB: Yes. If the Met does it, or Chicago does it.

MS: But don't you think it would lose some of its gritty, sick honesty?

IB: Utterly. Utterly! Completely! It wouldn't be in keeping, but I would understand their choices. And likewise, I'm very happy for a revival—or, not a revival—a new production of it to take place in contemporary Russia, and for her to be a sex slave, and for her to have HIV. But I think that's another option, because it's telling a similar story, I mean, it's just that story transplanted to now. She could be a sex worker. She could be [*undecipherable*]. As long as the story's told. But I'm extremely pleased that this is the first because I think this is extremely true, as you say, to the context.

MS: This will set the bar.

IB: And hopefully there will be an internet broadcast of it now. A webstream.<sup>355</sup>

MS: That's exciting. When?

IB: Diana's just told me. And there's a rehearsal—there'll be a rehearsal<sup>356</sup>—I don't know if Daniel knows yet. This [*undecipherable*] the press. It's great, because it

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<sup>355</sup> The live webstream of the complete performance was broadcast on the Theater an der Wien website, and took place at 19:00 CET on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

means we'll have a DVD. And that helps with selling it. And all the general management are coming from around the world to see it—over a hundred have been invited—so, hopefully, it'll have a life after this.

MS: I'm sure.

IB: No, you know—one never takes things for granted. I'd love it to be in the repertoire. I'd love it to be in the canon.

MS: Exciting. And speaking of Daniel, to what degree did he design the sets—do you know?

IB: It had nothing to do with me; it was just his set designer.

MS: And when did you come into contact with his set aesthetic?

IB: He sent an email in January, you know—"What do you think?" And I was delighted.

MS: So there was already a model or a sketch—

IB: Yes, you know—I am responsible for what everyone hears. And I will take full responsibility for that. If the orchestra sounds crap, at the end of the day, it's because I haven't given them the correct notes to play. You know, I can't take responsibility for the visuals. Everyone else is engaged to do that, and therefore, I was very happy for them to have free rein and just ride with it, and just go with what they presented. And it was brilliant.

MS: I was kind of struck in the first meeting when he introduced the set to us with the model, how much it was a priority to show this kind of compression of the stage area—

IB: Which is fantastic, by the way. And the doors, as being a metaphor of her ability to escape.

MS: Right. And in going back to the engravings after seeing that mock-up, it became really apparent in the engravings themselves in terms of what Hogarth uses as visual devices to constrict the horizon line, for instance—the vanishing point in the piece—throughout the progression of engravings, like in 5, for instance: he splits the vanishing point. One of them is in the fire—

IB: Where the boy is playing with...

MS: Yeah, where the boy is pulling lice [from his hair], and then the other one is a closed door. The only possibilities of escape are essentially no longer open to you, or the flames.

IB: The flames.

MS: Right, yeah—and then the next one, of course, is her death. So I was really—

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<sup>356</sup> The *Generalprobe* (final rehearsal) was open to certain press channels and took place on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

IB: He's carried that on, yeah.

MS: —by the way he brings the space closer and closer forward—

IB: And I think that also—it was very important because every single member of the chorus and character has a different costume. If it were an open, fussy set design, it would just be too much, because everyone is in a different color, and entirely different suggestion of era. I think that clear, neutral set really helped the characterization be portrayed.

MS: Totally. It's almost a kind of a canvas upon which that chorus—

IB: —the characters—

MS: —becomes lively, especially since the opening scene features the chorus so prominently.

IB: And the final scene.

MS: And the final scene, right. You really get the sense of their being more of a living object than their environment.

IB: I wanted—yes. And also, I want them, in a way, to represent us, and rather than that sounding like a cliché I'll explain that to you: these pictures...these pictures— I mean, the paintings no longer exist; they were destroyed in a fire. Apparently a couple of them still do in private collections.

MS: Reprintings, though, right?

IB: No, they were actually paintings. It is claimed that they exist in private—

MS: Really?

IB: I'm hoping that maybe whoever has them may hear about this and may secretly invite me...

MS: Hopefully.

IB: I'll let you know.

MS: I'll keep my fingers crossed. *[laughs]*

IB: But, you know, these pictures, the prints now—the paintings notwithstanding—have been viewed by hundreds of thousands of people. Let's not say millions, but hundreds of thousands of people. Wherever they've been presented. And therefore the viewers, they're us—you know, looking at Moll. So they represent the crowd. They represent all the spectators—like me, when I was at the Tate Britain—judging. And I think he's done that, in that they are involved in the set changes, they're involved in her initial deflowering. I love how he's used them.

MS: It's an environment that is also personified. But they're also agents within her decline, so it's—

IB: And they take glee in it.

MS: Yeah, because they're getting fed, essentially.

IB: It's for their entertainment. You know, another pict— You know, I could just spend my life setting Hogarth paintings as operas. I won't ever do another one, and it's been touted, you know, I'll probably get offered if I want to do his *Marriage à la Mode*, I would never. I would never come back to this, because, you know—lightning shouldn't strike twice. But he's got another: *Bartholomew Fair*, which was like a fair, but also a freak show, where people would go and gawk at these freaks.

MS: So could your chorus be representative of this—

IB: No, I think... Well, actually they are! They are, aren't they? In the prison, I think, he's got some mutilated people. Because in the prison scene, on the actual painting, there's a woman with Down's Syndrome.

MS: And a black woman, which apparently would have been very exotic in those days—

IB: Absolutely. So they were.

MS: The whole spectrum.

IB: The Kitty character—actually, in the paintings, there were two maids. And we decided to codify it and have one. In scene three, the maid is syphilitic and she has no nose.

MS: And there's another one where she's got a spot.

IB: They all do, yeah. Even Moll does. In that picture, she's got one—which is what inspired the, "What is that blemish there?" But you wanted to show me some musical...

MS: Actually I would love if you would point out to me where you see a couple of the gestures—the Journeyman, for instance, you said you mostly distinguished him by his tempi?

IB: Yes, not so much by the conductor's tempo, but by the speed of his delivery. So here we have slower notes.

MS: And in terms of other characters, would you identify if there are any recurring musical gestures, or something that you see multiple times sung by one person—maybe themes?

IB: Let me go through... So—

MS: I may be sort of springing this on you. *[laughs]*

IB: No, it's fine! It's just—had I just written it—I finished it two years ago.

MS: So, one of the places that I see most of these gestures that I can identify is actually in the fourth scene—intro to the fourth scene. I feel like this instrumentalization has a lot of little musical gestures that I've heard before.

IB: Actually, this is a theme and variations on a later chorus [*sings*]. And that musical motif, the [*sings*—what is it? E E F D<sup>357</sup>. That, if you were to see me play that on the piano, the fingers go [*sings*—they're enclosing.

MS: Aha! That's awesome.

IB: And, you see at the end of this scene, for instance, when she says, "I thank God for you, Kitty," when they're getting kicked out of prison, I mean, we hear it throughout that whole scene, but we hear it played really gently and lyrically in the woodwinds. [*sings*]

MS: How interesting.

IB: OK, so that is her in prison. There is a London motif throughout the whole piece [*sings*]. You hear it in so many disguises throughout. First sung by Mother Needham when she sings, "stony-hearted stepmother."<sup>358</sup> So that's the London motif. It's four notes [*sings*]. Again, it's encircling, and there's no resolution. You don't get any sigh or any breath afterwards. Kitty's "poor thing," which we hear in her aria<sup>359</sup>: you hear that in the beginning of scene one when Needham finds Moll. So that comes throughout the piece. The "little chicken, chicken"—Mother Needham's first "little chicken, chicken"<sup>360</sup>—it's about Moll being a commodity, and it's throughout the piece. There's a love motif that we hear [*sings*]: "You sweeten my days."<sup>361</sup> [*sings*] It's love, but it's also sex. We hear that throughout. The last time we hear that is... The first time we hear it is [*sings*]: "sweeten", which is Moll's duet with Dalton in scene two. But we later hear it as an orgasm. We hear it after Moll dies; there's then a huge requiem, as I feel it. It's for the strings—she sings, "Moll's a..." and she doesn't sing "cold."<sup>362</sup> The strings have this two-minute interlude, just a straight piece of music in the whole piece, it's just [*sings*—rising all the time, these four notes [*sings*]: "You sweeten..."<sup>363</sup> So that's love—that's pure love again. That motif gets fetid and dirty throughout the duration of the piece, but then comes back in its truest form.

MS: How do you express musically the dirtiness of a theme?

IB: So, what you can do—the theme remains the same, true to itself. But you have the context, the other notes around it, actually pollute it. So you can then have a base which is completely discordant—filth. Kind of sound-filth. Or you can have much higher—repeated, but higher, at a discord with it. So that's just two of hundreds of different possibilities.

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<sup>357</sup> This theme occurs in the chorus' "Gaolers and gaoled" vocal line in the Act II, Scene 4 Interlude.

<sup>358</sup> This occurs in Act I, Scene 1.

<sup>359</sup> This occurs in Act I, Scene 3.

<sup>360</sup> This occurs in Act I, Scene 1.

<sup>361</sup> This occurs in Act I, Scene 2.

<sup>362</sup> This occurs in Act II, Scene 5.

<sup>363</sup> This occurs in Act II, Interlude 4.

MS: So actual interference by other notes.

IB: Exactly. Pollution.

MS: Noise pollution, or for instance, taking it a half-step down—

IB: Right—having it played with another note just underneath it, so that it crunches as it's going up. So it's these clusters of notes playing the same thing...

IB: ...so it's just completely [*undecipherable*]. And the other motif in the mad scene is the [*sings*] "Moll's a'cold" [*sings*]. We hear that throughout, entirely. That's her fate. And we hear that finally at the very very end, you hear it in the high strings in the overture, at the very end, after all the singing has been done, you've got the high strings playing the chinks [of light] coming in in the overture, and then we've got the [*undecipherable*] [*sings*]. So that [*undecipherable*] you can hear that. So that's just a few of the motifs that you hear throughout. There are loads more, but these are just the ones that I've got... And, you know, for instance, the overture, when you hear it played by the orchestra, the piano reduction is just atrocious. Nothing to do with the players, it's just—

MS: —not representative of the piece as a whole.

IB: Not at all! The material—I mean, there's dramatic planning behind the whole thing. So, it starts—the first bit of singing we've had is the "The morning of London is filled with the voices of buying and selling. It is the market where all come..." It's the [*undecipherable*]. And the orchestra—imagine part one, part two, part three, part four—the orchestra starts off portraying...it's dusk—no, dawn—very early dawn. It's still dark. The orchestra plays a very slow, very deep theme and variations on part one of this: "The morning of London" [*sings*]"The morning of London." OK, but really low, really deep, really slow. This is then interfered with; this is then dovetailed with some really high-pitched strings, and glockenspiels and flutes. That's shards of sunlight coming through. But they're not just shards of sunlight—they're Moll Hackabout, OK. They're her journey into London—they're clean, they're pure, they're unpolluted as yet. The orchestra then comes in, again playing deeply, but not as deeply as they were. They've gone slightly higher in pitch. They're playing part two of the chorus. OK, so they're playing slightly higher, there's more movement to suggest that London is in a further degree of waking up. That's then dovetailed with another few chinks in the strings and flutes to portray more shards of sunlight—Moll as well—but now these chords aren't as clean as they were. They're already just slightly dirtied; there are notes that shouldn't belong in there. And this continues to happen four times—so, the orchestra then plays the third choral section, which is then higher, faster, more movement, more bustle. The strings with the high shards come in again, even filthier than they were before. And the fourth and final time, when we expect the chinks of sunlight to come in, the chorus come in. Now what I wanted to suggest particularly—obviously the deep orchestra, and the orchestra itself—is that London's waking up. That the chinks of sunlight representing the sun and Moll, getting dirtier and dirtier, portray to me that even before she came here, her fate was sealed. She was already sullied.

MS: It also suggests and reinforces that cyclical element too, especially since you tie it into a day—

IB: And then it happens at the very, very end—you have these chinks of sunlight coming back—

MS: —when the daughter—

IB: (*sings the “Moll’s a’cold” theme*)

MS: —but her fate is the same, so she may also become a part of the chorus; part of this massive machine—

IB: No, I think it’ll be worse. She’s going to be a child prostitute. It gets worse.

MS: So not only does it cycle back upon itself, it’s a downward spiral.

IB: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. We’re talking horrible, pedophilic filth.

MS: What do you see happening to Dalton?

IB: Well, he dies.

MS: That’s right—he was on—

IB: But he was a real-life person who was—and that happened to him. As would happen, they eventually got caught. None of them were bigger than the system, none of them were. They were all caught in the end and killed. Kitty’s another, more interesting one. She will just become a prostitute herself, live in the gutter, attach herself to Needham.

MS: ...wait for the next Moll to come along.

IB: But with a child. You know, she’s beaten, and Emily is taken away from her.

MS: Right. And perhaps ends up in one of the orphanages.

IB: Yep. So that’s just the overture! None of this was by accident—this wasn’t just me trying to write pretty music to portray a dawn. When you hear it orchestrally—and you won’t hear it, I fail to hear it in the [reduction] [*laughs*]—

MS: [*laughs*] And it’s your music!

IB: [*laughs*] Yeah!

MS: Yeah, I’m really looking forward to hearing it with the orchestra.

IB: I’m not going to the first run. I’ve been told by my publishers it’s not good. They won’t have a clue what they’re playing—

MS: It’s more technical at that point anyway—

IB: It’s more them just getting it in their fingers. I hear that by the second day, they are amazing. So that’s when I’ll go. I’ll go the second round. And that’s when they’ve

got [conductor] Mikko [Franck]. It's [assistant conductor] Kalle [Kuusava] for the first. By the time they've kind of got my idiom in them. Because it's not an easy score. There's constant changes in timing—you know.

MS: And—instrument choices—like, how big is the orchestra?

IB: Sixty.

MS: That's big.

IB: Yeah, I had to bear in mind the size of Theater an der Wien's pit, which can accommodate ninety. But also, it's a dramatic role—Moll Hackabout is a dramatic role—and I call upon her to do very dramatic things with the voice. And this goes for all of the other characters: they're all essentially written voices. Marie McLaughlin can make an enormous sound, but she can't make it all that long. You know, same with Diana [Damrau]—that mad scene at the end is capable of unleashing thirty minutes of hell. I've made sure that she's not battling with an orchestra. She's resting in the prison scene; she doesn't have all that much to sing in the prison scene, so she can do that. You know, the prison scene's just about Kitty and Mother Needham, so she's well-rested by that point. Instrumental choices were dictated by the size of the pit, but also by the fact that we had a very lyric arsenal of voices, not dramatic voices.

MS: And—how many of those are strings? It sounds like quite a large string section.

IB: Let's see—four, ten, eighteen, twenty-six, thirty-two...forty-six.

MS: That's more than half.

IB: It's [*undecipherable*]

MS: And glockenspiel is an interesting addition.

IB: That's—we've got standard percussion—so, the percussion does... I was very keen to... We've actually got three percussionists. I was keen to portray bustle. And the way I've sought to portray bustle is with the percussion section. Be it the bustle in the jail, be it the bustle anywhere. There's always noise. There's very little peace. So, we have prison, the marketplace... So, for instance, the glock[enspiel] is usually used generally to kind of give a...a clarity...a [*undecipherable*]. We have tubular bells—so, church bells—used throughout, because London then was all the Nicolas [sic. *Christopher*] Wren churches...symbol of being the...epitome there of... We've got triangle, cymbals, a single timpanist...so we've got one—one that is completely—the timpani is throughout. So, the kettle-drum—the pitch-drum—throughout the whole thing. A huge role. That's always [*sings*—it's always—it portrays violence; it portrays everything. Added to that, then, we've got—in the prison scene—we've got a whip and an anvil.

MS: Really? I don't think I've ever heard those in an orchestra before!

IB: Yeah, yeah, it's a snap—it makes a kind of snap sound. And we have an anvil, to portray the beating of the rope—the hemp. Um...I don't recall having any other—that's enough. [*laughs*] And the harp! The harp is used very percussively.

MS: Percussively?

IB: Yeah, I don't really have many... Her lullabye aria notwithstanding, where I really use the harp as a harp, there aren't many times when the harp is just playing lovely arpeggios, like an angel, you know? I use it as a member of the percussion family. I use the extremes; not much in the middle—to add to the noise, to add to the noise.

MS: So traditionally a lyrical, very sweet instrument—

IB: I subvert it.

MS: [*laughs*] Very much in the spirit of the piece itself.

IB: No, really! [*laughs*]

MS: This is hugely helpful to giving me somewhere to enter into a negotiation of the music, because my dramaturgical focus on opera is relatively recent—so, like I said, music theory I don't really... But I can identify certain gestures and things in music, and I—

IB: Well, one of the things I did do... And we can continue having these conversations, so please don't feel that this is the last time you can get me. So, what I did with all of these things, particularly Diana's—it's a big role—was sit down and talk with them, talk about the roles they're singing at the same time that the piece was going to be premiered, so I knew exactly where their voices would sit. But also, talk about roles that they sing that are good fits for them, and also roles that are in the repertoire that aren't their type. So, for instance, Moll: I couldn't look to the English repertoire because there's no role in the English repertoire that is a *primadonna assoluta* role—this is what you would term this role: “*assoluta*”—which is a *primadonna* role that requires everything from the voice. Literally everything.

MS: Dramaturgically—she's onstage the entire time, as well.

IB: Almost, yeah. Pretty much. And I have no apologies to her, because that's what she wanted. She might feel like, “Shit! What did I [*undecipherable*]?” But it's what she wanted and it serves her talent. So, I looked (for Moll) for a template, and I couldn't—there was literally—nothing exists. Because, in the English repertoire, so much is done by [Benjamin] Britten, who was writing for his boyfriend, so you have amazing tenor roles, which are huge—like, *Death in Venice*—in their scope and scale, but nothing for the female voice which is this huge. [*undecipherable*] with the English repertoire; I'm sure you can show me exceptions. Even Britten's *Gloriana* isn't like this on the stage—that's about Elizabeth I. So I had to look to the Italians—to *Lucia* and to *Traviata*—both vocally. Mainly vocally, just to see what they do with Diana's type of voice, because no English composers have done this. For Dalton, I looked to *Billy Budd*, not only did I know that we had the best Billy Budd in existence, but it's that heroic, youthful sound I wanted. So I looked at the tessitura—which means where the voice sits—the mean space. Not the range, which can be very high and very low, but the place where it generally sits.

MS: Isn't that where—

IB: You're thinking of the passagio. So you've got a range—Moll Hackabout's range is from a low B-flat to a top E-flat, so it's two and a half octaves, which is very wide. But that's not the tessitura. The tessitura is where the piece generally sits throughout the entire opera. And that's often more important to a singer singing a role than the range, because they can push out individual notes, but where they have to sit—

MS: —for the entire two hours—

IB: And that's what a tessitura is. And—and this is Lucia.

MS: A Lucia tessitura.

IB: And James Dalton is just a tad lower than Billy Budd. Just—like, if you could get any lower. [Billy Budd] just sits a little bit higher. It's still a bloody high role; it's a very high baritone. Singers will look at it and say, "Ooh, that's high." But because he actually doesn't have all that much onstage time, I knew that the time onstage could be (punches open palm repeatedly) [*undecipherable*] and punchy, because he would have time to rest. Although it seems high, this was all taken into consideration. With all the roles.

MS: And, I have to ask—you mentioned in one of your introductory pieces to the character that this is really the first opera in which we see the mad scene in its entirety onstage—both the descent into madness and the madness. Was that a deliberate decision from the outset—

IB: Yes. Diana sings the bel canto repertoire. She's one of the biggest exponents [proponents] of it. The nineteenth-century Italians—and some of the French [composers]—were obsessed with the idea of madness. But it was a very polite form of madness. It was portrayed onstage, yes, but the *Lucia* mad scene is something different. There are echoes far more resonant with today. By and large, they're suggesting a delirium which is far more...today we wouldn't call it madness, we would call it...excitement...or—it's not madness. But one has to take into account the sexism at the time, the madness at the time. Therefore, lots is alluded to. You know, you don't see Lucia stab her groom, which she does just before the mad scene. You don't see—lots is left behind closed doors.

MS: Yeah, the process of getting to that point—

IB: Yeah, and I didn't want that. And also, none of... Moll Hackabout is medical madness. Syphilis. She has syphilis. The symptom of that is madness. And that's a clinically justified mad scene. Not just because she's been jilted or because her lover died.

MS: But because she's physically undergoing a depredation of her brain.

IB: Yeah, it's rotting. Yeah, and I wanted to portray this. And Lucia hears voices and sees a spirit—but that is left to the actor to portray it. Moll sees James Dalton, who comes back and we see him. And that's—for our sensibilities—I think I would be short-changing the audience if I didn't take her to that. We can deal with that. Another reason the *Rake's Progress* is so different from the *Harlot* is, in 1952 or 1953 when it was premiered, the audience wouldn't have wanted to see a scene taking place in a brothel. They wouldn't have wanted to see Bedlam Hospital. Now, if

I were to do the *Rake's Progress* now—which I will not [*laughs*—I would be able to do a [Peter] Ackroyd version of it. Mind, it would be a very different piece. So, I knew that the sensibilities of the audience were such that they could also take on board her envisaging her rape, which she does at the end in, “I’m bleeding, look—I’m bleeding!” She’s talking about her hymen, you know, being dislodged.

MS: And I think one of the things that struck me about that mad scene’s honesty—the fact that you really see this entire progression, it’s not like, magically, she’s in this very romantic, high-sitting, coloratura soprano, beautiful, “This is beautiful, right?” thing. No, it’s this horrible, syphilitic mad scene—

IB: The first thing she says is, “They’re weeping, they’re weeping—they’re crying for me.” I mean, those words are amazing [*undecipherable*].

MS: And especially fitting for the Hogarth prints, I think—because he was executing his art in a style that was very much determined by the French classicists, and the French school of history painting.

IB: It was.

MS: But depicting something that, according to the French [classical] unities, was absolutely not permitted, like having sexually transmitted diseases, for instance, and people dying.

IB: You know, I know that there are still opera houses now that will not take this piece. There will be American opera houses that just will not touch it. That’s how *A Christmas Carol* came about: I had a meeting with Houston, and they said...basically...

MS: “We love your music, but...” [*laughs*]

IB: [*laughs*] “Have you got any other ideas?”

MS: “We can’t put rape onstage.”

IB: They can’t—even the text is too rough. And I know that now. I know that certain opera houses just won’t be able to go anywhere near it. But it will arouse their interest in me enough to maybe commission other work.

MS: Right. [...] You’ve been so kind to talk to me at length.

IB: As I said, you can call me at any time and we’ll do this.

MS: I might take advantage of your offer. This is a really fantastic start for me...thank you very much.

**1.2 Personal interview with Iain Bell and Raphael Schlüsselberg  
(Répétiteur for Theater an der Wien premiere production of *A Harlot's Progress*), 25 October 2013. Conducted and transcribed  
by Margarethe Satorius.**

Margarethe Satorius: OK, so I have a bunch of questions for you, most of them are about music stuff—so, [to *Raphael Schlüsselberg*] thank you so much for helping me out with that. First off, I remember you talking about the “hangman’s noose” [theme]—and at the time I didn’t notate exactly when you said it was. Where is it?

Iain Bell: You first hear it—and it comes throughout, the whole time—my recollection, without looking at the score is the, “Where is he now, Kitty? Kitty? Where is James?” The opening [of the third] scene. We have I think three solo strings, dotted [*undecipherable*] [*sings*]—and it comes back. And it just responds to her death. Imminent demise. The whole aria she has in the prison scene, “I beat the hemp on which my love may hang...” You’ve got the whole thing—it’s that [*sings*].

Raphael Schlüsselberg: It’s almost like the first [*undecipherable*] three parts.

IB: Yeah, that’s it.

RS: [*undecipherable*]

IB: Utter. Utter. It’s a crunch anyways. And they’re all in seconds next to her.

MS: And it’s in the violins?

IB: No! First time it comes—no, I’m lying! No, that was it: “The crinolines, the carcasses hanging.” “Hanging.”

RS: [*sings*]

MS: That makes sense.

IB: So, it was intelligent. [*laughs*] So obviously it builds up to her aria, “I beat the hemp on which my love may hang,” then it’s in the mad scene...

RS: With the “carcasses hanging,” yes—but, it’s—

IB: It’s slightly lighter—

RS: It’s lighter, and the dissonance is more—like, fleshed out right there. Because then you have the sevenths, and here you have seconds, which build the intervals. [...] It was just that, lots of the pitches I’m asking of them are quite tricky—and the positions are hard—

MS: And they had to find it—

IB: Yeah, and they didn’t know, and they were playing flat-toned to start with, they didn’t realize I wanted them to go up, but now they do, so it’s all good.

MS: When did that sort itself out?

IB: Premiere. Not even at the Generalprobe. It was the premiere.

MS: Did [conductor] Mikko [Franck] work it at all with them between—

IB: I told him to—I told him...that was one of the biggest notes that I gave him was that I want... Were it a bigger orchestra of 20 first violinists, you'd have a sheen—

RS: Yeah, true.

IB: But because we only have 10, they needed to kind of make it more glossy.

RS: And he showed [*undecipherable*]. These were things he realized, and rehearsed, and did tell them, and just in the premiere, kind of, showed them a few things like...

IB: I guess it was just a question of him filtering information in a way that they can assimilate it.

RS: Yes, exactly.

IB: But that's a real—it's—it's in the mad scene as well, and...I don't think it's in the final.

MS: So it accompanies Moll? If it's not in the last scene?

IB: It's her—yep.

MS: Also, I've been looking at my list of accumulated motifs that I've been identifying over the course of the last six weeks or so—

RS: Sorry—"I beat the hemp" as well.

MS: Right.

IB: Yep, that's it.

MS: And when I talked to you at the Musikverein, you said that everything was kind of built out from "The morning of London..."

IB: Yep, I split that chorus into four sections. Each one is—what's the word I'm looking for—is attached to the opening orchestral strophes, because there are four opening orchestral strophes in the overture.

MS: Right.

IB: And it's a theme and variations, so I've stretched them out using different theme and variations techniques.

MS: And the ones that I feel like I've identified are "Welcome to London"—

IB & RS: [*sing "Welcome to London" theme*]

MS: “Emily” or “Daddy’s girl”—

IB: Oh, that’s—yep, you’re right—

MS: “Moll’s a’cold”—

IB: [*sings “Moll’s a’cold” theme*]

RS: Yep.

MS: ...and “trussed up and taken.”

IB: [*sings “trussed up and taken” theme*] OK. And “little chicken, chicken”—there’s lots of bass line work. That comes in loads in the bass.

MS: Yeah, in the bass and the tubas, right? And how is this—is this also derivative of “the morning of London” [*theme*]?

IB: No.

MS: This is a separate theme. And “stony-hearted”—

IB: [*sings “stony-hearted” theme*] That is the motif of the whole piece—that’s London.

MS: That’s London.

IB: Throughout the whole thing. And for *A Christmas Carol*—

MS: Are you citing it?

IB: Because there’s no resolution on that—and I wanted to use it very discretely. [*sings*] I’ve actually resolved it for *A Christmas Carol*. So it actually has a resolution.

MS: Oh, interesting!

IB: You wouldn’t know it, but for me—I wanted them to be brothers and sisters to one another. One travels from hope to despair, one travels from despair to hope—so, being the mirror image, I wanted *Christmas Carol* to resolve.

MS: Both musically and dramaturgically.

IB: Because I wrote it immediately after, so it’s part of exactly the same historicism for me.

MS: If your future work is going to center around London, too—

IB: And it is.

MS: —is this going to be a—

IB: No, it was just for these two pieces. They were bookends—they were... Not only did I write them back to back, they are mirror images of one another. That the darkness and the haplessness that *Harlot's Progress* ends with, is exactly the same place in emotional tone that *Christmas Carol* starts with. Ebenezer Scrooge's bleakness is the same, for me, as the funeral scene—the cynicism. So they are an extension of the same—she's a young woman, he's an old man—it's a complete... So she's a young woman whose undoing is at the hands of an old man; he's an old man whose redemption comes from a young boy.

MS: Right.

IB: Tiny Tim. So, it's the same musical journey.

MS: Right. In looking at the dramaturgy of *Harlot's Progress*, in a way it's cyclical. Because the story restarts at the end, in scene six, but it just depicts one—

IB: One chute.

MS: One chute down—one descent. So that is then redeemed by—

IB: And that was necessary for me more on a cathartic level than on a musical level: to be able to twin these pieces.

MS: [*laughs*] So you don't just stay mired in the depths of Moll's London? [*laughs*]

IB: Yep.

RS: So what are the four parts of the "London" part?

IB: [*sings*] "The morning of London"—part one. "Is filled with the voices"—two. "Of buying and selling" is three. "It is the market where all come to bargain" is four. And so the opening overture is [*sings bass line*].

RS: And also in the one, two, and four—the ambitus is always a tritone.

IB: A tritone.

RS: And the tritone is always [*undecipherable*] in the whole piece.

IB: Yeah. No resolution.

RS: So, [*sings*] "the morning of London", yes—"is filled with the voices—

IB: [*sings*] "...of buying and selling"

RS: The lowest note here is a B, and that highest note is an F. A tritone. The lowest note in this phrase is a C, and the highest is an F#—it's again a tritone. It's [*undecipherable*], but the tritone is there. And then the fourth—here, the lowest is a D, and the highest is an F. There's a tritone.

IB: I love the sound of—the tritone was known as the devil.

RS: The devil's interval.

IB: Because it doesn't—it's a direct clash, and I've always loved the sound of it. You know, medieval music theory—not medieval; in the medieval it was used a lot, but in renaissance music theory, there were so many treaties and musical laws against it, there was—you couldn't write two in a row, and there was so much legislation against that in music, wasn't there?

RS: Yeah, the thing is, the base for every scale is the clear fifth. That's the base for every scale. And if you have a tritone as the base, you don't have a clear fifth. So if you take the church scales, when you take it from C—from C to C, only the white keys, then you have C to G. When you take it from D, then you have D to A. When you take it from E, then you have E to E. But when you take it from B, then you have B to F—

IB: And it's the only one.

RS: It's the only one that doesn't exist.

IB: And I'm quite obsessed by that interval.

RS: Because you have B, C, D, E, F—and B to F isn't a clear fifth, and the next would be a G, and G isn't a clear fifth as well. That's why there is no clear fifth in this scale. But when you go from F, you have F, G, A, B, and then you have the C, so you have the clear fifth in that scale.

MS: I like the dramaturgical implications of that: that you're setting yourself in a world that is inherently irresolvable. Could that be why you're obsessed with this interval?

IB: No, I—just within this piece. It doesn't really come in *Christmas Carol* so much. Dramatically, I didn't want the piece to resolve. If you have too many cadences, if you have too many resolutions in a piece, there's a certain degree of dramatic resolution and relaxation. And I didn't want that. I wanted them to be unremitting. And the only real perfect cadence is the "of heath and hillside" at the end of Moll's big aria. And then he immediately comes in with, "What are you saying?" So she's immediately contradicted anyway. And the audience don't feel it, because he's beating up Kitty, and there's too much action anyway.

MS: It's kind of like the "coitus interruptus" in *Tristan*, actually, because—

IB: That's what I wanted.

MS: —they reach it, almost, and then it's "Rette dich, Tristan!"

IB: That's what I wanted—I didn't want... People have observed that the piece is almost too much for them, and that's what I wanted! I didn't want it to be polite. You know the *New York Times* guy said, "He almost beat us into submission." And I wanted people to be moved by it, but I didn't want them to be saddened. I wanted them to be relieved—for themselves, and for her—because they've just seen her go mad for thirty minutes. Bashing around, over to the door... I wanted them to look at her now and go... I wanted them not to feel so much sympathy. I didn't need her to be overly sympathetic. I was calling for observation and participation, not for

sympathy. And people kind of thought I did—but I don't think that *Wozzeck* requires sympathy; I don't think *Lulu* does. And I wasn't asking for you to like her. Some people do, but I wanted people to just be moved by watching it. Some people don't get that.

MS: It's almost like a Brechtian didacticism—

IB: Yeah! It's Brecht. It's utter Brecht.

MS: And I think that Daniel did a really good job of—

IB: Well, he's in that school. By letting people—particularly Marie [McLaughlin]—by letting her be a ring leader, the way that she is, directly addressing the audience, that is extreme Brecht. Yes. I mean, that might be partly a performance technique that he's kind of harnessed—he [*undecipherable*]

MS: Diana [Damrau] too—she almost directly addresses the audience a couple of times. Like in scene two—

IB: Oh, [*sings*] “She fears her situation...”

RS: But with Diana it's much more like a psychological thing. With Marie—Marie is doing theater. Diana is doing...

MS: Self-reflection.

IB: Right.

MS: In the intervals as well: the fact that all of the scene changes happen before the audience's eyes. I mean, we know inherently now that those sores that are being placed on her body are fake because we see them being put on.

IB: Mild Brecht.

MS: So in that case, that begs the question then: if it's a Brechtian “Lehrstück”, to what degree do you see it as didactic? Do you see it as a lesson, or...?

IB: No—an observation. Nothing...do you know what? *La Traviata* and *Manon* only scratch the surface. Yeah, Violetta Valery hung around with dukes and counts, but...that can't be the only operatic reality of the sex industry.

RS: And it's written for an audience that knew what is going on, for an audience that you didn't have to show anything—that they understand it. Nowadays you have to show it to make sure that people understand [*undecipherable*].

IB: And you have to do so politely. And I think that's why the *Rake's Progress* is so light. It's very prim, because in 1950, the audience could not have taken the Hogarth that I've shown. Auden and Stravinsky embraced a far more—just a wit, a Hogarthian wit—but to me, that's twenty percent of Hogarth. But they had to go that way because the social mores of the time were such that, had they explored... I mean, there's no Baba the Turk in [Hogarth's] *Rake's Progress*; he marries an old lady to get her money. That would have been considered obscene 63 years ago.

You wouldn't be able to portray that onstage, a young man was with a 70-year-old crone. So they couldn't be as gritty as our audiences have permitted us to be. Now, it so happens that we're in a city that might be one of the most permissive audiences in the world, which is why we've been able to go there. Because it's sexually a very [*undecipherable*] piece. But in fact, the brutality—and sexual brutality—in it, seventy percent of it has been imposed by [Jens-]Daniel [Herzog]. And were this to go to the MET, they could have exactly the same piece and only change a word or two. But it could play in a slightly more conservative place and have another truth. You know, the only actual necessary sexual acts are Moll and Lovelace—which is comedy—and James, when he rapes her. And at the MET, she needn't be riding him; she could be tickling him or kissing him and he has a premature reaction. The rape can be done offstage, and it can be just a Kitty aria. You know, it just so happens that Daniel chose to embrace those in the most realistic [way], and I say, I think that this was the best production for this house at this time. For this house at this time, this was it. But we did not need to see—we're not obliged to see oral sex in the prison, we're not obliged to see people having sex with the coffin, you know? And that extra veneer can be removed quite easily, and then have the piece played elsewhere. Because—I had a meeting with [Theater an der Wien Intendant] Roland Geyer yesterday, and he said, "My only criticism is that there's a great deal of compassion in the piece between Kitty and Moll, and even between James and Moll in the second scene." And he feels that maybe Daniel didn't explore that as deeply as he could have. Kitty and Moll in the prison scene as well, you know: [*sings*] "I thank God for you, Kitty." We've got a whole other thing going on with the prisoners leaving rather than letting them have that moment—that Suzuki and Butterfly moment. [Rather], there's a whole other thing going on.

MS: We're a bit distracted by this group of twenty—

IB: Which is great for this production in this house. But I think that's a valid point from Geyer: that maybe, the compassion in the piece is yet to be explored further.

MS: I'm curious about the way you found Daniel's use of space. You mentioned the rape scene happening in one corner while Kitty has her [*soliloquy*]. He does it two places; he splits the stage into two distinct areas twice. When she gets raped is one, and the scene with Lovelace and Dalton, when they're talking off [*to stage left*]. And actually, in the score you specify that in the prison scene that they should be in a separate location, or that they exit—

IB: But I had to take into consideration the size of the stage, and the technology the stage affords. As long as the dramatic... Although I anticipated that Diana's mad scene doesn't take place in the same space as the prison, the fact is that it's confined and dirty. And that's the environmental truth that was necessary, and it was maintained. It just so happened that he wanted to play the labor onstage, which meant that she had to stay there. And it didn't make sense to take away the prison wall, and...and adding an additional wall would have made the stage too skinny. And it wouldn't have made sense that they were back in the place they were before. But his use of space... I think his use of the chorus... The chorus in the first scene I think are underused a little bit—you know, the [*sings*] "crashing of irons, the clanking of..." I think there could have been more of the bustle; the director directs their delivery, and I think Diana is just kind of wandering around them. So I think they're underused there, but in the overture I adore them, in the prison scene I adore them, and "Drink, Drink, Drink and Be Merry" I think they're fantastic.

MS: Yeah, he [Director Jens-Daniel Herzog] does kind of apply them as a spatial indication—

IB: He does—and I told him that I wanted them to be like animals, and you can see that in the opening. My favorite, favorite part [*undecipherable*] is when they attack in the prison [*undecipherable*]. I think that's just awesome.

RS: It's so easy and so clear and so—

IB: It just works. I've actually got an audio, the [*undecipherable*] I can send it to you, Gretl.

MS: Awesome. Yeah, that would be perfect. [*undecipherable*] I also wanted to ask you about the manipulations of time I find in the score. There are a couple of different ways I think that the music—

IB: Within the score.

MS: Yeah, within the score. There are a couple of different ways in which the music either extends time, or brings it to a standstill, or speeds it up—for example, the first one that occurs to me is the “Does this chick have a name?” where there's almost a freeze or a semi-freeze onstage—and that's an issue of—

IB: Yeah—that—that was the only thing in Daniel's staging I didn't like. [*undecipherable*] No, I need them to build up—that's the only accented line. It just doesn't sit with me; I think it's a staging issue. There should be something going on with the chorus; there should be an interplay with the chorus, because it was meant to be—it's the London motif [*sings*], so it was meant to be reinforcing the London theme—and I just don't think he used them properly.

MS: Do you think his objective with that was...? I don't know, the way that I read it was that he wanted to make the audience uncomfortable because the audience is inherently uncomfortable when they feel like action has been brought to a halt and something should be happening but—

IB: I think so...I think it was to solidify intent, so that that audience had time to realize...

MS: These are predators.

IB: And that's the intention.

RS: But it feels strange. It's the only thing—

IB: It stops the action. I, as a dramatist of sorts, don't like arias for the reason that I feel like they stop action. So the arias I do have, the one aria “Come riddle me, riddle my ree”, is an insight. It's not how she actually feels, it's much deeper than that. “Poor little thing” [by] Kitty—it's an insight—and that's about 90 seconds long. I don't like anything, *anything* that holds up action because I have a very short attention span myself. I can't bear long [arias]. Puccini had the right idea. It's three minutes long.

RS: Yeah, he's the—Puccini's always—in every moment, you always think, “Now it's going to be a little longer” but...

IB: He, yeah—no—

MS: The exposition never stops.

IB: You can't! It can't! Because we are all from the MTV generation. That's not patronizing any of us. We know music videos. Any films that last more than two hours, we're kind of like (yawns).

RS: Nah—

IB: I exaggerate slightly, but—

MS: But that's action, pure—it's just constant exposition. There's no reflection.

IB: I like that to be within the music, too. For instance, Diana's mad scene, when she was learning it, she was like, “I don't have any time to rest [*undecipherable*] vocally.” But look at the audience. They're not breathing by the time she's [*sings*]. So it works. And that was the only point at which I don't feel my objective in the constant bombardment was followed. But, you know, it was in the beginning of the piece; it doesn't really matter. Everything continues from then on without any letup at all. She even—in scene four, when the curtain comes up, she's in exactly the same position as she is in when the curtain comes down in scene three. So it's a continual trajectory.

MS: That brings up another point about these time freezes. Because the music stops, kind of—most the orchestral music stops, and then we hear the tubular bell keep ringing at the end of scene three. And everything onstage—all of the onstage action—freezes. And the only other freeze that I can think of is, in the beginning—in scene one, when her clothes are being torn off and she's being taken to the bed.

IB: Just after the chorus sings, and just before the orchestra comes in.

MS: And then at the top of scene four, where we kind of re-meet her where we left her before the intermission. But, how do you think the freezes function—

IB: They're completely directorial.

MS: They're not echoed in the music?

IB: No...? I mean, scene three ends with a huge stretta—everything goes crazy. And I don't like that Kitty's dragged off, because I have her singing a second—a clash with Moll—and everyone just thinks it's a solo for her now.

RS: Yeah, because they are so—

IB: They've taken her offstage.

RS: And the problem is, we told them [the supernumeraries]. We told them, and they said, “Yeah, no problem.” But the extras—they’re always too early.

IB: And it sounds lovely—it sounds really lovely when Kitty’s singing, clashing like that. Is it a...C sharp and B?

RS: Yes, C sharp and B—

MS: You never hear that...

IB: It sounds amazing—and you’ve got Nathan on an F, I think.

RS: Yep.

IB: And again, you’ve got the tri-tone between the F and the B... And that’s a wonderful note from Tara [Erraught]. She has a great B. And it’s a shame... So, no—the time freezes are all directorial, but, to me, in the first scene—really only—the chorus has particularly two functions. It’s participative when they’re market sellers, but there are moments which I score much more neumatically—do you know what neumatic means? Like plainchant-ish. In unison. Like, “trussed up and taken”, “the morning of London is filled with the voices” all on the same note. It’s those moments when I, myself, feel a time freeze. Not musically, but in the actual lapse of time. They’re addressing the audience directly, telling them what’s going on, rather than participating. Like, “the clashing of irons, the rattling of...” etc. So that’s the—

RS: But you can very much see that in the opening choir, when they tell the story of “the morning of London is filled with the voices of buying and selling,” it’s all neumatic. Even “everyone comes to the market, fish and flesh...”

IB: Yeah.

RS: And then when it becomes “fruits, cabbages...” then they become more involved musically, and then the music really starts to move. Before that the music is building.

IB: It’s building.

RS: I don’t want to say “ambiance” but—

IB: No, it’s setting the scene.

RS: Yes, absolutely.

IB: So, that was my time freeze. But the music doesn’t have to stop. But I’m aware that the action for me is not taking place in [a way that] one second equals one second. We’re in a different kind of continuum at that point. Even the beginning, [*sings*] “Gaolers and Gaoled...” (hums)

MS: That’s neumatic as well.

IB: Yeah. Until we get to “Newgate, the clink, the Fleet...”[in scene 4] [*sings*] Because there, they’re telling us where we are, they’re telling us what’s going on, as opposed to doing it. So it’s when they’re observant...when they’re—yeah, when

they're not participative—and for me that's a time freeze. But it doesn't mean the music has to be still. See, like, [*sings*] "Gaolers and gaoled..." which they now pitch properly.

RS: Finally!

IB: [*laughs*] Yeah, I was thinking about that for the [*undecipherable*]

RS: It's hard for them to find the note.

IB: Of course it is! It's not an easy choral part. It looks easy on paper. But I don't always give them lots of hell.

RS: It's the very first entrance and this one that are the two [that are difficult]... All the other ones, actually—

IB: Well, they're often doubled.

RS: Yes.

MS: So, it feels like—well, there are times also when the music stops completely, except for the vocal line. And it's "You'll do as you're told now" [in scene three] and in the mad scene [in scene five].

IB: [*sings*] "Why..." [from scene five]

MS: Are there any others that—

IB: Where the music stops, apart from the vocal line? Um—when she's hit, "Oh, you are bleeding."

MS: Oh that's right—that's another one.

IB: And that's grand—that's a big pause. That's huge. A "GP." You know, I feel that in opera, silence—orchestral silence—is the most precious, precious, *precious* commodity. And I think you should only ever use that when you have something that *really* needs to be delivered. Something of *momentous* emotional import or the *deepest* compassion. So we have, "Oh, you are bleeding" [*sings*] is the only thing [one hears] because I want it to be an utterance between two close friends. So you have [*sings*] "You'll do as your told now. Lay down on the bed."

RS: [*sings*] "What are you saying, woman?"

IB: Yeah, but directly after that we still have the playing from the orchestra of [*sings*] "heath and hillside" [scene three]. And the reason I wrote that one in there was because I was anticipating maybe having an applause after the aria.

RS: Yeah, I thought that.

MS: Aha.

IB: And in this production you won't, the way it's staged. But if it was at the MET, you would. You would because it's a high note. But this is not that kind of audience.

RS: If it was at the Staatsoper, there probably would be an applause.

IB: Right. It's not yet. So I needed the conductor to be able to pick up from somewhere, so on the upbeat of [sings] "What are you saying...", it's with him rather than with the orchestra.

RS: Also, [sings] "Anything." [scene one]

IB: Right. [sings] "Anything." It [signifies] a commodity—such a precious commodity—so it's something you really need to have her hone. But the most important one is the [sings] "Why are you looking at me like that?"

RS: I think that's the most obvious one.

IB: The funny thing is that I wrestled with that, because I couldn't hear or feel it [the orchestration]. With everything else I could feel the orchestration. But that—nothing was coming to me, and I thought, "Am I dry?" But then I realized, no—it's just that that doesn't need to be scored, that that's meant to be a cadenza. And I've realized not to have any shame in that. In *A Christmas Carol*, I only had one moment where it is unaccompanied, and that's where the Narrator is describing Bob Cratchett beside the dead Tiny Tim, in bed. And then, what stands there is by itself. And I thought it was a moment of such poignant intimacy that it is the only time in the opera, again, where it has no scoring at all. Because—I've just listened to—a friend sent me a recording of this opera [*Two Boys*] that's just opened at the MET. And what he's done—and I don't want to bash another composer, because he [Nico Muhly] writes chorally better than any other composer alive at the moment, this composer. He can do things that I just wouldn't be able to conceive to do. But, when the singers sing, they have just the most—the gentlest of homophonic—the gentlest of [undecipherable] accompaniments—kind of sustained chord accompaniments. And then when they're not singing, he does business. But it's really holding up the action, because when the exposition is happening, there's nothing happening musically to back it up. Whereas this [undecipherable] it's an hour and a half long, and you've got people saying, "It's an hour and a half too long," really because when the action is happening verbally, there's nothing to underpin it—he's just got chords, or sometimes just one chord—and you can't do that. You must think of different textures, different rhythmic patterns, different colors you want to portray, all to suck people in and draw them across—rhythmically as well. And, it's hard—it's a harder job, but so important. And then when you have moments that are silent, the audience go, "Okay, I need to listen to this."

MS: Speaking of that, what do you find the most beneficial in a libretto, when you're looking at it for forward motion?

IB: That there are no moments when someone is sitting down, telling you how they feel. I can't stand that. Maria Callas, one of the greatest dramatists onstage in the middle of the century, loved *Tosca* but hated "Vissi d'arte", the big aria, because she said it held up the action. Because she's just saying—she's talking about being a pious woman, and how she always gives to charity, why is this happening to her? It's not important. It's just not important. It's the most gorgeous aria you can imagine, but

it stops up everything...what happens then is that, at that point, he's [Scarpia] said, "Right, I'll let him [Cavaradossi] go if you'll have sex with me," and she just carries on [undecipherable] So I just can't bear anything where someone's just talking about something that isn't—not exposit[ory]—but isn't giving us insight into the plot. I can't stand it.

RS: How much did you interfere with the libretto? I mean, for example, are some of the ideas yours, like, for example, that Dalton comes back?

IB: Half the libretto is mine. The mad scene is all me.

RS: But he [Peter Ackroyd] put it into words—

IB: So, he gave me great environmental settings, he unlocked a linguistic palate, which I was then able to voice myself. But he gave me lots of rhymes and verses which I did have to remove. So, I sharpened it, I tightened it, and the mad scene—he loved what I'd written, so he completely sanctioned it. We met before every scene, and talked about the dramatic arc of every scene, and plotted it. He would then write his draft, send it to me, I would send him rewrites, suggestions...

RS: But the idea for Dalton coming back?

IB: That was me.

RS: Because dramatically I think that's the most genius idea—

IB: The idea of her revisiting her rape was me; that whole scene.

RS: The whole concept of her imagining him coming back—that is really dramatically the most genius thing. And it's surprisingly new; it's a completely new concept. You don't have this in any other—

IB: No, you only have mad scenes where people are—you don't hear people singing what they're thinking about.

RS: Yeah, and there are dead people who are singing onstage, but there isn't—or I don't know of—any [examples] of someone who'd already been onstage coming back as a dead or imagined person. I mean there is, for example, [undecipherable],

IB: Commandatore [from *Don Giovanni*]

RS: Commandatore, that's another one. Because he's onstage in the beginning and then he's coming back.

MS: But he's confirmed by at least one more person onstage, so there is some physical [undecipherable] of him.

IB: Ah recognition, yeah—

RS: You're right.

IB: In contemporary opera, let's say. [laughs]

MS: Yeah, actually—something I noticed in the last performance I went to, about two weeks ago. There's a little bit of uncoupling that happens between Moll and [*undecipherable*] in that scene. I notice it for the first time when she's singing the lullabye, and she goes, "A cradle? I had a baby once..."

IB: [*sings*] "A cradle? I had a baby once..."

MS: It's almost like the orchestra reminds her, by using the Emily theme, and she starts this odd dialogue with them. And I couldn't, last night, identify anywhere else where it happens—where a character is actually interacting in an information transfer with the orchestra.

IB: Not in a dialogue, no—the orchestra is always providing information—

MS: To us, though, the audience. The orchestra is either commenting on something that's happening, or providing an insight into something, giving us hints like, "this will come back" or "this is related to this other idea" through motifs, but never with the characters. And I think that—as far as I can identify—the first evidence of her being mentally in this world that we're actually participating in, as an audience. Because she can hear what we can hear now.

IB: That makes sense. No, because the orchestra is speaking to her. In *Lucia di Lammermoor* she hears—

MS: Birds, right?

IB: Well, flutes—and she speaks to them.

MS: And it becomes later in that same scene even a physical manifestation—especially the way Diana is playing it right now. She looks directly out into the house in order to deliver, "Why are you looking at me like that?" And there's this *awesome* uncomfortable double-meaning, where, yeah, she means the people who have preyed upon her sexually—

IB: That we see on the bed at the end of scene one.

MS: But it almost recalls... The reason I ask about that freeze in that first scene, is because it almost recalls the kind of self-aware discomfort of the audience, that "people are acknowledging my presence and I'm in on all of this. I'm being implicated into what's happening to her onstage."

IB: "I'm judging her" or "I'm being—"

MS: Or, "I'm a witness, and I haven't done anything!"

IB: That's what I wanted.

MS: Those, to me—that moment is the most powerful recall of some kind of audience implication.

IB: It was important to me—and I'm really pleased that Daniel reinforced this within his staging—that this is based on paintings. Paintings that have been for over two hundred, almost three hundred years now, by people walking past them, by crowds of people, and I wanted... Moll Hackabout exists, you know? Not just in my opera, Moll Hackabout exists as a contemporary reference. And she has been thought of since 1730. She has been recalled, she's been named—she's had a name. To me, that makes her as real as Father Christmas. No, it does! Or the Tooth Fairy—this is an entity that has cultural significance, a cultural identity. And I wanted the fact that Moll Hackabout has been looked at for three hundred years...

MS: ...by hordes of consumers, and we're all witnesses.

IB: And I wanted that.

MS: And I think what makes your treatment of it different is that you're shoving this in our face in the same way that Hogarth did—in the way that, this is a dirty, disgusting, reprehensible, victimizing story. And she has been made into a consumable commodity in order to make it proper and polite for us to view these paintings—and, yes, in order to consume them; in order for us to view them without being completely repulsed, we need to bring in an element of humor about the whole thing. And [that aids] self-reflection. But we have to acknowledge that, just by virtue of the fact that it is being presented onstage or has been presented as this series of pictures, she's become a consumable item. A person who was a character—a full, fleshed-out character.

IB: It's true.

RS: The difference is, when you look at the pictures, you can always just go away. You don't have to look at it. But when you sit in the opera, watching an opera—

MS: In a darkened theater—

RS: And you can't even—even if you close your eyes, you can still hear everything! [laughs]

IB: One of the critics said that, "Yes, we have *Lulu*, we have *Manon*, we have *Traviata*. Never has the downfall of a woman been portrayed so blatantly, so [raw].

MS: And I think—maybe you could argue for *Lulu*, but—you also don't see in any of those other pieces the implication of the people around her as being just as responsible. I mean, in the final scene, too: there's this funny kind of tennis match of, "You're to blame" and "Well, she only had herself to blame" and "You're to blame for her downfall" and "She did it to herself." And we have all of the characters onstage who were part of it, but maybe no one of them is as—

IB: Kitty is the only one who knows that she's to blame, because she's the one crying. But then she thinks Needham's more to blame than she is. [sings] "You're to blame, Needham..."

MS: Kitty is a particularly interesting aspect of this, because she is also a harlot—

IB: A lower-grade one than Moll. She's a whore's maid.

MS: But she, arguably—and she also says in the prison scene, “You made *us* into whores.” She has done that work herself. But what makes her different? Why did she not suffer the same downfall?

IB: She does, but I feel that she’s a low-level whore. But she talks to Moll about Moll being prettier. Obviously, we can’t say that about Tara versus Diana, but she says, “With the grace that your looks confer,” “Plump your tits and bow low, then with a voice so rich, so slow...” [scene three] So she’s inferring that she’s a higher-grade whore because she’s better looking. She calls her “Mistress.”

RS: But there is, of course, this aspect of friendship—and I think she feels responsible for her. Because she [Kitty] could decide to go away from her [Moll]; she doesn’t have to stay with her for the whole downfall. She, at any point, could say, “OK.” (waves) But she stays with her until the end. So, maybe it’s the first time that she feels like this...maybe she does feel a kind of love for Moll—

IB: Oh, she does.

RS: It’s not so wrong, what Needham says in the prison scene.

IB: Yeah.

RS: It’s just that that would be the only explanation why she stays with her, and why she changes so much throughout the piece. Because in the beginning, she’s Mother Needham’s.

MS: Yes, and she develops a love for her [Moll].

IB: “You have done your share for me. Never mind it.” [scene four] So it’s a bit of duty as well, you know, I think.

MS: I think one reason why she sticks around, or why she has that great affection for her [Moll] is because of an attraction to innocence. I think Kitty represents the counterpart to the predatory chorus and Lovelace and Needham. They see Moll’s innocence as something to be commoditized and capitalized upon. And Kitty also sees Moll’s innocence, and, I think, in her interaction with her, constantly brought back to her connection with Moll through reminders of Moll’s innocence, effectively. Like the “Home” aria [scene three]: the reason why she sticks around after the “Home” aria is because she’s like, “This girl from Yorkshire—she doesn’t know that there’s no escaping. But you poor thing.” The innocence of a baby being born—that also pulls her back into it...and that, at least as far as I see it, I think that’s probably a large reason for why Kitty has this genuine affection for her. Because she sees in Moll something that she doesn’t have, which is this still unstained “glance unchanged” [scene two]. That’s why I find it interesting that, essentially both of these two character bodies: chorus, Needham, Lovelace; and then Kitty over here; are getting from...or pulling Moll apart to find, really. Everybody wants—or is attracted to—her innocence and her optimism that she could still get out of this situation.

IB: Yeah. There is another motif which is [*sings*] “Poor little thing”, [scene three] which comes throughout, even in the first scene.

MS: [*sings*] “You didn’t know her.” [scene six]

IB: “You didn’t know her”—exactly.

MS: I think she sings it in “sores” as well [scene five]—

IB: Yeah, in the mad scene. It’s in the first scene as well.

MS: Is it in the first scene?

IB: In the solo strings in the background somewhere.

RS: Yes, here. [*sings*] “Suffering”—

MS: Oh really!

IB: So there’s already sympathy from somewhere. To me that represents a sympathy toward Moll.

MS: That there’s some element—if only in the strings at this point, and maybe a little bit in Kitty—that there’s some sympathy.

IB: Well, see, I think in “Does this chick have a name?” it’s all mischief. She’s more mischievous than cruel. You know, I don’t think she’s as cynical or as evil as Needham. I think Kitty—just from my perspective, and it’s wonderful that we can have different perspectives already on the piece—my perspective is that her motivation is mischief and fun. You know, lots of her delivery is very rapid-fire and cheeky. And she’s got some of the best one-liners, like, “You’ve got a face like a slapped nancy.” She has a sense of fun, and I think that’s her motivating factor.

MS: Yeah. Do you think that she could be played by an older woman?

IB: Eeehm—there has to be a hierarchy. I’m not sure.

MS: If she were older, for instance, it would be clearer that it’s her [physicality] that places her at a lower level. I mean, I’d be curious as to whether it would work with, like, a 40-year-old.

RS: I’ve found it again. [*sings*] “She is a beauty, with a wanton air... *Nothing more tempting.*” [Page] 48 [of the full score]. Here. [*sings*].

MS: That’s right.

IB: I think I’ve got it clashing, haven’t I? It’s sevenths or something, isn’t it? [*sings*]

RS: Yes. [*laughs*] Of course it’s sevenths. It’s on the seventh or second. Always. [*laughs*]

MS: Is that—this “Anything”... [scene one]

IB: [*sings*] “Anything”

MS: I hear it again in “Dreamed of it” and “...than I have *ever seen*.”

IB: Yep. The last time you hear it is in the solo strings just before she gets molested in that first interlude.

RS: [*sings*]

IB: Yeah—and it’s so high, and they’ve just got it now. The strings have just about learned how to play that.

MS: The end of the first interlude?

IB: Middle. In the middle—before they start hitting her and it goes all *Rite-of-Spring*—

RS: Page 66 [of the full score], yeah.

MS: Right here.

IB: But it’s not referred to again. Because that’s her compliance. “I would do anything.” “Right, you’re gonna get fucked.” Because this is her—her rape. Her deflowering.

MS: This is her compliance.

IB: We’ve got lots of these descending chromatic scales, here: Moll’s aria, [*sings*] “My cottage is upon the coast...*chasing away* the boredom...”

RS: The mad scene, of course.

IB: Oh, full of them. Also in the “Take her about...” [*sings orchestral part*] “Ride her about...” [*sings orchestral part*] That—that is like adventure. It’s like—I’ve never had to put it into words, but it’s—it’s getting out there. That’s stuff happening.

MS: So it’s forward motion, but downward?

IB: Yeah, because [*sings*] “*Chasing away* the boredom...” It’s [*sings descending chromatic scale*] underneath—to me it’s just wanting to get out there and moving forward.

MS: Forward momentum.

IB: Yep. But could be perceived as good or bad, as you say. In the mad scene, for instance.

MS: Because there’s another—and I don’t know if it’s chromatic or not, but there’s a descending in “Trussed up and taken.” Is that musically related?

IB: A musicologist might find that it is, because I was writing a lot of this very instinctively, and felt that I’d incorporated a lot of motifs without realizing. And please don’t think any less of me for doing that; it’s just that I was so involved within the language of the piece that I was able—I knew what things meant without having to—

MS: I'm sure it's instinctual.

IB: But it became my alphabet. These motifs became... A great many of them I did—eighty percent of them I applied with complete thought and deliberately manipulated them. There are some that I didn't—that I've thought, "Oh...that's there."

MS: And you came to realize after the fact that—

IB: After I listened to the orchestration, or after listening to *A Christmas Carol*—after having written *Christmas Carol* and then coming back to it—that's when. I had to get distance from it [*A Harlot's Progress*].

RS: You know, there's an essay [by] Schönberg about *Verklärte Nacht*, where he is analyzing *The Transfigured Night* like 30 years later, from his own perspective, and realizing and discovering things that he didn't—

IB: So it wasn't just me, then! He did the same. [*laughs*]

RS: He was discovering things that he did unintentionally but totally make sense 30 years later—

IB: Musicologically.

RS: But he wasn't actively thinking about it.

MS: It's just embedded—it's part of the creative process. It's in there somewhere, but—

RS: Because the vocabulary you work with—

IB: Well, let's just think of it now: [*sings*] "Poor little thing"... [*sings*] "Drink, drink and be merry..." There's a similarity there. That's a manipulation—a quite intense manipulation—but it is...

MS: What were some of the intentional ones?

IB: Oh, well, all of the: [*sings*] "Poor little thing" [*sings* "*Stony-hearted*"]... All of those were, you know... [*sings* "*Little chicken, chicken*"]

MS: "Little chicken, chicken"—

IB: You know, that's in the prison scene and everything—

RS: I mean, these are the core motifs.

IB: [*sings*] "Moll's a'cold"—that comes directly from... That was all done with retrospect and deliberately. Like I said, eighty or eighty-five percent of them are all embedded within the tissue of the piece.

RS: And the [*sings*] "Anything"

IB: “Anything.”

RS: “Anything” and the “Drink, drink”—that’s a variation of the “Poor little thing.” You just take away the second notes. [*sings*]

IB: Yep. And the [*sings*] “Oh, to be back home again”—it’s the same.

RS: Yes—I overlooked that. It’s completely the same.

IB: But lots of that is subconscious, because I’m dealing with a very particular idiom—that I was just swimming in—and therefore was able to... [*sings*]

RS: Do you make notes before you write it? Not notes, but—what’s the word? Sketches? Where you have the core—

IB: No. No. Well, I wrote the vocal draft, they just started appearing as I was writing the vocal line, and then when I start orchestrating, I’m able to re-[figure] them with them all existing [already]. And after scene one, we already have seven or eight of the most important ones, and then I can therefore—in the vocal lines also—adapt. If you read that “Painting an Opera” which I’ve now sent to you, that will give you huge insight into why I’ve made orchestral choices for the roles.

MS: Thank you—I’m sure that will be really helpful.

RS: Lovelace kind of always has this... it’s seconds and fifths, like the [*sings*] “*Poor little thing*”. It’s very often, but in a very ironic way. [*sings*] “Toil I must, but...”

MS: His rhythms are so unique, too—

IB: Yep! Well, they all have a unique voice, but he particularly—I wanted to portray that he’s so intelligent and so quick-thinking, and so removed from everyone else. He’s in a class of his own, separate from everyone else. I did this by giving him extremely difficult rhythms and rhythmic patterns, because I wanted to portray this very very quick, whirling dervish brain. And not only are his rhythms difficult, but the rhythms of the orchestral part surrounding him will throw them off as well. So, not only is he going seven eight three four two four five, he’s got swirling oboes and flutes around him, portraying this intelligence and this speed, which are also playing not always on the beat. So, [*sings*] “I was preparing for you, sir...” even Diana takes it on when she’s addressing him. She takes on this...

MS: She assumes his method of speaking.

IB: Yep.

RS: It’s a breathlessness.

IB: [*laughs*] Yeah!

RS: I mean, that’s what it is—she also gets nervous, of course: “I wanted to—I was preparing for you—I was waiting for you—”

IB: Right. Yes, exactly. And Kitty—she’s intelligent, but in a different way. She also speaks generally very quickly, much quicker than Moll. Moll’s lines are generally quite broad. But Kitty—I wanted to portray a quick mind, but not necessarily academically quick. Rational. And I did that by giving her simpler, but quick rhythms—often monosyllabic and very direct, fast rhythms which run very much contrary to what Moll is then singing at the same time.

RS: More witty smart than intellectual smart.

IB: Yes. And she’s very recitative.

RS: Street smarts.

IB: Street smarts. Yes, exactly. But painted in a different way. So, she’s more secco recitative. Lovelace is more weaved and wrought. But this is all in “Painting an Opera.”

MS: You mentioned in the “Einleitungsgespräch” [introductory talk], in the “Hölle” [basement reception area] when you talked with [dramaturg] Karin [Bohnert] and [director Jens-] Daniel [Herzog], that the opera “approaches 12-tone qualities at the end.”

IB: Uh, not 12-tone, because that suggests... People have misquoted me; it’s not 12-tone because that suggests a real mathematical, sit-down with note rows and things... No, it just becomes highly atonal. So the singers, at that point, are singing against complete clashes. [*sings*] “She has been screaming”—that just goes in layers into this horrible...those entries [*sings quick orchestral runs*]—

RS: It’s in the interlude before the fifth scene—

MS: That madness run—at [system] 32 [of the second half of the full score].

RS: They begin at [system] 19. Here.

IB: The Kronen Zeitung are saying to everyone that they must come to Sunday’s performance because it will sell out. [Press Officer] Gabriela [Pfeisinger] just messaged me that.

MS: That’s great!

IB: You just see a lot more chromatic writing; you just see a lot more of that kind of “crunching” in different layers. So it’s not just these notes are chromatic to one another; it’s that they’re chromatic to those ones and those ones. And then you’ve got another tone underneath it which is stretching it out, so it just becomes a lot more complicated. So I wouldn’t say 12-tone, but it’s arch-atonality at some points. Because 12-tone is a very specific—

RS: No, 12-tone is a specific style...

IB: Completely—and it just becomes more and more atonal to complete Moll’s degradation, and then when she dies, you have the most tonal piece of music, which is the [*undecipherable*] strings. Because the cycle is starting again. Yeah, “Come

down, night". That is the reset button. That's what it is. And then in the final scene, it has the same tonality and harmonic space as scene one.

MS: So, tonality in this sense comes to represent a kind of release?

IB: Her journey. Certainly the darker the journey, the darker the tonality becomes. When she's dead, it's the reset button. So we get to... I never knew this term existed, because I didn't know you needed terms to term people that are not inner—because I don't write with a specific tonality, so I'm not atonal, I'm not completely tonal, you know, I thought I was free of that, but no—in German, I'm called "free tonal".

RS: But is that...?

IB: It's a stupid word; I'd never heard it until I got here. But it goes back to...it's people giving a term to something that doesn't have a term.

RS: My father [composer Ivan Eröd] always says about his music [that] he's writing tonal music, but not major/minor chords.

IB: Yeah.

RS: But this "free" thing is such a...

IB: It means nothing.

RS: It means nothing! It's just a—what's the word—an invention from musicologists...

IB: To try to put a bracket on something—

RS: ...because they need to put it in some shoebox, and they have to name the shoebox. Everything that doesn't fit into major/minor tonal or 12-tone comes into the box of "free tonal". Um, when you look at page 390, then you have these kind of tonal melodies that came before—tonal motifs that came before—come in, because she's going mad, in an atonal environment. For example, the [*sings "poor thing" theme*], what Kitty is singing [*undecipherable*].

MS: [*sings*] "Poor thing".

RS: Yep. And she [Moll] is singing [*sings descending run*] "I beg you, I beg you" while the orchestra is playing this motif in an environment where—

IB: It just doesn't sound like it did at the beginning.

RS: Yes. And all the [*sings*] "Please no more"—which is to say the "Moll's a'cold" [motif] but here in parallel sevenths, and seconds in the trumpets and violins which makes it kind of...

IB: In a completely different context.

RS: Yes, and that makes it, like, crazy.

MS: Do you think...do you think Moll recognizes her impending death in scene five?

IB: (shakes his head)

MS: No?

IB: She's going to sleep.

MS: Do you think that she recognizes that James is dead before she dies?

IB: (shakes his head)

MS: No?

IB: I don't think so. I think she's too far gone, as Kitty says. I think she's probably done that ten times already. I think...you know, Kitty says she's been screaming songs of Bedlam. So I think maybe this is just the loudest and the highest that she's screamed. But I think she's done this time and time again; maybe not with the James thing, because Kitty's so shocked when she sees her doing it—

MS: Because there are little...especially last night and the last time I saw it a couple of weeks ago, in the way that it's played I think there's a little hint that she might kind of understand her own mortality in this scene.

IB: To me in scene three she does, which is why she wants to fuck off and go back home. [*sings*] "To be back home again..." She knows what that is.

MS: Because she also in scene four says—oh, what is the quote—"We'll be at peace soon" or "Soon we'll be at peace"—

IB: [*sings*] "Soon we'll be at peace"

MS: And when she tries to grab the baby and is screaming "Take it, take it" and tries to smother it, it reads almost as though she knows that she's sending the baby to where James is by killing it.

IB: Well, I think that's a very valid interpretation. That wasn't my intention, but I love that. But isn't it wonderful that you can get that from it? My intention was that she's gone.

RS: But the motif is the same [*sings "Poor thing"/"We'll be at peace" theme*] again.

IB: Yeah.

MS: When she tries to smother the [baby]?

RS: What you just said—no, the [*sings*] "We'll be at peace."

IB: Yeah. There you go. Of course it is.

RS: Of course it is! It's an opera! [*laughs*]

IB: And that's what keeps the piece an *l'air*—a *me*—piece; that's what keeps it united. Because you have these. But you don't realize when you're hearing it that it's the same thing.

RS: But you have this in every good opera. Look at Britten. I mean, everything comes from something else in Britten.

IB: In *Turn of the Screw* there's about...I mean, it's literally all from one thing. Everything comes from one thing. *Rake's Progress*—everything comes from Anne Truelove's aria. I reckon he wrote that aria first, "No word from Tom," because it seems that everything else is kind of extracted from it.

RS: And you need to—especially in a time like today, where everything is allowed, where you can do everything, and there are no rules, you can just do whatever you want—but to write an opera that kind of has one red line through for two hours, you need things to hang on, even if the audience doesn't realize it—

MS: consciously.

RS: Consciously. But you need this red line. Otherwise, everything will just fall apart.

IB: Completely agree. Completely agree. Because we're used to it in films. Film music—we're used to it in films. Some do it better than others, but we're used to it.

RS: I recently saw that old *Robin Hood* movie with Errol Flynn—

MS: Yeah!

IB: Oh gosh—

MS: Korngold.

RS: Korngold. And the most amazing thing about it, in the first scene when Robin and [Marian] meet, they're talking about nothing. Literally, nothing. Just small-talking about nothing. Like, "who are you?" "What are you doing?" "My name is Robin." "My name is [Marion]." "I live in the woods." "Ah, OK." But in the background you have this love music by Korngold, and you see it and think, "Oh, that must be a love scene." But when you actually listen to what they are telling each other... [*laughs*]

MS: But it tells us what's going to come, right?

RS: Yes, absolutely! And you don't question that these two are falling in love right now. But if you just read the script, it would be like, "What is that? What are they talking about anymore?"

MS: But the music is moving the [story forward]. Yeah, it's clear in that case that he comes from an operatic background and he needs to move forward the plot.

IB: He wrote that when he was like 10 years younger than me. I mean, he embarrasses me because of who he is.

RS: Yeah, but he grew up in a different environment.

MS: He had his first opera premiere at the Staatsoper when he was 14.

RS: Yeah, something like that.

IB: At least Britten was the same age as me when he did *Peter Grimes*.

RS: I mean, you don't have a father who really liked the whole music world and—

MS: Right, and weren't introduced to Mahler when you were four...there's a distinct advantage that Korngold had.

RS: And you didn't become the pupil of Zemlinski when you were ten. It was the same with Mendelssohn. He just had a rich father who could afford to give him the best education very early on. Can I ask you one question, though it's a bit early? No, I could ask it on Sunday.

IB: No, ask it now.

RS: Because I've been thinking about it. Because now that on Sunday it's over, is there anything you can say that you learned from this, from your experience here?

IB: Yep. Yeah, I don't want to change this piece, but maybe audiences aren't ready to be bombarded with so much darkness. Don't feel the need as an orchestrator... Like, 99% of my orchestrations, I love. But don't feel the need as an orchestrator to feel that I always need to have a deep bass and a high soprano line, you know? So like, during the process I cut lots of tuba and piccolo. I cut lots of it. So, you know—enjoy just exploiting the alto and treble registers. [...]

MS: Would you have to expand the orchestral part for the MET?

IB: If it goes to the MET, it would be exactly the same size.

MS: The same size?

IB: Well, they do *Lucia* with the same size orchestra.

RS: Maybe more double-basses, more strings?

IB: Oh, yes. Um, I'm up to fourteen, split. Fourteen, twelve, ten, eight, eight. Yeah, the MET... You know, the one thing about this house that irritated me was the pit. I'd written this piece to be played in a pit. And therefore, the dynamics would be at least two shades quieter because it's underground. There's no pit in this house at all. And not only that, the tiny little half-meter overhang that we do have, the woodwinds are in, not the brass.

MS: Right, that's true. The brass is right out there, under the loge—

RS: And you have people coming out from the pit, like this—

IB: So, this will sound very very different in a longer pit. And this meant, conversely, that the singers had to sing... Do you know what a *Fach* is? A vocal *fach*? They had to sing one *fach* more dramatically. So, Moll Hackabout at Theater an der Wien is a far more dramatic role than it would be in Chicago.

MS: Because she's competing with the brass.

IB: Oh yes, all 55 of them. Diana's had to sing this role much darker than she would have if it was underground. I mean, they've all had to.

RS: Yeah, but on the one hand in Chicago and that, the audience is much bigger, so the voice has to go a much longer way than here.

IB: So, balance. That was the thing. But writing it... I was delighted with how it sounded, by and large. I just enjoyed... And, the thing is, my process changed while writing it. I had a very close family death right in the middle of writing scene three. Mike's [partner, Michael Batten] mum died. So, scene four I started experimenting with [*undecipherable*] textures. And so I'd already changed my technique midway through writing it anyway, which all of the critics noticed. All the critics noticed the same. Which was great, because they could perceive that I'd got better in writing it.

RS: That's what [*undecipherable*] said as well.

IB: Everyone said it. They liked—they think the first act is strong, but the second act is untouchable.

MS: That's what [John] Corigliano said, too—he said, "God, the second act was particularly impactful."

IB: [...] Because I wanted it to plummet. Everyone's saying, "Oh, but we know what's going to happen to her." You don't know what's going to happen to her daughter, and that's what scene six is about. [...] That's a great question, though: what you asked about how I would have changed anything. It's not that I'm being arrogant—

RS: No, no—I mean, it's not about this piece. This piece is how it is, and—

IB: I think [*undecipherable*] is to revisit it.

RS: Yeah, absolutely. I was just interested in—

IB: I mean, in my next one, I won't... Obviously I expected a teeny bit too much of the audience, in expecting them to immerse themselves in such darkness. When I do the piece for Welsh National Opera [...], there has to be levity throughout. And not just ironic levity; it has to be proper...because otherwise it'll be dead. But that's a dramaturgy thing. I'll bring that up with all of my future directors.

MS: This is something that I've asked of a couple of composers that I've worked with in the past, and I'd be curious to know: if you could represent your relationship as a composer with music with a libretto as an analogy or a metaphor, what would you—

IB: I don't understand the question.

MS: Like, a metaphor that I've heard composers use in talking about the way that their music interacts with text differ—for instance, someone described it as being like a cake: you have the dry ingredients and the wet ingredients, and together they create something that wouldn't exist outside of the two interacting with each other. Or, one composer I've worked with says that it's more like a jewelry setting, where the music is like the setting of a gem, or vice-versa. I've heard another composer friend say that it's more like a ladder—that the two are slopes of a ladder that can stand together, but wouldn't be able to necessarily stand independently. What I'm getting at is, how do you see the interaction of text and music?

IB: At the beginning, the text is the most important thing, because that is what inspires me. But then I feel the music then becomes the most important thing. It's like the teacher becomes the student becomes the teacher again. At the beginning, the text is the master. Then the music becomes the master. I haven't been asked this question, so in order to give you an answer that's that poetic, I might need a bit of time to think of it. I've always just striven to do a play that's sung. So I approach it as a libretto must be able to be read as a play. That's what I said to Peter Ackroyd. [...] Fortunately, Dickens has done that. And I said to my librettist for Welsh National Opera, "It has to read as a play."

RS: But like a very simple—

IB: Very concise—very concise. But I don't want to sound verse. I don't like verse. I don't like rhyming, unless it's ironic. So, it has to be a play.

RS: Like [*undecipherable*], for example.

IB: But that—[sings] "Riddle my ree...Till Moll put it out 'cause she'd nothing to do"—that was from the original *Harlot's Progress* opera from 1731. That's the only—it's a quote. It's a direct quote, reincluded.

RS: That is very—

IB: Which is why it's in there—it's a little bit, [*looks stunned*] "Hello?"

MS: It's surprising how bawdy it is, especially for 1731. I'll have to take another look at the program, but was that included in Katrin [Bohnert]'s note?

IB: It's in the libretto, but I don't know if it's been [*undecipherable*]. I doubt it. Because it's not in italics in the—in the surtitles. Yeah, I don't know if it's in there.

MS: I don't think it is.

IB: But there isn't any music from the opera—only bits of the text. And Peter [Ackroyd] found it and said, "Should we have some of this?" It was originally sung by someone about Moll, but we decided to appropriate it so that she's—

RS: I think it's in the London biography.

IB: Is it? May well be.

RS: Do you have that?

MS: The London biography—yes.

IB: Yes, it's in there.

MS: [...] Thank you so much. This has been really helpful.

IB: It's a pleasure.

### **1.3 Sybille Gädeke, written responses regarding *A Harlot's Progress* costume designs. Questions from Margarethe Satorius, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013.**

Margarethe Satorius: Could you describe your process of developing the costume concept for this production? To what extent did you collaborate with other members of the production team on a design aesthetic, and what did the early stages of your process look like?

Sybille Gädeke: Nach der Lektüre des Textes/ dem Anhören der Oper erstelle ich eine Sammlung von Bildern, Photos und Kostüm- oder Genredarstellungen als Bildwelt, die sich aus historischen Zeitbezogenen Bildern und aus Umsetzungen mit heute vergleichbaren Zusammenhängen zusammensetzen. Diese sende ich den Kollegen: Regie, Dramaturgie, Bühne um die gemeinsame Phantasie abzuklären. Danach beginne ich erste Figurinen zu zeichnen auf der Basis dessen, was wir im ersten Regiegespräch besprochen haben und auf der Basis dessen, was ich über die Sänger/Schauspieler weiß (Aussehen, Größe, Alter etc.). Auch diese von mir GROBSKIZZEN genannten Arbeiten sende ich an das Regieteam zur Überprüfung, ob unsere gemeinsamen Vorstellungen wirklich gemeinsam sind. Aus diesen Dialogen entwickelt sich dann die gesamte Bildwelt, die in dem Stück herrschen soll und in der ich mich sehr frei bewegen möchte. Dannach zeichne ich die Figurinen, wie sie dann dem Theater vorgelegt werden, während des Zeichnens überlege ich mir bereits die Stoffe und die Funktionabilität des Kostüms zB in „Harlot“ die offenen Umzüge von Moll Hackabout und die Bespielungs-Möglichkeiten, die die Kostüme den Darstellern bieten. Ich halte es für sehr wichtig sinnvolle Kostüme zu entwerfen, die den Darstellern, die Möglichkeiten geben ihre Figur darin weiter zu entwickeln, Die Kostüme sollen immer unterstützend sein.

MS: To what extent were your designs inspired by the original 1731 Hogarth prints? Are there any particular challenges involved in creating a costume concept for a piece based on a very specific graphic series?

SG: Die Zeit 1731 hat eine sehr extreme Art von Mode: extrem weit seitlich ausgebaute Pagnées, die auch nur kurze Zeit existierten, Ansatz war eher die Silhouette vom 18. Jahrhundert, die eindeutig körperbetont war, sowohl im Herrengewandt, als auch in der Damenmode, mit heutigen Styles zu verbinden. Ich wollte eine universalere Linie finden. Die Radierungen von Hogarth sehen sich heute als etwas "putzig" an, man hat damals soziale Härte nicht abgebildet wie heute, oder wie Goya zB, sondern eher allgemein gültige Zeichen und Allegorien verwendet. Ich wollte mehr Härte in der Darstellung des Kostüms und eine radikale Veränderung, von der Moll am Anfang bis hin zu der stark in Mitleidenschaft

gezogenen Moll am Ende. Ihr Niedergang Moll zeigt sich auch in der schrittweisen Veränderung ihrer Bekleidung.

Die Graphische Darstellung des Radierzyklus von Hogarth hat mich dabei weniger beeinflusst, als die Große Sammlung bildender Künstler, Photographen und Modemacher, die ich in meinem Konzeptblatt genannt habe.

MS: Were there specific stipulations, technical requirements or challenges, or dramaturgical concepts that you needed to take into consideration in your designs? What kind of inspiration, feedback, or requests did you get from the other members of the production team?

SG: Zunächst lasse ich mich von dem Inhalt des Werkes inspirieren, da ich die Musik als Partitur hatte, bliebe sie mir als Klangbild bis zum Probenbeginn die Überraschung. Die technische Darstellungsweise wähle ich auf Grund der Stimmung, die ich dem Werk entnehme: in diesem Fall sind die Figurinen in Graphit, Tusche, Aquarell und etwas Buntstift gezeichnet. Es gibt auch Produktionen, bei denen ich Filzstift wähle (*Anna Nicole*) oder nur Buntstift und Graphit (*Fliegender Holländer*) oder Tempera- Acrylbilder für die Figuren herstelle (*Rosamunde*). Im Falle von „A Harlot's Progress“ war mir ein lockerer Strich wichtig (Graphitstift), die Darstellung zarter Stoffe und Stoffschichten und präziser Farben (daher farbige Tusche). Die Mischung der diversen Jahrhunderte in Modestyles lässt gut auch eine Mischung von Techniken: Zeichnung und Aquarell zu. Ausserdem hat jede Figur eine technische Bleistiftzeichnung, in der ich die Schnittführung vorschlage, als Diskussionsbasis mit den Gewandmeistern. Ausser mit dem Regieteam, mit dem ich zur Konzeptfindung in Kontakt war, hatte ich auch mit Iain Bell email Kontakt, und konnte ihm einige der Chorfigurinen vorab senden. Seine Zustimmung war mir sehr wichtig, da ich den „Duft“ seines Werkes auch im Kostüm einfangen wollte. Ich brauche natürlich auch das Feedback der Theaterdirektion, das sehr positiv ausfiel und ich brauche das Gespräch mit der Kostümdirektorin und der Produktionsleitung, und den Gewandmeistern. In diesen Gesprächen werden die Herstellungsweise und Stoffauswahl jeden einzelnen Stückes besprochen ebenso mit der Maske, ebenso wird besprochen, wie mit dem Kostüm auf der Bühne umgegangen wird, damit man dies in der Herstellungsweise bereits berücksichtigen kann (hier zB: Verschlüsse, die leicht zu öffnen sind und dennoch ein ganzes Bild durchhalten). Prinzipiell habe ich von allen Mitgliedern der Produktion sehr positives Feedback erhalten, die Arbeitssituation zwischen Künstlern und Werkstätten war sehr gut und die Künstler haben sich sehr konstruktiv und inspirierend im Umgang mit ihren Kostümen gezeigt.

MS: Iain [Bell] has been outspoken about your constant collaboration and active participation throughout the process of the opera's realization—what kinds of changes or alterations did you need to make to the designs during the rehearsal process, and why?

SG: Ich habe einige Veränderung gemacht um Umzugsvorgänge einfacher zu gestalten, Knöpfe versetzt, andere Verschlüsse gewählt aber auch einige Kostümteile neu entwickelt, um den Fluss der Bespielbarkeit zu verbessern, oder der Figur mehr Möglichkeiten mit ihren Kostümen zu geben. Es sind auch einige Kostüme weggefallen, die sich im Ablauf der Szenen nicht mehr unbedingt erklären hätten (z.B. Kitty's offenes Mieder Kostüm mit der Strickjacke drüber im 3. Bild am Anfang). Mit Diana Damrau habe ich die Veränderung ihrer Kostüme, die alle offene Umzüge, waren intensiv und dialogisch weiter entwickelt. Der Weg der Veränderungen waren alle vorausgedacht, aber im Detail haben wir die Kostüme so

gearbeitet, dass sie nicht zur Belastung für die Solistin wurden. Diana war unglaublich positiv, und offen für die Fülle an Kostümen, die sie bespielt hat. Alle noch so kleinen oder großen Vorgänge hat sie mitgetragen. Auch hier war die Zusammenarbeit einfach erfüllend.

MS: When you saw the finished costumes within the completed opera as a whole, what was your reaction? How did you see the relationship of your designs to the rest of the production—to the scenery, blocking, lighting, etc.?

SG: Ich war sehr zufrieden. Der helle, schlichte Raum bot eine gute Projektionsfläche für die Darsteller. Die Kostüme waren exakt so gearbeitet, wie ich sie entworfen hatte. Der Chor war sehr gut besetzt und alle Sänger gingen geschickt mit Ihren Kostümen um. Alle Solisten hatten ein sehr natürliches, sinnliches und kluges Gespür für ihre Kostüme. Sie waren sehr lebendig, blieben nicht abstrakt. Die Zusammenarbeit auf allen Ebenen war wirklich wunderbar. .

Alle Beteiligten waren immer konstruktiv und an einem Gelingen der Produktion interessiert - dies ist nicht immer der Fall in Theaterproduktionen. Während der Produktion „A Harlot’s Progress“ war ein außergewöhnlich gutes gemeinsames kreatives Arbeitsklima, dass auch durch Iain Bell’s konstruktive Anwesenheit sehr positiv beeinflusst war.

**2. Bell, Iain. “Painting an Opera.” 2013. Programme notes for the world premiere of *A Harlot’s Progress*. Posted on the composer’s website: [www.iainbellmusic.com](http://www.iainbellmusic.com) (Last accessed 22 September, 2014)**

**Painting an Opera by Iain Bell**

The characters in William Hogarth’s art are brought to life in exquisite detail; complete back-stories are conveyed with just a wrinkle of a brow, the gesture of a hand or the fabric of an item of clothing. In a world of two-dimensional art, these are living, breathing three-dimensional personalities and I was determined to capture this musically.

Though there six performers and a chorus on stage, all of whom would be differentiated by their own distinct musical language, to me it was of the utmost importance to begin with the characterisation of Hogarth’s own muse; London - in its ever-shifting, convulsive, infectious and cynical glory. This role would be played by the sixty-headed hydra that is the orchestra, emanating fittingly from the ‘pit’. It is my perception that London has molded those within its walls and wards; a view that is further explored in Peter Ackroyd’s ‘London: The Biography’. As such, I wanted the contagia of the city to emanate from the opera’s first utterances as the dark, dangerous night slowly dissolves into dawn on Cheapside Market.

In Bar 1, the orchestra (which for the first 12 bars consists solely of the lowest instruments playing - in their deepest registers - music which is derived from the chorus’ later opening monodic ‘hymn’ to

London) is instructed to play 'With a swarming darkness'. These quiet, yet foreboding growls momentarily subside as the first shards of the light of the new day penetrate, chiming a chord progression of sustained ultra-high strings, flutes and a glockenspiel. As the low music represents both night and the malevolent qualities of London, these high, ringing, exposed chords symbolise both the promise of a new day and the very nature of Moll Hackabout herself. They will remain her musical calling-card in various guises throughout the piece; they are 'clean', unspoiled by any chromatic infiltration. The 'night/London' music again returns dove-tailing the very end of the 'day/Moll' passage. With the addition of the tenor instruments of the orchestra playing a more complex variation of the later London hymn, one is made aware of a city slowly rousing. The 'day' theme again returns and the once unsullied chords have now taken on a darker more chromatic tone; the hope of a new London day is already tainted before the morning has fully dawned. Likewise, the city's malignant influence has already begun to affect Moll long before her arrival. These two contrasting sections continue to dovetail one another, each time the 'day' music is further polluted and the 'night' music enters more violently and higher in pitch until they combine and the bustle of Cheapside's market is in full focus.

When the characters begin to sing, rather than deputising to the voices, the orchestral tissue of the music continues to reflect the location, stating and re-iterating various leitmotifs that are sewn in a continuous thread throughout the opera. In this scene the percussion section frequently interjects as a reminder of the 'busy-ness' of the marketplace and outdoors space. This outside atmosphere is again evoked when the action is taken outdoors in Scene Three during James Dalton and Mister Lovelace's meeting. Once more the low winds and strings deliver their sustained, polyphonic nocturne as the drama unfolds. It was my aim to keep this 'swarming darkness' ever-bubbling beneath the surface of the work, often playing at the quietest of dynamics to suggest the ever-present toxic tendrils of the city.

It was extremely important to me that London's presence be felt even when the action was not unfolding outside or in a location discernibly of the city. A four-note motif was therefore conferred upon the capital, heard throughout in constant modification from the first scene to the last. It is first intoned in Mother Needham's 'entrance aria' on the words "Stony-hearted step-mother of suffering" and features prominently to illustrate the key moments of Moll's descent; her de-flowering, her being dragged to prison and finally infecting her so completely that it forms the backbone of a great swathe of her mad-scene, culminating in her faltering dying whispers of "*Moll's a-cold*". The motif itself is circular in shape, uncomfortably discordant with no resolution suggesting the eternally poisonous, enveloping, embrace of the city. Lest I be considered a London-basher, I must state my enormous love for the city; it is my home as it has been for countless generations of my family who hail from its east end. I feel re-charged and inspired when I have time to luxuriate in it and it calls out to me musically more than any other subject. That said, it is a 'warts and all' devotion and I wanted my portrayal of it in its eighteenth-century garb to be an honest one. Hogarth's output on this subject is oftentimes free of any trace of air-brushing or sentimentality and I was determined to maintain this tone. However much I love strolling along the bank of the Thames on an early morning to head to Borough Market or indeed walk around the deserted grandeur of the City of London on a Sunday evening I must acknowledge that the city wasn't always thus, nor is it now. Like Needham herself, though captivating in its sophistication and decadence I am acutely aware that Hogarth's dystopian paradigm of its sexual and moral vice still exists at this very minute, however well-concealed. This parallel I could perceive is

yet another reason I felt inexorably compelled to set this work from the moment I saw it hanging in the Tate Britain all those years ago.

London is not the only location to be suggested in the opera. When evoking Moll's birthplace - rural, coastal Yorkshire, I made a conscious effort to render it as aurally opposed to the London sound-world as possible. Yorkshire is suggested by means of an extension of the musical calling-card I used to portray Moll; namely transparent high strings and winds. In Scene One she sings of her home, calling to mind such rural idylls as her cottage upon the coast and the birds flying through the air. This is set to a backdrop of scalic descending woodwinds on a bed of high strings and is again heard in Scene Three when she yearns to be back home, in Scene Four when she is offered safe passage from Bridewell Prison and finally during her insane visions in Scene Five where she imagines Dalton has returned to speed her and her daughter Emily back there.

Having the luxury of knowing my cast (which, thankfully to Theater an der Wien I had huge input into assembling) at the very early stages of writing the piece enabled me to harness their particular vocal colours and strengths. As such, I was able to find and draw out the Needham in Marie McLaughlin's voice rather than creating a Needham and hoping the performer later cast in the role would know my intentions and be up to the challenges presented by assuming the role. I was also keen to know the roles they would be planning to sing around the time of the world premiere to ensure what I created would best suit their presumed vocal estate, offering yet another level of musical and dramatic insight.

Having worked so extensively with Diana Damrau from our initial meeting in 2004, deepening our knowledge of each others' work with each new collaboration, the idea of creating an opera in which she would play the lead was a most thrilling prospect. I knew that by Autumn 2013 Diana's repertoire would focus centrally on the bel canto and Mozart coloratura heroines including Lucia, Violetta, Gilda, Konstanze and Amina. These roles are noted for their facility in the upper register whilst requiring a warm and anchored middle-voice, agility in quick-fire passage of fioriture and (particularly in Diana's outstanding portrayals) quite sudden dynamic 180-degree flips. Whatsmore, Diana is an astonishingly successful performer of song repertoire with a gift for delivering the most heart-breakingly honest and intimate readings of text. Without veering from a written note of my music, she has continued to bowl me over with her interpretive choices in every piece of mine she has performed.

I was determined to incorporate all of these elements into Moll's writing, the most important being Diana's attention to text. Though I would be sure to employ them, in no way were her more obvious virtuosic talents to be a mere canary-display. It was essential for every run, trill, messa di voce and high note to have dramatic justification. Moll Hackabout is a plucky young woman from the country, not a mere virginal ingenue, who aspires to a great deal more than rural life can offer; the trait that leads to her eventual un-doing. This element of gutsy abandon and excitement in her vocal personality is frequently portrayed in melismatic displays as first witnessed in her opening passages "*My cottage is upon the coast...*" in Scene One during which she vocalises ascending triplet figures and chromatic runs to portray her exhilaration. This agility is again called upon in Scene Two as a display of her inner strength as she sings of how arduous her life was in Yorkshire and in Scene Three when she is excited now by the prospect of returning there in her 'cabaletta' "*To be back home again...*". This coloratura element takes a far darker turn from

Scene Four onwards becoming an outlet for the mental and physical pain she undergoes, be it the labour pains brought on in Bridewell Prison (Scene Four) or the plethora of requirements of vocal dexterity called upon in Scene Five (her mad-scene) to demonstrate the physical and mental anguish induced by her syphilis, encompassing a four-bar sustained messa di voce when her sanity finally leaves her completely "*I feel a fire in my head*", trills, many forte-piano attacks and thermospheric scalic passages that would make Zerbinetta blush.

Plundering the coloratura arsenal with such a gifted and vocally secure performer as Diana enables a composer to create the most thrilling of dramatic coups in full knowledge that they will be executed with complete accuracy and sound dramatic intent, but such moments must be balanced and opposed. For me the delicate, intimate spaces in the score (and particular this mad-scene) are the most affecting. In her duets with Dalton in Scenes Two and Five (imagined or otherwise) she is able to express herself honestly and the line is deliberately simple and free of any melisma. Likewise, in Scene Five when she sings her two lullabies, the first to her stolen baby's blanket "*Sweet baby sleep*" or when she ultimately sings herself to sleep/death during "*I can lie here, lie forgotten*" one is given the time and space to empathise. I like to think of Moll as a vocal cousin to both Lucia and Zerbinetta; imagine Zerbinetta has been kicked-out of her *commedia dell'arte* group and fallen on hard times!

Hogarth based *Mother Needham* on renowned real-life procuress Elizabeth Needham who died when pelted to death following a stint standing in the pillory in 1731. Alexander Pope, writing at the time, described how kindly and charming she was to prospective prostitutes and clients, yet was famed for her foul mouth and ability hurl the rudest of abuse when slighted. Peter Ackroyd captured this dichotomy wonderfully in the libretto and I sought to reflect this duality. With Marie McLaughlin on board to play the role I know I would have a performer capable of meeting these contrasting dramatic and vocal demands. Hers is a voice of luxurious warmth, capable of outbursts throughout her range, yet also possessing of real delicacy of touch.

In her 'opening aria' "*In a coach from Yorkshire*" her cynical flippancy regarding Moll's use to her as a commodity is scored in playful, yet nonetheless threatening staccato phrases like "*Little chicken, chicken*" after which she evokes London as the "*Stony-hearted step-mother of suffering*" (reminiscent of Lady Macbeth calling for the "*milk of human kindness*" to be drawn from her) in mock-religious terms, further darkening her persona. Her sinisterly-playful nature runs throughout the scene and indeed the entire opera. Needham's lines are frequently peppered with effervescent trills and staccati over fairly light, faux-elegant parlour-room chamber-orchestration, all the while underpinned by the snarling 'London' drone lingering beneath the surface to add a layer of menace to her charming veneer. To ingratiate herself to Moll, her serpentine qualities are portrayed with snaking woodwinds and shimmering high strings. At this point her vocal line softens to become more lyrical; staccati and trills are replaced by sleek, legato phrasing and gentler dynamics.

She next appears in Scene Four in Bridewell Prison. Having been crossed, her foul mouth now pours forth its vulgar tirade. The dramatic, angular vocal writing, with its sustained leaps into the higher register now rides over much larger orchestral forces. An even darker side to her sinisterly-playful temperament is on display as she goads Kitty for her devotion to Moll during "*Maybe it is her dainty cup you are waiting to*

*sip?*” as it writhes with discordant tremolo strings in a far more chromatic setting. The full force of her wrath is then un-leashed in her fight with Kitty as they brawl over a sea of erupting strings; the vocal-jumps widen as the line rises in pitch melismatically to the climax “*I will carve your face a pretty mess, I will!*”. By this point, all facets of Needham’s personality have been explored and when she returns for her final appearance at Moll’s wake in Scene Six, it appears as if the ‘reset-button’ has been pressed. She is once again charming and playful, clothed in her familiar and ‘*oh, so elegant*’ string quartet and delicately snaking woodwinds as she flirts with Lovelace, absolves herself of any guilt in Moll’s downfall and luridly discusses the future prospects of Moll’s baby daughter, Emily.

Kitty is ever the pragmatist. She is well-aware of the realities of London’s dark underbelly so is thoroughly no-nonsense and very quick to temper. This side of her personality is portrayed in a mono-syllabic ‘one-note-per-word’, occasionally quasi-patter vocal line in complete contrast to Moll’s more decadent, lyrical writing. Orchestrally, her personality is delineated by a light, brittle, rhythmic texture, often moving as fleetly as she does. The harmonic landscape is initially harsh with little warmth or bloom. By way of her growing exposure to Moll’s idealistic romanticism, her gratitude for Moll’s kindness and deepening sympathy for her plight several moments later emerge when this hard-faced guard is let down, notably at the end of Scene Three when she is powerless to do anything as Dalton rapes Moll, “*Poor little thing*” or as she is comforting Moll as they are ejected from Bridewell Prison in Scene Four, “*You have done your share for me*”. Here, the writing closely resembles Moll’s with its melismatic sweep, high-lying pianissimo dynamics and long, legato phrasing. Though the severity and hopelessness of her situation has caused her to become even more brittle when speaking to others, the harsh quality of her mono-syllabic delivery has softened when she addresses Moll, often taking a rallying or playful tone as can be heard in Scene Three when she helps Moll prepare for her work, “*With the grace that your beauty confers...*” or in her kind nurturing of Emily throughout Scene Five.

Even before auditioning Tara Erraught for the role of Kitty I was delighted to learn that she had had great success as a member of the company of the Bavarian State Opera in highly contrasting roles from 18th-century to contemporary repertoire. This ensured she would have the variety of colours and stylistic tools to portray the complexities of this role. For instance, her knowledge of the Rossini style suggested that quick patter vocal delivery would be no problem, the Bellini experience meant she could deftly shape legato phrases when necessary and her portrayal of the title role in Ravel’s ‘*L’enfant et les sortilèges*’ reassured me of her skills in the demands of more recent repertoire (counting, an ear for chromatic writing etc). Once she had sung for me, it was obvious that this was a perfect match; a rich tone, flexible throughout the register whose security at the top of the voice would enable her to meet Diana Damrau head-on for any dramatic high-lying passages.

As opera continues to assimilate the dramatic ideals of film in its realism, a physical performer able to embody the heroic both in stature and voice to Nathan Gunn’s elite level, who is also as accomplished as Nathan in contemporary repertoire will be a magnet for all composers. These qualities make him ideal to create the role of James Dalton.

Dalton walks with a confident swagger. He is based on a real-life criminal of the same name and this swagger has been earned by having staved off arrest and death

in the gallows time and time again. He knows London, the violence of its people and the darkness of its streets; they are his “*manor*” as he says. This violence remains a feature of his orchestral identity, constantly punctuated with dyspeptic brass/percussion and volcanic strings. Rhythmically, his metre is far more complex than the other characters; one moment it is in a simple 4/4 then in 7/8 then 5/4, all feeding this sense of unpredictability and dangerous spontaneity. This tension is consistent with a very high-lying baritone line, sitting in a most thrilling niche of Nathan’s voice. All this is heard in the regaling of his Scene Two tale “*Alone in my thoughts outside Garraway’s Coffee House*”. The only time his demeanour softens is with respect to Moll. It is her relative purity (relative to the other women of London) that has caused him to fall for her. At these moments his vocal lines become less spasmodic and the orchestra quieters to provide an almost pastoral soundscape, as in Scene Two “*Beside the drabs of this city you are a Queen*” and during Moll’s mad visions in Scene Five. These are both extended examples of his lyrical compassion, though other more fleeting examples exist. These often follow a dramatic barrage, thus requiring enormous vocal control and refinement, as in Scene Three during his argument with Lovelace. He is deeply moved by the thought that the old man struck Moll and momentarily reflects gently to himself “*You struck her beautiful face*” in delicate head-voice, before once again returning to the hell-for-leather vocal tirade.

Christopher Gillett is another champion of contemporary opera, having been many a composer’s go-to tenor (including Henze and Tippett) due to his astonishing musicality and my favourite quality, his desire to get stuck in, the dirtier his hands the better! On paper, Mister Lovelace could indeed be categorised as a character-tenor but knowing Chris’ vocal and dramatic instincts as I do, I was assured that whilst able to personify the more humorous or caricature-ish elements of this role, he would also be able to infuse him with a deeper, more rounded motivation. Whatsmore, his frequent engagements performing Bach and Mozart mean that his attention to the even delivery of a beautiful vocal line sets him aside from many others.

St John Lovelace has an affected side to his personality, but is also a man of stature and great means with a darker, menacing side. As such, it would be wrong for him to be portrayed solely as a mere effeminate fop. I believe his more ludicrous, affected traits are borne out of his wealth and social class, with its exaggerated emphasis on good-taste and delicate refinement. When portraying this aspect of his character, many of the vocal and instrumental tics associated with Needham’s elegance and social standing are on display including trills, staccati and heavily accented phrasing along with small-scale parlour-room chamber-orchestration. This can be heard in Scene Two during his flirtation with Moll and Scene Six when greeting Needham at Moll’s wake, “*Oh, what a mucky little gathering*”. But he is not a one-dimensional “*over-ripe ninny*”, despite Moll’s assertions to the contrary. His quick-wits are illustrated by a very rapid vocal delivery and orchestrally by a constant coterie of swirling medium-to-high-pitched winds portraying his restlessly alert mind. There are then times during which he is dramatised in far darker, more menacing shades; times when he knows he is in a position of unquestionable authority, be it when striking a woman (Moll’s eviction from Leadenhall Street in Scene Two) or when flanked by officers (whilst taunting Dalton in Scene Three). During the latter when face-to-face with Dalton, the once whirling, reedy orchestral tissue and fitful vocal delivery is slowly usurped by low, growling winds, festering scalic figures in the strings and broader phrasing in the vocal line, culminating in his final insult “*She has gelded you, she holds your balls*”. Though a lyric tenor, I knew Chris would be able to ride masterfully above the orchestra in such moments. During Moll’s wake, I

enjoyed being able to make of his experience in performing Bach during his parodical bidding-prayer "*Dear God, look down on our poor Moll*".

Though the bass playing the Coachman, Officer and Gaoler is theoretically engaged to perform three separate roles, I consider these men to be personifications of differing elements of London's nature so would therefore inhabit the same vocal sound-world. The Coachman is a manifestation of the opportunistic face of the city, the Officer is the mercenary face and the Gaoler the sadistic. Though utterly involved in the action of the piece (always set against the existing orchestral landscape), as a quasi-totemic figure I was keen to make his vocal writing unlike any other character's, identified by very long vocal lines, operating outside of the same sense of time as the others therefore conferring upon him a removed or eternal perspective. In writing the role for Nicolas Testé I knew he had the requisite breath control and strong physical/vocal presence in spades. Having played a great many gods, priests and doctors I was also sure that the arch, sinister and grave nature of the part would suit his dramatic gifts perfectly.

This function of the chorus in this piece is two-fold. In the first instance they are active participants in the action. Hogarth's art work is often teeming with people squeezed tightly into the frame, with each person, regardless of the size of the sea of bodies inhabiting the scene, recounting their own story or 'progress'. I wanted to reflect this infestation and did so by frequently scoring their parts polyphonically, creating a constant barrage of sound invading the ears, first heard in Scene One with the Market traders' and Londoners' calls of "*Fruits and roots...*". In other instances, I favoured a densely chromatic, homophonic idiom to create an intensely acerbic wall of singing, unsettling in its lack of harmonic resolution as can be heard during Scene Four in Bridewell Prison when the inmates encircle Moll, collectively insulting her with chants of "*Strumpet! Punk! Fireship!*". This is directed at her rather than to her, the effect being one of aggression and violence. Their role during Moll's wake differed again as on this occasion they actually *sing* a drinking-song. I had great fun writing and scoring this 'number'. Though all my own work and distinctly contemporary both melodically and harmonically, I was wonderfully enthused when capturing the raucous atmosphere of an 18th century tavern-song with its driving compound 'jig' rhythm and repeated vulgar catches.

The second function of the chorus is that of the observer and is removed entirely from the action. This is particularly fitting when one considers that this opera is based on a work of art that has itself been observed and judged by thousands upon thousands in galleries and museums since its inception. During these moments time does indeed freeze, the orchestra sustains in hushed tones (if playing at all) and the monodic, quasi-plainchant chorus makes their comment before quickly dissolving back into the fabric of the music as the orchestra re-enters. During these moments the chorus serves to provide a deeper commentary of the action, as heard in Scene One when Moll is led away by Needham, "*The flower taken to market...*" or tell us where we are, as in the opening of Scene Four "*Gaolers and Gaoled*".

Though I appreciate it is a writers' cliché, the day I 'killed' Moll was a poignant and sadly-tinged one. I knew it was looming but had grown very attached to little Molly and her hapless yet well-intentioned journey. This affirmed to me that telling stories in music is the journey I hope to follow for the rest of my life and I feel privileged that the roles of Moll, Needham and the rest of the harlot *menagerie* were the first characters to whom I was able to give voice.

**3. Sybille Gädeke, initial costume concept for *A Harlot's Progress* sent to Iain Bell, 10 December, 2012. Reprinted courtesy of the designer.**

Berlin, Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> 2012

Due to the original time of Moll Hagabout's history the silhouettes of the choir refer to the outline of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, like justaucorps or a full habit, bodices, pagnets or bonnets, culottes. The fabric will be of nowadays materials like leather, velvet, polyester-satin, rips, poly-moiree, jeans, polysatin, etc.. There will also be a mix of styles, like a justaucorps of leather combined with satin-jeans with a gallon of silverbuttons, put inside boots, to make an impression of a baroque-silhouette. You can see a typical manteau with drapee à la polonaise in synthetic lace over jeans and a bodice made of poly-duchesse. We will use Watteau pleats in the back of a coat and will style some of the hairdos in the outline of a bonnet. And there are veils of lace and voile to change the outline slightly. I am looking for a pitoresque appearance, which has both: the scent of the past and the toughness of today's vision, like Picasso's paintings of artists and acrobats had. Since Moll's story could happen and happens yet any time, any place on earth, and there will always be „the people“ watching, commenting without any emphasis, I think the point in time, when her story happened or happens should be wide.

This is why my research was not only focused on the historical costume platforms, but I also was inspired by Thierry Mugler, Galiano, Vivian Westwood, Jean Paul Gaultier and Hussein Chalayan. As for a wider visual background I searched around Kara Walker, August Sander, Toulouse Lautrec, Otto Dix, Brassai, Picasso, James Ensor, Watteau, Fragonard and of course Hogarth.

The choir's colours are shimmering shades of a dung beetle, like a dark-shining jetstone, whose real appearance of colour one will never understand. The costume line refers to various social classes: rich man, bag-lady, middle-class-bourgeois, worker, punk, elegants and drop-outs, all together in one community of the market. The idea of the costume line for the choir is to transport the vision of a vivid, varied, rather tough, partly cynical society.

I am sending you the collection of some of the choir figurines, they will be realized with a mix of vintage-sale, newly cut historical pieces, and used and overworked fundus-clothe. As for the hairdo I am planning on the same way, as to partly rebuild the baroque silhouette with today's methods, like f[or] e[xample], using dreadlocks like a baroque wig.

Please understand that I am not ready to send the soloists figurines yet, since I am still working on details.

I will have a similar concept to mix historical cut lines with today's fabric, but with an individual colour concept for each person. For Moll I am very much thinking of the „English-rose“, with nude-colours, rosee, close to skin-colour, for mother Needham it would rather chose a darkish base, maybe a leather bodice, span over with a cocoon of voile or lace, as if she was a spider inside her net. For Mr. Lovelace I think it is possible to go for the typical elegant line of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century banker or industrial leader. I feel that it is possible to use all the historical lines linked to the individual characters.

You will surely see the work fully, when I am completely through with it. I hope my examples of the figurines gave you some ideas about the way we are heading.

Best wishes,  
Sibylle Gädeke

**4. Sybille Gädeke, costume concepts for lead roles in *A Harlot's Progress*, 19 January, 2013. Reprinted courtesy of the designer.**

**A Harlot's Progress**

Moll Hackabout

Moll's figurines will adapt to a 18th century cutline, on the use of today's fabric, and under the aspect of her development and of course the individuality of the Singer. Moll's destiny has happened then and still happens now. The „Moll Hackabouts“ are international and timeless. She starts with rather rural clothing, fresh and naive, and dies in a small nude coloured underdress, like a wretched modern icon of suffering. So the visual Line will stretch from then to today.

Moll's first appearance will be a mix of a typical baroque „Holland-doll“: her dark blue coat, reminds to a school uniform (or a very young Mary Poppins), the cut refers to the 18th century à l'anglaise in the front, with Watteau-pleats in the back to create an impression of a child's coat.

She wears a hand-knitted scarf of woolen roses, her look in the first scene should be the one of a naive, rural, fresh young girl, an typical unspoiled English rose. That personal handmade scarf will accompany her through the plot: it will get more and more rotten, like an old worn out doll, which one carries along, as a last rest from one's childhood, and will finally be thrown into her grave, as a dirty, torn off rug.

The dress under her coat, shown in the interlude scene will as well have a freshness and lightness of a summer dress, it changes into a negligée, cut like a baroque manteau, but from a shiny polyester-like fabric, at Mister Lovelace's Place. During the story, Moll's dresses get smaller and less, as if her wardrobe was [skinned]: The red skirt for scene 3 is a drappé as a big lace, as if she was a gift to anyone, who wants to unpack her. The lace-drappé and the bodice in scene 3 are both over the top and shrill, due to her professional position, They will be worn out, faded and torn in scene 4, like the shades of the scene before.

Her clothes turn more and more in cheap rugs, until at the end the dress is like a dead-skin.

Leaning on the „rose of England“ colours, colours are rose, apricot and nudes. Her colours are mainly soft and tender.

Kitty

Kitty is streetwise, she knows how to survive, her dressline is professional. She dresses as it is needed. She wears wigs if wanted, dresses as a service-girl, as a prostitute, as whatever her job asks her to, she helps Moll to understand the laws of her world, she knows the dress codes and adjusts.

Her figurine refers to a cutline à l'anglaise, with a historical bodice as underwear. In scene 3 it might show and maybe refers to the melancholic acrobats from Picasso's blue phase. Kitty as well gets more and more wretched with torn off clothes, other than Moll who, becomes more and more skinny fragileness, Kitty gets punkier (scene

4). Her figurine though in scene 5 and 6 could have an impression of a Mother Mary: carrying Moll's child and wrapped in a blue-ish cloth, it is the moment, when she has the possibility to switch to her emphatic part of mind: Take the child and run, or to stay in the situation and become a follower of mother Needham.

#### Mother Needham

Mother Needham's Figurine is like a spider in her web. She has an armour of thick shiny fabric, hidden under a net of greyish lace. The bodice should be leather, there is some Vivian-Westwood-likeness in her outfit beneath that cloud of lace. The cut of the lace coat is pure 18<sup>th</sup> century: a caracoa and a skirt drappé à la polpnaise.

She will wear an old dress and a big old coat, in scene 4, her hair still like a cloud around her face.

She will appear like in scene 1, when Moll is dead.

#### James Dalton

James Dalton is the typical seducer: handsome, smart, fast, ruthless and even in his recklessness there is charm, his outfit is a bit „too-too-too“, but elegant – a bit too elegant of what he is and a bit too loud, a bit too red, but: he can wear it. The trousers might be leather jeans, the red manteau over a muscle-shirt, his colours are white, red and black – hard, precise and direct colours. His hair should be long-ish.

In scene 4 as the appearance of a nightmare, his face should show shades of a skull.

#### Mister Lovelace

[He] has a grey outfit, the cutline refers rather to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the area of industrialization („hier referiere ich auf Dein Benjamin Zitat „in der Prostituierten schlägt die Ware die Augen auf....“).

His social standard and the way of treating Moll (and later her persecutor) like an available trading object reminds me to the cynic[al] gesture of an high industrial manager or first range banker, a typical powerful „grey-man“ with the attitude of „everything is buyable“. He should be very elegant, sophisticated and conservative, good and trustful-looking, to widen the gap between „book and cover“.

#### The Coachman

Adapted to the choir: the coachman wears the style and colours of one of the people from London: a short leather spencer-jacket, the cut referring to a hunters habit from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, linen trousers, boots and a pullover like a sailor, he should be just like one of the workers from the street.

#### The Detective

[He] could be a high-range police officer in his uniform: his position makes him as unhurt-able as money does for Mr Lovelace. They are both upper class, mighty and work hand in hand: powers subvences[sic] finance. Diese Figur steht ja noch zur Klärung offen.

#### The Guard

The guardian's[sic] figurine refers to a uniform of paramilitary, a masculine outline of the subaltern brute, who just hands pressure from above to below him. The closer we come to Moll's end the more modern her partner's figurines get. After her death all the people she had met, except for Dalton, show up at her grave: unchanged (except for Kitty), just as in the beginning: and await the new „usable Moll“ in her look-alike daughter.

All the figurines are a base I am still working on, depending on the fabric and the on-going work.

I will keep developing details, or change pieces.

As of 19.01.2013

## 5. Performance Stills and Production Photos

Performance stills from *A Harlot's Progress*, Theater an der Wien, October 2013.

Images included courtesy of Werner Kmetitsch

### 5.1 Choral entrance, Scene One. Arnold Schönberg Chor. Image © Werner Kmetitsch



5.2 Moll Hackabout's entrance, Scene One. Diana Damrau, Arnold Schönberg Chor. Image © Werner Kmetitsch



5.3 Moll's depredation at the behest of Mother Needham, Interlude One. Diana Damrau, Arnold Schönberg Chor. Image © Werner Kmetitsch



5.4 Moll manipulates her wealthy keeper, St. John Lovelace, Scene Two. Diana Damrau, Christopher Gillet. Image © Werner Kmetitsch



5.5 St. John Lovelace expels Moll from his keeping, Scene Two. Diana Damrau, Christopher Gillet. Image © Werner Kmetitsch



5.6 James Dalton threatens St. John Lovelace, Scene Three. Nathan Gunn, Christopher Gillet. Image © Werner Kmetitsch



5.7 James Dalton rapes Moll, Scene Three. Nathan Gunn, Diana Damrau. Image © Werner Kmetitsch



5.8 Kitty defends Moll from Mother Needham and other female inmates in Bridewell Prison, Scene Four. Arnold Schönberg Chor, Tara Erraught, Diana Damrau. Image © Werner Kmetitsch



5.9 James Dalton haunts Moll's mad visions, Scene Five. Nathan Gunn, Diana Damrau. Image © Werner Kmetitsch



5.10 Moll's syphilitic ravings worsen before her death, Scene Five. Diana Damrau. Image © Werner Kmetitsch



5.11 Mother Needham takes Moll's child, Emily, into her care, Scene Six. Christopher Gillet, Nicolas Testé, Marie McLaughlin, Arnold Schönberg Chor. Image © Werner Kmetitsch



5.12 The cycle restarts, Scene Six. Letitia Popelka. Image © Werner Kmetitsch



Production photos from rehearsals and performances of *A Harlot's Progress*, Theater an der Wien, September - October 2013. Images not taken by the author included courtesy of Iain Bell.

5.13 Tara Erraught, Nathan Gunn, and Diana Damrau in rehearsal at the Rosenhügel Film Studios in Vienna, September 2013. Image © Iain Bell



5.14 Arnold Schönberg Chor, Marie McLaughlin, and Tara Erraught in rehearsal at the Rosenhügel Film Studios in Vienna, September 2013. Image © Iain Bell



5.15 A supernumary, Nathan Gunn, and Christopher Gillet in rehearsal at the Rosenhügel Film Studios in Vienna, September 2013. Image © Iain Bell



A photograph showing a large, curved, white structure with vertical ribs, likely a tunnel or a large container. A person is standing inside the structure, providing a sense of scale. The structure is illuminated from above, and the background is dark.

[illegible]

5.18 (from left) Nicolas Testé, Kalle Kuusava (assistant conductor), Joyce Fieldsend, Raphael Schluesselberg, Diana Damrau, Jens-Daniel Herzog (director), Mathis Neidhardt (set designer), Mikko Franck, Marie McLaughlin, Anja Meyer (production manager), Leonora Scheib (assistant to the director and stage management), Sebastian Bauer (assistant to the director), Tara Erraught, Sybille Gädeke (costume designer), Christopher Gillet, and Roland Geyer (artistic director) at the premiere reception of *A Harlot's Progress* at the Theater an der Wien, 13 October 2013. Image © Margarethe Satorius



5.19 Iain Bell receives applause from cast and audience at the final performance of *A Harlot's Progress* at the Theater an der Wien, 27 October 2013. Image © Margarethe Satorius



## 6. Harlot's Progress, series of six engravings by William Hogarth, 1732.

### 6.1 *A Harlot's Progress*, Plate I: *Arrival in London*



### 6.2 *A Harlot's Progress*, Plate II: *The Quarrel*



6.3 *A Harlot's Progress*, Plate III: *Apprehended by a Magistrate*



6.4 *A Harlot's Progress*, Plate IV: *Beating Hemp in Bridewell*



### 6.5 *A Harlot's Progress*, Plate V: *Her Death*



### 6.6 *A Harlot's Progress*, Plate VI: *Her Funeral*



## 7. Supplemental Materials

7.1 Detail of Plate III of *A Harlot's Progress*, series of six engravings by William Hogarth, 1732.



7.2 Lady's fan showing five scenes after William Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress*, c. 1732 ©The British Museum



7.3 Lady's fan showing three scenes after William Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress*, c. 1732 ©The Art Institute of Chicago



7.4 Verses written by William Combe for Thomas Rowlandson's *Tour of Doctor Syntax in Search of the Picturesque*, London: 1812.

Plate I

The snares are set, the plot is laid, Ruin awaits thee,—hapless maid!  
Seduction sly assails thine ear, And *gloating, foul desire* is near; Baneful and  
blighting are their smiles, Destruction waits upon their wiles; Alas! thy  
guardian angel sleeps, Vice clasps her hands, and virtue weeps."

Plate II

Ah! why so vain, though blooming in thy spring, Thou shining, frail, adorn'd,  
but wretched thing Old age will come; disease may come before, And twenty  
prove as fatal as threescore!

Plate III

Reproach, scorn, infamy, and hate, On all thy future steps shall wait; Thy furor  
be loath'd by every eye, And every foot thy presence fly.

Plate IV

With pallid cheek and haggard eye, And loud laments, and heartfelt sigh,  
Unpitied, hopeless of relief, She drinks the bitter cup of grief.  
In vain the sigh, in vain the tear, Compassion never enters here; But justice  
clanks her iron chain, And calls forth shame, remorse, and pain.

Plate V

With keen remorse, deep sighs, and trembling fears Repentant groans, and  
unavailing tears, This child of misery resigns her breath, And sinks,  
despondent, in the arms of death.

Plate VI

No friend's complaint, no kind domestic tear, Pleas'd thy pale ghost, or grac'd  
thy mournful bier: By harlots' hands thy dying eyes were clos'd; By harlots'

hands thy decent limbs compos'd; By harlots' hands thy humble grave adorn'd; By harlots honour'd, and by harlots mourn'd.

**8. Articles posted on Norman Lebrecht's "Slipped Disk" blog: <http://slippedisc.com/2013/10> (Last accessed 25 Sept. 2013), October 1<sup>st</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013.**

**8.1 A harlot prepares for a big night in Vienna**

October 2, 2013

*Here, as promised, is our first blog entry by a British composer who's about to stage a world premiere in Mozart's town. Enjoy.*



*Photo: © Iain Bell/Slipped Disc.*

My name is Iain Bell and I am a 33-year old classical composer. My opera 'A Harlot's Progress' (based on the Hogarth series of etchings to a libretto by Peter Ackroyd) is due to receive its world premiere in Vienna's Theater an der Wien on Sunday October 13th.

As of today, I have been in Vienna for exactly a month and will stay for another month. Being at this mid-point, a day shy of a fortnight before curtain-up, it feels like the perfect opportunity to take stock and bring you all (and myself) up to speed...

Now that time has ironed out those initial

creases of paranoia that so crumpled my first few days here, with such internal outcries as, "that piano score reduction sounds nothing like the orchestra...eek" or blaming myself when a singer is fishing for their pitch at a particularly thorny vocal entry, I have now adapted to and grown very fond of my life in Vienna; I know to get all my food shopping in on a Saturday night as no shops are open on a Sunday, likewise I know better than to cross at a red light lest I incur the wrath of spittle-filled tutting from all others!

It is difficult to convey the surrealism that came with the first few days of rehearsal here. Obviously I knew this period was coming; I completed the work eighteen

months ago and it was commissioned in 2010. Nonetheless, nothing could prepare me for the fact that on that first day of scenic rehearsals those dozens upon dozens of people were in that studio to realise a story that had up to that point existed solely (to me) as six etchings that had somehow morphed in my mind into the form of a black-and-white Watch with Mother cartoon with a slightly racier sound track.

What should have been the least surprising moment of the entire process was when the time came to hear the singers actually 'sing' their roles. I don't know why it came as such a shock to me to hear them finally utter the words I had set to music, it is an opera after all, but I was utterly bull-dozed. No longer did I have to imagine how Diana Damrau would shape a certain phrase, it was there, living and breathing in 3D (excuse the mixed metaphor). Moll Hackabout – Hogarth's name for his titular harlot – now existed, and what's more she had a much finer voice than my broken-baritone could ever muster!

As the weeks have passed, I've become more relaxed in the environment and completely engaged in the rehearsals I have attended. I chose not to attend them all as it was very important to me to hand over the reins to the singers, directorial and musical staff and let them really stamp their own identities on the piece. I didn't want them to just interpret, I wanted them to create and therefore have as much ownership of the work as me. This has thus far floored every journalist out here who has interviewed me who are seemingly all too aware of stories about composers terrorising entire houses with their diktats. Not for me. There is so much fun collaboration to be had as an opera composer so you have to be willing and happy to embrace that, if not, just stick to writing (and conducting) symphonies!

So t-minus 13 days and I am a very happy bunny indeed. The cast is on fire, we have had several runs of the piece already and the director's concept is marvellous. That said, I am well aware that another set of tests will be presented in the coming week. We move from our studio rehearsal space in the outskirts of Vienna to the stage in the opera house, meaning the cast will have to transfer all their staging to a completely new space. This is also the week in which the first orchestral rehearsals take place. I have been urged by my publisher to stay well away from the first couple of these. The orchestra is world-class but as this piece is brand new to them, one cannot expect them to be note-perfect on the first attempt, so it has been decided that hearing this may not be a completely necessary part of my musical journey, as desperate as I am to hear them breathe life into the dark underbelly of London I have sought to evoke!

Will let you know...

## **8.2 Too late to turn back: my opera is in general rehearsal**

October 13, 2013

*Composer Iain Bell is back in the laundry for the last time, before his big night in Vienna.*

Again I write this blog in my regular haunt, the 'schnell & sauber' laundrette with forty-two minutes left in the tumble dryer and just a few hours until the General Rehearsal of A Harlot's Progress. The General Rehearsal is the final fully-staged run-through of the piece in its entirety before the opening, so the last opportunity for any little tweaks to be tweaked vocally, dramatically and orchestrally before we get this show on the road.

Having already basked in the joy of seeing the piece on its feet during last Sunday's final piano rehearsal, accompanied by the lights, costumes, wigs, sets etc., in their full Technicolor glory, I knew I would be able to entirely turn my focus onto the orchestra in the coming week.

I chose not to attend the first few orchestral rehearsals for two reasons. Firstly, I wanted the conductor, Mikko Franck to be able to stamp his own authority on the work. In past early-stage orchestral rehearsals I have had the experience where players crane over the shoulder of the conductor, bypassing him completely to ask me a question about interpretation. This is very awkward for me and undermining for the Maestro who is charged with interpreting the piece. I wanted to avoid that entirely. Secondly, I wasn't too keen on hearing the orchestra 'search' for the piece and preferred to hear it for the first time when they were a little more familiar with it.

So the sitzprobe on Monday would be our first meeting and I was rather delighted that the venue of said first-date would be the Golden Hall of Vienna's Musikverein; a wonderfully ornate concert house in the centre of the city. A sitzprobe is the rehearsal where the singers and orchestra first meet one another and in this case



*Photo: © Iain Bell/Slipped Disc.*

the singers were as eager as me to hear the piece, at least I had an idea how it should go; they were chomping at the bit. Not only did they want to hear the sound world I had created to tell Hogarth's/Ackroyd's story but they also wanted to assure themselves of such 'singerly' yet very valid concerns as whether the orchestration may be too dense for them, whether they could still find their pitches amid the instrumental textures etc.

It is no secret that this piece deals with some extremely dark issues like rape, madness and prostitution all of which I have tried to convey within the orchestra, which is free to explode further during the interludes I have scored to link the scenes. It was the interlude I had composed to depict Moll's violent 'deflowering' that Maestro Franck chose to kick-off with. I was well aware that the acoustics of the hall would not be representative of those in the opera house, distorting, amplifying and echo-ing the music played, but this was definitely the moment where such a distortion had full impact. The violence of the music bombarded the room like the most aggressive, blood-thirsty film score you could imagine. I LOVED it for the sheer shock value of it! Within a short while our ears had all adjusted and the rehearsal again became the studious environment necessary to get some work done. I could see the singers

were really enjoying the process, physically grooving to the rhythms (an action I can assure will not be replicated on stage). I too was relieved that the music all held together and even with the distortion of the hall sounded better than I could have hoped at that juncture thanks to the great orchestra and firm leadership from the conductor.

It was so moving to hear my London soundscape wake up as it so exceeded my expectations. Upon leaving the theatre, I noticed a crowd of fans speaking to the singers with photos to sign. We have been in a 'harlot bubble' for six weeks and it is only now starting to really dawn on me that people ARE actually going to be listening to it very soon.

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## Abstract

In the autumn of 2013 Vienna's Theater an der Wien presented the world premiere of *A Harlot's Progress*, a new opera by composer Iain Bell and librettist Peter Ackroyd based on William Hogarth's 1732 graphic series of the same name. Working on this production as a *Produktionshospitantin* presented a unique opportunity to document the realization of a contemporary opera at a world-class *stagione* house. Thus, this paper includes accounts of the production process, transcribed interviews with members of the artistic team, images and photographs of rehearsals and performances, critical responses to the piece's premiere, and reflective commentary from its composer.

Further, in order to enable meaningful examination of Bell and Ackroyd's adaptation, this documentary material is presented within the context of research on the piece's original source. Substantial historical and art historical information on William Hogarth's aesthetic serves as contextualization for dramaturgical analysis of the *Harlot's Progress* opera. The chance to investigate the dramatic characteristics of a single narrative in two fundamentally different forms—print media and operatic performance—enables a detailed study in transmedial adaptation. This work therefore examines the structural parameters, compositional gestures, and modes of communicating character and setting employed by Bell and Ackroyd as compared with Hogarth's original series.

## Zusammenfassung

Im Herbst 2013 präsentierte das Theater an der Wien die Uraufführung von *A Harlot's Progress*, einer neuen Oper des britischen Komponisten Iain Bell und des Librettisten Peter Ackroyd, die auf William Hogarths gleichnamigem grafischen Zyklus aus dem Jahr 1732 basiert. Als Produktionshospitantin hatte ich eine einzigartige Gelegenheit, die Realisierung einer zeitgenössischen Oper in einem *stagione*-Haus von Weltrang zu dokumentieren. Daher beinhaltet diese Arbeit Schilderungen des Produktionsprozesses, transkribierte Interviews mit dem künstlerischen Team, Bilder und Fotografien von Proben und Vorstellungen, Kritiken der Uraufführung, und Überlegungen des Komponisten.

Um eine sinnvolle Betrachtung der Adaption Bells und Ackroyds zu ermöglichen, wird dieses Material in einen Zusammenhang zu Hogarths Zyklus gesetzt. Wesentliche geschichtliche und kunstgeschichtliche Informationen über die Ästhetik William Hogarths dienen als Kontext für eine dramaturgische Analyse der Oper, *A Harlot's Progress*. Durch die Betrachtung der dramatischen Eigenschaften einer einzigen Geschichte in zwei unterschiedlichen Erzählweisen—Darstellung in den Kupferstichen und in der Oper—wird eine detaillierte Studie transmedialer Adaption ermöglicht. In dieser Arbeit wird demzufolge die Struktur, Kompositionstechnik, und Raum- und Charakterdarstellung von Bell und Ackroyd mit jener von Hogarth verglichen und analysiert.

## Curriculum Vitae

### **Margarethe Satorius**

is a writer and dramaturg currently based in Vienna, Austria. Born in central Illinois and raised in Southern California's Mojave Desert, Satorius completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dramaturgy and Criticism



at DePaul University's Theatre School in 2005. As one of two students accepted annually to America's only undergraduate dramaturgy program, she had the opportunity to study closely with dramaturg and author Dr. Rachel Shteir, celebrated *Chicago Tribune* critic Chris Jones, and playwright Dean Corrin. She has participated in master classes with Bill Irwin, Edward Albee and Ntozake Shange, workshops in Meisner actor training, and gymnastics and circus arts training at the Actor's Gymnasium.

After studying at Vienna's Institute for European Studies (IES) during the autumn of 2004, Satorius' fascination shifted to the dramaturgy of opera. She returned to IES in January of 2006 to work as a Student Assistant, and began coursework at the Universität Wien in Theater-, Film-, und Mediengeschichte in 2008. Over the course of her studies, Satorius has sought to immerse herself in every facet of operatic production and analysis: as research assistant for Univ. Prof. KWPU Dr. Edwin Vanecek (2009-2010), dramaturg and production manager ("A Sacred Concert", Ireland, November 2010), production assistant to Michael Pinkerton (Konservatorium Wien, Spring 2011), Productionhospitantin to Mag. Anja Meyer (Theater an der Wien, Autumn 2013), and conference translator for the European Academy of Music Theatre (Autumn 2013).

For her written work, Satorius' recognitions include the California Governor's Award and Marcus Award for Dramaturgy, as well as numerous publications and

productions throughout Europe and North America. Her academic writing has appeared in scholarly journals such as *Religion and the Arts* (Brill: “Das ewige Kunstwerk: Friedrich Nietzsche’s Apollonian-Dionysian Opposition in Richard Strauss’ *Daphne*”), and her journalistic impulse has found expression in both written publications (*Ether Magazine*, *Vienna: InYourPocket*) and on-camera interviews and reportage (*CultVisual*) in both English and German.

Since 2004, several of her original plays and one-acts have enjoyed workshops, readings, and performances across a broad range of venues and festivals, including The Wrights of Spring and the 24-Hour Theatre Festival in Chicago. In 2008, her commissioned adaptation of an Austrian folktale, *Hondidldo and the Apple Thief*, was premiered by Talespin in Vienna, and has since been published as a children’s book (*Delos*) and interactive audiobook app (available on iTunes). She garnered a further multi-medial commission for *The Secret of the Five Powers* in 2010, which was realized as a 48-page color comic book (*Parallax*), full-length graphic novel (forthcoming as of 2014), and feature documentary film (Peace is the Way Films, 2013). Following a successful collaboration with fellow writers, poets, and musicians at the Vancouver International Song Institute and Canadian Music Centre’s Art Song Lab in June of 2011, Satorius’ first song cycle, *In Absentia*, was set to music by composer Andrew Paul Jackson and performed at Bostons’ Fifth Floor Collective in November of that year. Since early 2012 she has been working on an opera about the life of British mathematician Alan Turing.

Shaped by nearly ten years of experience as a tour guide, Satorius’ enthusiastic interest in Austrian cultural history was recently realized as an original iPhone audio tour app, *Gretl Goes: Vienna* (available on the App Store and at [www.gretlgoes.com](http://www.gretlgoes.com)). Since its release in February of 2013, *Gretl Goes: Vienna* remains the highest-rated digital tour resource of its kind in Austria.