



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
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(Satirical Print) Lieut. Goveer. Gall-Stone, inspired by Alecto; or The Birth of Minerva.

Stock#: 85112
Map Maker: Gillray
Date: 1790
Place: [London]
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 15.25 x 21 inches
Price: \$ 950.00



Description:

Vitriolic Satirical Plate Attacking An Outspoken British Eccentric

A Pictorial Mapping of One Man's Foibles - By His Enemies

A striking and visually elaborate satirical plate attacking Philip Thicknesse (1719-1792), the outspoken eccentric and man of letters, erstwhile Lieutenant-Governor of Landguard Fort, Suffolk (1753-1766) and friend of the painter Thomas Gainsborough. His early adventures included a 1736 visit to the British North American colony of Georgia, and a stint in Jamaica against the Jamaican Maroons. He was married three times, first to Maria Lanove, a wealthy heiress whom he allegedly abducted from a street in Southampton. A second wife, Lady Elizabeth Tuchet, died in childbirth. His third wife, Anne Ford, was a talented musician who sat for a painting by Gainsborough. Later in life Thicknesse aspired to become an ornamental hermit, living on the grounds of St. Catherine's Hermitage, Bath.

Drawer Ref: Curiosities - People

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Thicknesse had a propensity to outspokenness which surely encouraged his enemies. The present visually arresting print must have pleased them no end. It is interesting to note the print is dedicated (perhaps tongue-in-cheek) to several of Thicknesse's enemies: Lord Thurlow, the Earls of Camde, Bute, Bathurst, and Coventry, as well as Thicknesse's own sons Baron Audley and Philip Junior. Per the caption:

"From his head she sprung, a Goddess Arm'd," M[ilton]. To the Opinions of The Right honble. Edward, Lord Thurlow, The Earls Camden, Bute, Baihurst, and Coventry, George Touchet-Baron Audley, and Philip Thicknesse Junr Esqr to the Literati, the Royal-Society, the Military, Medical and Obstetric Bodies, this attempt to Elucidate the properties of Honor and Courage, Intelligence and Philanthropy, is most respectfully submitted, by their humble servant, Js Gillray.'

According to Thomas Wright:

The personage here satirized was Philip Thicknesse, Governor of Landguard Fort, a writer well known at the time this plate was published, for the bitterness of his personal quarrels, and the violent effusions to which they gave rise. He was the author of a Sketch of the Life of the celebrated landscape painter, Gainsborough, whose failings he exposes somewhat more than might be expected from a friendly biographer. Various other writings are alluded to with sufficient distinctness in the plate

The British Museum gives an exhaustive description of the print, which visually summarizes the main controversies from Thicknesse's life, as seen by his critics and enemies:

Philip Thicknesse writes at a table; he listens to Alecto who whispers slyly in his ear, her right hand on his right shoulder; she is seated partly on his knee partly on a cloud behind him which rises from the jaws of Hell, the gaping mouth of a monster in the lower right corner of the design. Alecto is a winged hag, with hair of writhing serpents, one of which coils round Thicknesse's right arm, its poisoned fang touching the tip of his pen. He is seated on a close-stool inscribed "Reservoir for Gall Stones." An explosion issues from the crown of his head in the centre of which is Minerva who is shot into the air surrounded by books written by Thicknesse. She is a classical figure in back view; her head is the source of a billowing pillar of smoke which conceals it. In her right hand she supports a gun, which rests on her hip, and is inscribed "The Coward's delight or, the Wooden Gun." On her left arm is an oval shield, cracked and bordered with serpents, inscribed: "Acts of Courage and Wisdom. Running away from my Command in Jamaica, for fear of the Black-a-moors Refusing to fight Lord Orwell, after belying him; & afterwards begging pardon. Extorting 100 pr Annum from my eldest Son by a Pistol - Swindling my youngest son Phil: out of 500£ by a forged Note of Hand - Debauching my own Neice, on a journey to Southampton - Horsewhipping my own Daughter to death for looking out at Window. Attempting to gull Lord Thurl[ow] Extorting £100 pr Annum from

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Lord Camd[en] for suppressing his confidential Letters to myself. Gulling of Lord But: - D^o Lord Bathu: - D^o Lord Coven: Causing my Footman to be pressed from Bath & cruelly Flogg'd or refusing to Father my own Child by the Cook Maid Scandalizing Women of Virtue, to be reveng'd upon their Husbands: - Noble defence before the Court Martial for embezzling the Kings Stores; - Patient endurance of my Sentence in a Goal: - and heroic bearing of my discharge from the Service for Cowardice.'

Beside Minerva (right) is her owl, flying towards the spectator and holding three papers:

[1] "Character, by Sam Foote. Phill: is as stupid as an Owl; as senseless as a Goose; as vulgar as a Blackguard; & as cowardly as a Dunghill Cock - vide own Mem."

[2] "Poetry, on the Lieut. Goveer receiving Lord Orwells Challenge:

*A Challenge inform I receivd the next day
But the heart of a Coward my face did betray
For I like a good Christian, think fighting a sin.
And what the World talks of, I care not a pin
Vide Own Memoirs.'*

[3] A print of the front of a small house; on it is inscribed 'Wit & Decency or, the door of the Hermitage Bath'. The door is inscribed 'Two Cu--s to lett'. Other objects borne upwards in the explosion from Thicknesse's head are: a sealed packet inscribed 'Junius Discover'd or undeniable Proofs that Sir Jeffrey Dunstan was the Author of Junius's Letters. Sealed up Pro bono publico'; three books inscribed: 'Life of Gainsboro', 'Art of Decyphering', and 'My own Memoirs'.

On the writing-table is a pile of books on which stands an ape-like creature dressed as a postillion and flourishing a whip above his head. In his left hand he holds up a bottle labelled 'Laudanum, or the Preservative of Life - prepared by Lieut Genl Jackoo [see BMSat 6715], Spanish Postillion to Dr Viper - O Death! where is thy Sting?' A bottle protrudes from each coat-pocket, one inscribed 'Extract of Hellebore', the other 'Extract of Hemlock'. One bare claw-like foot tramples down the broken end of a long spear, held by Death, a corpse-like body, almost a skeleton, who stands on the extreme left, frowning and raising a denunciatory hand. Between Death's legs lies a dead dog on its back; a pamphlet beside it is inscribed 'Elegy on the death of my favourite Dog. - Horsewhipped to Death for Barking while I was kissing my Wife'. The book on which the ape stands is 'Valetudinarian Bath Gui[de]'; five others in the large pile have titles: [1] 'Treatise ...', [2] 'On the fatal effects of



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eating Hot-Rolls for Breakfast,' [3] 'Philosophers Stone,' [4] 'on Long Life,' [5] 'Abbe Monge Mad.' Against the pile rests an open book: 'Man-Midwifery Analyzed, or a new way to write Bawdy for the instruction of Modest Women - With an Emblematic Frontispiece'. This is called 'A Man Midwife teaching a Woman' and depicts a man indecently touching a woman who holds a wine-glass. On the table are papers and pamphlets inscribed: 'Private Anecdotes', 'Answer to Makittrick never published for prudential reasons', 'Letter to ...', 'Scraps of French', 'Extortive Epistle,' and (under Thicknesse's pen) 'Incendiary Letter'.

Over the front of the table hang two prints: [1] a rat-trap inscribed 'Landguard Fort', "a Frontier Garrison of importance". 'Vide own Mems'; [2] a boy wearing a cocked hat and holding a hammer and a hoop: 'The Cooper's Boy, turn'd Soldier - an old Song'. Under the table are 'Extortiv Letters' spiked on a file and a number of money-bags, three being labelled: '100 pr A', '£100 pr Annum from Lord Comb [sic], and '100 from Lord B.' In the foreground lie a bundle of newspapers inscribed 'St James Chronicle' and a decapitated head in a dish inscribed 'Head of the Traitor Struen[see]'.*

The background is covered by scenes and objects interspersed among the clouds produced by the fires of Hell and the explosion from Thicknesse's head. Behind the table the apex of an obelisk partly obscures a framed picture of a building inscribed 'St Ardres Nunnery or, a Grave to immure my Daughters alive; to keep their Fortunes myself'. On the obelisk a skeleton with a large head devours an infant holding a pen and a book, 'Rowley Poems'; the inscription: 'To the Memory of the Immortal Chatterton who wrote 400 Years before he was Born - a Stranger erects this Monument'. Above the ape is a half length portrait, the head obscured by cloud, of a man wearing a star: 'Portrait of the Pretender the Star in my Sisters possession for Favors receivd'. On the left a pair of pistols in bags, inscribed 'Pistols of John Duke of Marlborough', hang on the wall under a motto: 'Requisat [sic] in pace'. Seated on a cloud above these objects is a grinning demon playing a viol da gamba, labelled 'Gainsborough Humbug etc.' His music-book is inscribed 'Friendship a Solo for the Viol da Gamba Dedicated to the Memory of Gainsborough and Sterne.' The book is propped against a skull in the eye-socket of which is a lighted candle; the skull stands on a book: 'Sterne. Alas poor Yorick', and a paper: ' - quite Chop fallen'. The demon is seated on a canvas which hangs over his cloud; on it are seen the legs of a whole length portrait of a man leaning against a tree and inscribed: 'Portrait of an ungrateful Madman left unfinish'd by Gainsborough.

*The Picture thus, does yet unfinished stand,
Ingratitudes damn'd crime, stop'd the great Painters Hand'*

[A portrait of Thicknesse was set aside (1760) and never finished.]



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Poised on one of the demon's horns stands Fame with webbed wings, blowing two trumpets from which issue blasts inscribed: 'Imprimis, a Young Coward' and 'Finis, an Old Rogue'. In the background is Mount Helicon, irradiated, Pegasus as a winged ass springs from a temple on its summit. Behind the clouds appears the arc of a circle (left) with signs of the zodiac: a galloping lion is 'The Lion of the Tribe of Judas'; the scales are heavily weighted with a book: 'The final Account. Memoirs of a Life of Villainy'; above is the inscription, 'Heavy as Death it sinks, & Hell receives the Weight'. On the right is the scorpion.

In the upper right corner is a scene in a theatre. On the stage Thicknesse's third wife sits at a table playing the musical glasses. Behind her (left) stands Thicknesse (half length) his hands held up in admiration. A cherub flies above her, holding out a scroll: 'Miss Ford's [struck through] St Cecilia's first appearance at the Little Theatre'. On the right of the stage three demons playing musical instruments form an orchestra; they face the heads of a row of hogs representing the audience. In a box (right) are three hogs, one, who wears a star, is weeping and holds a 'Pathetic Ode to Lord Jersey.'

The etching is signed in the plate:

James Gillray design, et fecit. Pubd. Febr. 15th 1790 by H. Humphrey, No. 18, Old Bond Street

Detailed Condition:

Engraved and etched print. Sheet edges trimmed quite close. Several repaired tears to lower margin. Other repaired tears in upper left region of sheet. Withal, condition is nearly very good.