Hannah Humphrey, London’s Leading Caricature Printseller

Ersy Contogouris  
*Université de Montréal*, ersy.contogouris@umontreal.ca

Béatrice Denis  
*Université de Montréal*, beatrice.denis@umontreal.ca

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Hannah Humphrey, London's Leading Caricature Printseller

Abstract
Hannah Humphrey (ca. 1745-1818) was the exclusive publisher of James Gillray's (1756-1815) caricatures from 1791 until Gillray's death. His achievements were made possible in large part thanks to Humphrey and her innovative business acumen. But while Gillray has been celebrated and studied by art historians, Humphrey's contribution to his success and to the history of graphic satire has remained unexamined. This article is a first attempt to shift the focus onto her in the story of the "golden age" of British caricature. It outlines Humphrey's career, takes a closer look at her relationship with Gillray, and finally considers some of the reasons she has remained in the shade.

Keywords
Hannah Humphrey; James Gillray; Caricature; Print sellers

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Cover Page Footnote
In thinking about the place of women in satire, we would like to acknowledge the work of a number of extraordinary women scholars, including Diana Donald, Amelia Rauser, and, of course, Dorothy George, whose Catalogue of Personal and Political Satires at the British Museum forms the basis of any study of British graphic satire. This essay is based on a talk Ersy Contogouris presented at the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS) in Boulder, Colorado, in March 2019 in a panel on “Reclaiming Women's Satiric Voices” organized by Sharon Smith. Our sincere thanks to Linda V. Troost, Sharon Smith, and Jocelyn Harris.
In 1973, the French mint commissioned the British caricaturist Ronald Searle (1920–2011) to produce designs for a series of medals commemorating the six “fathers” of the history of European graphic satire. These were Annibale Carracci (1560–1609), Pierleone Ghezzi (1674–1755), William Hogarth (1697–1764), James Gillray (1756–1815), Thomas Rowlandson (1756–1827), and George Cruikshank (1792–1878). In developing the design for the Gillray medal, Searle experimented with a number of ideas in which he portrayed the artist together with his publisher, Hannah Humphrey (ca. 1745–1818). Although Humphrey does not appear in the final design, she features very prominently in the working drawings. She is the only publisher who is represented in this way, which indicates Searle recognized the fundamental role she played not only in Gillray’s career, but in the history of graphic satire as a whole.

Figure 1. James Gillray. The plumb-pudding in danger: —or— state epicures taking un petit souper. Published by Hannah Humphrey, 26 February 1805. Etching, hand-coloured, 26.1 x 36.3 cm. London, British Museum (BMSat 10371, BM# 1851,0901,1164). Creative Commons license (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

And he was right to think about featuring Humphrey in such a prominent role. She was one of the premier publishers of graphic satires and contributed greatly to the era known as the “golden age of caricature” (Jouve; Donald). Her name appears as publisher on some of the most iconic images in the history of caricature, for instance The Plumb-Pudding in Danger [fig. 1], which generations of caricaturists have referenced in their designs. Humphrey’s shop was patronized by the most prominent figures of the day and she achieved significant status and recognition among the highest echelons of society. Writing to Gillray
while she was on holiday in Brighton with her shop assistant and close friend Betty Marshall, Humphrey recounted that, “His highness of Clarence did me the honour of asking me how I did as we were walking on the Steine tho he had two noblemen with him.” This was indeed undeniable evidence of others’ high esteem of her.

Her success was in large part owed to her becoming, after 1791, Gillray’s exclusive publisher, other than for a handful of prints he published elsewhere. It is difficult to overstate Gillray’s importance in the history of graphic satire. He was the most important and most highly prized caricaturist of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. His production—from the late 1780s to around 1810—took place during an important conjunction that proved decisive for his career and for Humphrey’s, as well as for the history of caricature: on the one hand, there was the quick multiplication of the production and consumption of the printed image, and in particular, an “efflorescence” of caricature (Porterfield). On the other, these were pivotal decades in European and world history, which witnessed, among other events, the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, the Regency crisis, the Pitt-Fox political rivalry, an intensification of imperialism, and the struggles for the abolition of slavery.

Gillray was merciless in his critiques of the follies of society and in his attacks against political and other public figures. He could be an asset to those whose positions his etchings supported and a menace to those he attacked. Between 1797 and 1801, for instance, he secretly received an annual pension of £200 from the Tory government to produce prints against the French Revolution and its sympathizers among the Whig opposition. The terms of the pension also seem to have stipulated that he was not to attack the royal family or the government, and his satires against them did indeed diminish greatly during those years (Godfrey 19). Gillray coined the term “Little Boney,” and led an image war that did much to minimize the perceived threat that Napoleon posed. In fact, while in exile in Saint Helena, Napoleon reportedly said that Gillray’s caricatures had played a bigger part in his defeat than all the armies of Europe. While Gillray might have been considered as a threat to those he pilloried, some of his victims also felt that featuring in his caricatures was a mark of their achieved status, and some, most famously George III and the Prince of Wales, even collected them assiduously (Bricker 326–27). The Prince of Wales, who was one of the most frequent targets of Gillray’s pen, took out a standing order starting in 1803, so that in the years 1806 and 1807, he bought 121 prints from Humphrey’s shop (Gatrell 238). Perhaps this was, as Vic Gatrell has stated, so that he could “monitor how little he was loved” (238). Certainly, it allowed the Prince of Wales to keep an eye on
what was published, and he sometimes bought entire print runs and their plates in order to suppress a particularly vitriolic caricature.

Gillray’s prints were celebrated as works of art across Europe. Johann Christian Hütter, writing in the Berlin periodical *London und Paris*, called Gillray a “great artist” (247) and considered his creations alongside those of the most revered painters, including the Italian Renaissance master Raphael (1483–1520). Hütter also noted that “English art collectors already place Gillray’s original prints among the finest pieces in their portfolios, and they will continue to grow in value in the future” (245). Contemporaries therefore understood that the significance of Gillray’s caricatures lay beyond their commentary on people and events of the day, and that these prints stood as collectible artworks in their own right.

Gillray’s achievements were made possible in large part by Hannah Humphrey and her business acumen. But while Gillray has been celebrated and studied by art historians, particularly since the exhibitions held at the Tate Gallery in 2001 and the New York Public Library in 2004, Humphrey’s contribution to his success and to the history of graphic satire has remained unexamined. This article is a first attempt to shift the focus onto her in the story of the golden age of British caricature.

**Hannah Humphrey’s career**

Hannah Humphrey was born in London in or around 1745. The first record of her is from 1771, when she showed a basket of flowers created in raised paperwork at the exhibition of the Incorporated Society of Artists of Great Britain (Clayton). Her older brother, William, born around 1742, received training as a printmaker and opened his own printshop in 1772 or so, where he was joined by Hannah. A few years later, in 1778 (or possibly very late 1777), Hannah struck out on her own, opening a shop in St Martin’s Lane. The caricature historian Tim Clayton notes that it is difficult to know when exactly Hannah Humphrey began to publish prints because of her practice (not uncommon at the time) of buying and republishing old plates with the name of the original publisher scratched out and replaced with her own, but keeping the original publication date. Hannah Humphrey’s success as a printseller quickly surpassed that of her brother.

It was rare for a woman to run a printshop, but not unique. Other women printsellers in the eighteenth century include Mary Darly (active 1756–79), who, with her husband Matthew (active 1741–78) were among the earliest successful caricature printsellers; Elizabeth Darchery (active 1780–84); Elizabeth Jackson (active 1783–88); and Susan Vivares (active c. 1781–97). In many cases, women
printsellers were widows who had taken over their husbands’ printshops (Gatrell 240). Hannah Humphrey, however, never married. She simply started her own business and had decided to go by the name “Mrs.” Humphrey for the sake of propriety, even though it was common knowledge that she was not married (H. Lavers Smith, quoting J.G. [Joseph Grego] in Angelo I 431).

One of the unique characteristics of Hannah Humphrey’s printshop is that she sold only the prints she published, almost all of which were graphic satires. In an article entitled “Caricaturists in London Today,” published in London und Paris in 1806, Johann Christian Hüttner writes that “This woman [Hannah Humphrey] runs a successful business selling her own publications alone” (Hüttner 246). Printshops at that time tended to sell much more than caricatures. They also sold maps, portraits, topographical, sporting, military and genre prints, as well as books, pamphlets, and even stationery. They also “relied on wholesale barter of current prints amongst themselves, and the acquisition of old plates and prints etc., to augment and diversify their stocks” (Banerji and Donald 246 n4).

Regarding Humphrey’s main competitors, Diana Donald notes that “The advertisements of Holland and Fores emphasized the range of their merchandise” (4). An 1810 print attributed to George and Isaac Cruikshank, Folkstone Strawberries or More Carraway Comfits for Mary Ann, which depicts Fores’s

Figure 2. George and Isaac Cruikshank. Folkstone Strawberries or more carraway comfits for Mary Ann. Published by S.W. Fores, 20 June 1810. Etching, hand-coloured, 24.3 x 35.8 cm. London, British Museum (BMSat 11565, BM# 1868,0808.7949). Creative Commons license (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)
shop in Piccadilly, shows that the window display is comprised predominantly of books, and books are prominent inside the shop as well [fig. 2].

Another reason that Humphrey stands out is that she relied very heavily on the prints created by a single artist. A comprehensive survey of her print publication by decade in comparison to her competitors’ can better highlight her overwhelming reliance on Gillray, especially during the 1790s and 1800s [Table 1]. Of the 887 prints published by Humphrey that we were able to identify, 76 percent are by Gillray. During the 1790s, Humphrey’s most prolific decade, 87 percent of the prints she published were by Gillray, and in the following decade, this rises to 96 percent. Neither Fores nor Holland relied on a single artist: Fores’s most published artist was Isaac Cruikshank, representing 26 percent of his publications. Although Humphrey’s business decision may have seemed risky, with Gillray’s output equivalent to around one caricature per week at his peak in the 1790s, it was judicious, and it placed Humphrey among the top printsellers of her time.

<table>
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<th>1774-1779</th>
<th>1780-1789</th>
<th>1790-1791</th>
<th>1800-1809</th>
<th>1810-1820</th>
<th>Percentage of non satirical prints</th>
<th>Percentage of prints made by Gillray</th>
<th>Most published artists</th>
<th>Most prolific year of publication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Humphrey</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>3% (29)</td>
<td>76% (673)</td>
<td>James Gillray 76% (673)</td>
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<td>by Gillray</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>96%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samuel Fores</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>599</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>3% (52)</td>
<td>3% (47)</td>
<td>Isaac Cruikshank 26% (409)</td>
<td>1798 (75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Holland</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>8% (45)</td>
<td>2% (11)</td>
<td>Richard Newton 23% (135)</td>
<td>1803 (52)</td>
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Gillray’s designs were so popular that other printsellers tried to get around the exclusive Humphrey–Gillray partnership. As early as 1794, there is evidence that Fores reissued prints by Gillray: Gillray’s *Jack a’ both sides*, published by William Humphrey in 1783, was republished by Fores in 1794, with Humphrey’s name crossed out, though it remains legible, and Fores’s name and the address of his shop inscribed at the bottom right of the print.
One of Fores’s caricaturists, Charles Williams, directly copied Gillray’s designs. We were able to identify eight of these copies that were published during the years Gillray was exclusively producing prints for Humphrey.\textsuperscript{15} Out of these, some are antedated to camouflage the copying, as with \textit{The Reconciliation} (1804). The dating for some is left vague, showing only the month and not the day of publication, as for \textit{“The Friend of the people” \textemdash; & his pretty-new-tax-gatherer, paying John Bull a visit} (1806). One of the Williams copies is particularly curious, as it clearly takes a dig at Gillray himself, all the while copying his work to be sold elsewhere. In Williams’s version of \textit{More pigs than teats, or the new litter of hungry grunters, sucking John Bulls old sow to death} (1806), the inscription at the bottom left corner reads “Invented — designed & Executed by one who wants a Suck,” meant perhaps to reference Gillray’s pension. This outright attack on Gillray made with the help of his own joke deliberately brings attention to the fact that this caricature is only a copy, and that the original was made by Gillray himself. This copying of Gillray prints for Fores ultimately shows the quality of Gillray’s caricatures, and because of Gillray’s exclusive arrangement with Hannah Humphrey, the only way Fores could access the designs was to copy them.

Another business decision that ensured Humphrey’s success was her move to better locations for her trade, first to Old Bond Street around 1779, then New Bond Street around 1783, and finally to St James’s Street in 1797. This last location is the shopfront made famous by Gillray’s \textit{Very Slippy-Weather} [fig. 3], a now iconic print that gives some clues as to how caricatures were produced, displayed, and consumed. They were individually printed loose sheets and did not usually appear inside other publications. A few hundred copies were published of each print. They were displayed in printshop windows, where passersby could stop and look at them, but those who could afford to buy them were the wealthier classes (Nicholson; Taylor).\textsuperscript{16} It is a common misconception that caricature was a popular art produced for all. Prints such as those sold by Hannah Humphrey fetched handsome prices, in part because of their size, the quality of the colouring and the paper used for printing, as well as market considerations: Humphrey charged the prices she could get for her prints. There were other, lesser quality satirical prints, such as those sold by street-hawkers, or in lesser quality shops, and there was a gap in the market that Thomas Tegg sought to fill when he opened his print-shop in Cheapside in 1805, where he sold more affordable satirical prints.\textsuperscript{17} Hannah Humphrey’s shop, located in the affluent West End of London, targeted much wealthier customers. \textit{Very Slippy-Weather} suggests that although many different social groups might have gathered in front of the printshop window to gaze at the prints,\textsuperscript{18} only the wealthiest—the ones with the means to buy the caricatures—were let inside to manipulate them and observe
them closely. It is not just that the elites were the only ones who could afford the prints, they were also often the ones who possessed the education necessary to fully understand them, who could unravel the many layers of meaning within them, who were aware of current events and gossip, who were familiar “with the written political journalism of the day,” (Nicholson 14) who could have deciphered the French and Latin text sometimes appearing in them, and who could recognize the artistic codes and cultural references embedded in the prints.19

Figure 3. James Gillray, after Rev. John Sneyd. *Very Slippy-Weather*. Published by Hannah Humphrey, 10 February 1808. Etching, hand-coloured, 26 x 20.3 cm. London, British Museum (BMSat 11100, BM# 1868,0808.7623). Creative Commons license (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

Humphrey’s prints clearly catered to members of this social class. Her location on St James’s Street was at the very heart of the stomping ground of the highest social elite. It was a few steps from St James’s Palace and from many private clubs: Brooks’s was across the road, and Boodle’s and White’s were up the street (Gatrell 243). It was also close to the Royal Academy of Arts and the Opera House, and near the Milton Gallery and Boydell’s Shakespeare Gallery. In 1795,
two years prior to Humphrey’s move to St James’s Street, Fores had also moved his shop to a nearby location at the corner of Piccadilly and Sackville Street. In comparison, William Holland’s was further north on Oxford Street.

Another important aspect of Humphrey’s printshop on St James’s Street and of those of her competitors was that they were places of sociability. Dorothy George describes them as “lounges” where the wealthy—the people who were members of the nearby clubs, the politicians passing by, etc.—met and socialized. In this respect, too, Humphrey surpassed the other print sellers and provided an environment where stimulating discussion could take place. Hüttn er reported in London und Paris that “It is only in Mrs Humphrey’s shop, where Gillray’s works are sold, that you will find people of high rank, good taste and intelligence” (246). What might appear curious, then, is that Humphrey fostered an environment in which the people caricatured felt comfortable enough to come to her shop. More than that, the caricatures in which they featured must have seemed so essential to them that they felt the need to buy them. Even outside London, as the Duke of Clarence anecdote mentioned above shows, Gillray’s victims held no grudge. There was a proper way to react to being caricatured: one had to remain graceful. There were of course some exceptions—one time, someone broke Humphrey’s shop window, and it was reported that the king did not always react well—but mostly, people were good sports, and their amiability was duly noticed. Henry Angelo recounts that when Fox heard there was a new satire against him by Gillray (Loyal Toast), he walked over to St James’s Street, saw the print in the window, walked into the store, and addressed Humphrey “good-humouredly.” Angelo continues, quoting Fox as he entered the store:

“Well, my good lady, I perceive you have something new in your window;” and, pointing to the very print, paid his eighteen pence for it, received his change out of half a crown, rolled it carefully up, and, putting it in his pocket also, smiled a “good morning to you,” and gently shut the shop door on his departure.

Old mother Humphreys [sic], albeit not much given to the melting mood, overcome with the gentle manner of Mr. Fox, the tear glistening in her eye, observed to Betty, as the great statesman passed the window up St. James’s-street, “Ah, Betty, there goes the pattern for all gentlemen!” (Angelo I 367–68, italics in the original)

It was not just a question of tolerating a perceived affront. There was a sense in which it could aid one’s reputation to appear in a Gillray print. Humphrey
understood that being caricatured, particularly by Gillray, was a recognition of one’s status. For instance, George Canning, who would later become prime minister, was keen to be featured in a Gillray print. The Reverend John Sneyd acted as an intermediary and pressed Gillray, via letters to Humphrey, to depict the rising Tory politician. In December 1795, Canning, who was about to be appointed as undersecretary to the Foreign Office, wrote to Sneyd: “Have you heard anything from Mr. Gillray lately? And do you know how soon after my coming in I am likely to come out?” Hearing of the publication of Gillray’s *The Death of the Great Wolf*, in which a host of politicians were represented, [fig. 4] Canning rushed to St James’s Street, only to be disappointed that he had once again been snubbed. Sneyd wrote directly to Gillray this time: “The Great Wolf is very capital indeed, and I regret with you that Mr. Canning did not make his debut in Mrs. H.’s window in so excellent a print; as you say you have no likeness of him, I enclose one, which I have succeeded in better than I expected.” It seems Gillray had used as an excuse that he could not represent Canning because he did not know what Canning looked like, a flimsy excuse if there ever was one and a sign of the power that Gillray knew he had. Canning wrote to Sneyd: “If you can hit upon any proper mode of introducing Mr. Gillray to me […] without its appearing to be at my instance or with my formal assent, I shall be very happy to see him.” Hannah Humphrey was aware of these exchanges, and she understood

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**Figure 4.** James Gillray. *The Death of the Great Wolf.* Published by Hannah Humphrey, 17 December 1795. Etching, hand-coloured, 34 x 44.7 cm. London, British Museum (BMSat 8704, BM# 1851,0901.767). Creative Commons license (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)
that caricatures—and especially Gillray’s—at once confirmed and contributed to a person’s celebrity.

The celebrity, or notoriety, of Humphrey, Gillray, and the individuals caricatured, was therefore intertwined. All were aware of this interconnection, as is confirmed by an anecdote involving the statesmen Charles James Fox and Edmund Burke. Gillray’s biographer Joseph Grego reports the incident:

Fox and Burke one morning walked into the little shop in St. James’s Street, on the exhibition of a severe attack upon the latter orator. The mistress was behind the counter. […] “So, Mrs. Humphrey,” said the man of the people [Fox], “you have got yourself into a scrape at last! My friend here, Mr. Burke, is going to trounce you all with a vengeance.” “I hope not, Sir,” said the affrighted Mrs. Humphrey. “No, no, my good lady,” said Burke with a smile, “I intend no such thing. Were I to prosecute you, it would be the making of your fortune; and that favour, excuse me, Mrs. Humphrey, you do not entirely merit at my hands.” (13)

**Humphrey and Gillray**

James Gillray grew up in a very strict (and humourless) Moravian family. He apprenticed with the highly respected engraver Francesco Bartolozzi (1727–1815) at the Royal Academy before turning full-time to caricature. In his early career, he collaborated with a number of publishers in London, including William Humphrey, and it is only in the late 1780s that he and Hannah Humphrey began their partnership. From 1791 he published almost exclusively with her, and in 1793, they also entered into a domestic arrangement: Gillray moved in with Humphrey, followed her as she relocated, and lived with her until his death. For Gillray, whom contemporaries described as withdrawn and eccentric, ill-suited to modern living with its polite niceties, the arrangement gave him protection, security, and stability, and it meant that he did not have to worry about the day-to-day concerns necessary to managing a home.

In the only depiction that we have of Humphrey, Gillray shows her in a domestic setting [fig. 5]. Humphrey is in the centre, wearing a huge bonnet, with her shop assistant and friend Betty Marshall, who has just won her game, to her right. They are playing whist with the picture dealer and restorer Mortimer and the German Tholdal, who turns toward Betty. The scene is an illustration of warm domesticity; and Gillray playfully ribs Humphrey, Betty, and their guests, who are
playing with low stakes ("two-penny"), unlike the extravagant spending of aristocrats (Grego, qtd by H. Lavers Smith, in Angelo I 431). Henry Angelo describes the importance of this domestic setting to Gillray: “Mrs. Humphreys, and her maid Betty, were all the world to him” (Angelo I 388).

From Humphrey’s point of view, taking Gillray “under her wing” (Gatrell 265) was undoubtedly an act of compassion, but it was also a smart business decision, one that ensured the best possible conditions for her goose to keep laying the golden eggs. Gillray suffered from a mental condition that worsened with time and that became so acute in the last years of his life that it prevented him from drawing. Humphrey made it possible for Gillray to flourish, to explore his art to the greatest possible extent. It might be going too far to say that there would be no Gillray without Humphrey, but we can assert that it would have been a very different Gillray. To say, as Vic Gatrell does, that “she blessed him with a pleasantly mothering domesticity” (261) is to recognize the protection that she offered him, but it also places Humphrey in a gendered role and denies her agency as a businessperson. We are not arguing that Humphrey was exploiting Gillray or his condition, for Gillray did more than just live with Humphrey. He seems to have had a real stake in the printshop. There are receipts in his hand that suggest that he contributed to the day-to-day running of the shop and that he was responsible for tending it when Humphrey and Betty Marshall were away.
There is no sense that there was anything romantic between Humphrey and Gillray. There seems to have been genuine affection between them, but nothing “not essential to their relation as designer and publisher,” as one near contemporary noted (Stanley xi). In a letter written in 1804, Humphrey, who had gone to Brighton with Marshall, addresses Gillray “Dear Gilly,” signs “your affectionate friend,” and asks him if he is feeding the cat.25 One account reports that Gillray had made repeated “nuptial overtures” to Humphrey, who had not refused them (she had also not rushed to the altar), and that the pair had even decided to get married one day. But nearing the church, Gillray is reported to have said, “This is a foolish affair, methinks, Miss Humphrey. We live very comfortably together, we had better let well alone!” The narrator continues, “And, turning upon his heel, he returned to his old quarters, and went coolly to work on his copper” (Grego, qtd by H. Lavers Smith, in Angelo I 431).26 What this anecdote, and more widely, what Humphrey and Gillray’s arrangement suggests is that they had arrived at a non-normative business and living arrangement that benefitted them both. For Gillray, it meant being able to practice his art without the daily pressures of maintaining a household, finding publishers, selling his prints, etc. For Humphrey, the arrangement meant running a successful business, one based on Gillray’s satirical prints and that offered Gillray choice conditions in which to live and create. As unconventional as it was, their relationship was essential to their success.

There is even less known about the relationship between Humphrey and Betty Marshall, but some of it can be pieced together. We do know that Humphrey and Marshall went to Brighton together, and that Marshall also lived with Humphrey and Gillray. Writing about Two-Penny Whist, Grego describes the three as living in friendly congeniality and on equal footing:

The whimsical circumstances that governed the little household in St. James’s Street, of which Gillray was a resident member, excited no small amusement in the neighbourhood. “Mistress” by courtesy, but Miss Humphrey properly, — for the old lady died a spinster, — her eccentric admirer, and the faithful Betty, her maid-servant, were all “hail fellows well met”; they lived in common, and only that she managed the culinary and marketing department, it was not always to be determined who ruled the roast. This print, then, describes Mrs. Betty entertaining a party at cards, all well-known characters, in Miss, alias Mrs. Humphrey’s drawing-room. (Grego, qtd by H. Lavers Smith, in Angelo I 431)
From this description, it seems Marshall was more than a shop assistant and that she was in a position to entertain visitors.

Humphrey left Marshall a sizeable amount of money in her will. When she died in 1818, three years after Gillray, Humphrey was affluent. She left her shop to her nephew George Humphrey (1773–1831), who had also been her shop assistant, considerable sums of money to other (mostly female) relatives, and a £200 annuity to Marshall (Grego, qtd by H. Lavers Smith, in Angelo I 431). We do not know if these elements allow us to surmise there was a romantic relationship between Marshall and Humphrey, and it has never been suggested either by their contemporaries or by other scholars. But we can also not discount it. What we can say is that the two women seem to have been very close, that Humphrey recognized the role that Marshall played in the success of her printshop, and that she took care to ensure Marshall’s comfort after her death.

**Into, and out of, obscurity**

Despite her achievements and her uncontested importance in the history of British graphic satire, Hannah Humphrey does not have an entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Information about her is only found in a sub-section of the entry for her brother William (Clayton). We would like to end by considering some of the possible reasons that Humphrey has remained so little studied. One very basic reason is that scholars have tended to overlook women’s contributions. The feminist art historian Griselda Pollock has rightfully argued that it is not that art history is simply a reflection of a sexist society, but that it has been constructed as a masculinist enterprise meant to shore up masculine privilege (Pollock 1989 and 1990).

There is also the general conception that women are in a way antithetical to humour. As recently as 2006, Vic Gatrell argued that satire became tamer in the 1820s because of “the increasing cultural presence and idealization of women,” forces which for a while “had been staunchly resisted” (575). The idea that the presence of women leads to tamer satire seems unfair considering the abundant farts and outsized phalluses in the Gillray caricatures that Hannah Humphrey published. Not only do these texts fail to recognize Humphrey’s role in publishing and distributing these bawdy images then, they also rewrite her contribution in a way that purposefully dulls her, as when Gatrell writes of the “pleasantly mothering domesticity” with which she “blessed” Gillray (261).

Another element that might help understand the lack of scholarly interest in Humphrey is a longstanding bias against the study of graphic satire. Although art
historians have begun to take caricature more seriously in the last decades, this bias coloured the way scholars wrote about this art form. Michel Jouve, in his 1984 *L’âge d’or de la caricature anglaise*, apologizes in the first few pages for presenting his readers with a form of visual expression whose primary purpose is so obviously to make money for the publisher (25). Such a statement couches the fact that economic imperatives have very often guided artists, and it maintains the hierarchy between forms of so-called pure, disinterested “high” art, and caricatures.

Another hierarchy long maintained by art history is that which has placed the artist above the publisher. In the eighteenth century, the central role of the publisher was recognized, as attested by the many references to Humphrey’s importance recorded in her own time. The first article ever published in *London und Paris* was entitled “Gillray and Mrs. Humphrey: The Latest Caricature,” thus placing artist and publisher on an equal footing (Hüttner 45). But with modernism, only the individual artist has been celebrated and presented as a mythical lone genius. The Lewis Walpole Library has taken steps toward redressing this imbalance and now includes publishers in the “Creators” category of their prints database. In this way, the publisher is shown as a co-creator alongside others who collaborated in making the print, such as the original designer and the engraver.

We can continue to break down these hierarchies and recognize the creative and innovative role played by the publisher. If we shift our perspective, we can argue that it is precisely because Humphrey was looking to make money that she created new opportunities, that she conceived a living arrangement that benefitted her and her business, that she envisioned new modes of consumption and distribution of her prints, exploited new markets, and so on. Humphrey’s decision to become the exclusive publisher of Gillray and to sell only the prints she published was novel and bold, but it was also smart, and it paid off. She recognized the value of the caricatures Gillray drew, she ensured their production was of the highest quality, and she made them available to a discerning public. Analyzing Hannah Humphrey’s innovative contribution to the history of caricature thus helps to reinscribe the place of women in eighteenth-century satire. More than that, it encourages new thinking about the processes of artistic production and the re-evaluation of the hierarchies that have governed the discipline of art history.
The reasons why Searle decided to exclude Humphrey from the Gillray medal in the end are unknown—perhaps slightly cynical, explanation might be that there was seen to be no place for a woman in this series about the fathers of caricature.

One, perhaps slightly cynical, explanation might be that there was seen to be no place for a woman in this series about the fathers of caricature.

The term “caricatures,” “graphic satire,” and “satirical prints” are used interchangeably in this article to refer to prints “that exposed and ridiculed the political clashes, cultural trends, and social attitudes of the day” (Lovejoy 171).

The Spectator’s 10/17/24 December 2016 issue cover featured a drawing by Peter Brookes showing Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump cutting up the globe shortly after the latter’s election to the presidency of the United States in a design based very closely on Gillray’s print (the 2016 drawing is captioned, “The Plum-Pudding in Danger—Peter Brookes after Js Gillray”). The satirical television show Spitting Image famously adapted the motif to only one person: Margaret Thatcher greedily cutting Britain out of the globe and serving it to herself as a bloody steak on her plate (Roger Law, Thatcher Cutting up Britain, 1989).

Hannah Humphrey letter to James Gillray (BL, Add. MS 27337, fol. 103), quoted in Clayton. The exact date of this letter is not known, but Clayton indicates it is in one of her “later letters” to Gillray.

According to the catalogues to which we have had access, Hannah Humphrey’s main competitor Samuel Fores published no caricatures by Gillray after 1791, and William Holland, none after 1788. After 1791, Gillray published for instance in the Anti-Jacobin, a weekly newspaper founded in 1797 in opposition to the French Revolution. It is thought Humphrey sold the Anti-Jacobin prints as separate loose leaves, unfolded and hand-coloured, in her printshop. See Godfrey 106.

The pension seems to have ended in 1801, when Pitt resigned, but even while Gillray was in their pay, his attacks against the Prince of Wales and some Tory ministers did not entirely disappear from his production, which has led Godfrey to refer to Gillray as a caricaturist without a conscience (19–20).

This apocryphal statement is cited in Navasky 30, and Porterfield 194. In an article on Gillray written in 2015 for The Guardian, the caricaturist Martin Rowson writes, “In exile on Elba Napoleon said Gillray’s depictions of him did him more damage than a dozen generals.” Also, R. Ouvrard, “Lui-même, à Sainte-Hélène, revint à plusieurs reprises sur les attaques dont il avait été l’objet sous la forme de caricatures.”

Gillray’s popularity plummeted in Victorian England, and it is only since the late twentieth, early twenty-first century that he is once again appreciated.

The information on Hannah Humphrey is scant and mostly spread across writings on Gillray and on the history of eighteenth-century caricature. There is also an overall confusion about her name, stemming in part from the many different spellings, which is typical of the eighteenth century. This has often not been corrected however: in one book, her name in the index is spelled as both Humphry and Humprey—two entries, neither of which spells her name correctly. See Bills.

In spite of this, she continues to be referred to as her brother’s sister.

As the Women in Book History Bibliography project has shown (http://wbhb.dh.tamu.edu/), there were a number of women involved in book publishing in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century. During this period, however, caricatures were not published within books or other publications but appeared as loose leaves.

The non-Gillray prints were mostly by other notable caricaturists such as James Sayers, Thomas Rowlandson, and George Cruikshank.

This table considers prints found in the databases of the British Museum, Library of Congress, National Portrait Gallery, and Lewis Walpole Library. The numbers are indicative rather than definitive. The years of the study are Hannah Humphrey’s dates of activity. The production of other printsellers such as the Darlys or even William Humphrey predates this period. Their
statistics have therefore been excluded. It should also be noted that Fores stays active well beyond those years.

14 Gillray’s print *Jack a’ both sides* is identified in the British Museum catalogue as BMSat 6250. The item number at the British Museum (hereafter indicated as BM#) is 1868,0808.5025. Fores’s copy BMSat number is the same, and its BM# is 1868,0901.146.

15 The King of Brobdingnag and Gulliver. — Vide. Swift’s Gulliver: Voyage to Brobdingnag (1803, BMSat 10019.A, BM# 1935,0522.11.25), The Reconciliation (1804, BMSat 10283.A, BM# 1851,0901.1155), Making-Decent; i.e. — Broad-bottomites getting into the Grand Costume (1806, BMSat 10531.A, BM# 1935,0522.4.143), Visiting the Sick (1806, BMSat 10589.A, BM# 1851,0901.1204), “The Friend of the people”, & his pretty-new-tax-gatherer, paying John Bull a visit (1806, BMSat 10571.A, BM# 1851,0901.1206), More pigs than teats, or the new litter of hungry grunters, sucking John Bulls old sow to death (1806, BMSat 10540.A, BM# 1935,0522.4.144), A great Stream from a Pretty-Fountain; — or — John Bull swamped in the flood of new-taxes: — comorants fi (1806, BMSat 10564.A, BM# 1851,0901.1200), and — A kick at the broad-bottoms! — i.e. — Emancipation of all the talents. & c (1807, BMSat 10709.A, BM# 1868,0808.7539).

16 In his preface, David Francis Taylor insists on the performative nature of these prints: “I’m contending not simply that these caricatures circulated within and embodied a reasonably elite literary culture but indeed that they actively fostered and sequestered that culture in important ways.” (xi)

17 For more on Tegg and his market, see the forthcoming monograph by Christina Smylitopoulos, “Publishing Pioneer”: Thomas Tegg’s Regency Graphic Satire.

18 Eirwen Nicholson questions the notion that all presumed spectators would have had unfettered geographic access to elite London streets such as St James’s, where Humphrey’s shop was located.

19 See Bricker. See also Taylor, and Haywood for detailed analyses of prints by Gillray (mostly) and his contemporaries in relation to writings of Milton and Shakespeare.

20 For a visual representation of these locations, see the map of printshops selling caricatures in Bills 222–23.

21 See also Rauser 97 who describes them as “gallery-style.”


25 BL, Add. MS 27337, fol. 103, quoted in Clayton.

26 One of the Searle preparatory drawings shows Gillray and Humphrey walking arm in arm, perhaps in reference to this rumoured incident.

27 See Clayton. Gillray had left everything to Humphrey in his will. She continued to prosper despite the fact that her shop was in decline after Gillray stopped producing prints in 1810. She commissioned prints from George Cruikshank, but times had changed. Thomas Tegg was now producing much cheaper prints and transformed printselling.

28 After George Humphrey’s death, his widow, Marianne, ran the business. Five prints published by Marianne Humphrey are listed in British Museum catalogue. The printshop was then sold at auction at Forster’s upon her death in 1835. There is no entry for Marianne Humphrey on the British Museum website. The information on her is found in the entry under her husband’s name. See “George Humphrey (Biography).” [https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/term_details.aspx?bioid=120373](https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/term_details.aspx?bioid=120373).

29 Pollock extends this analysis to argue that art history is also a white enterprise.
Among the very numerous examples of writings supporting and supposedly explaining this position, see Hitchens. For a historical overview of this phenomenon, see Melchior-Bonnet.
Works Cited


Hitchens, Christopher. “Why Women Aren’t Funny.” *Vanity Fair*, 1 January


