

The Satirical Eye

John Bull is a personification of Great Britain, created in 1840 by John Lubbock and John Tenniel. He is depicted as a stout, middle-aged man wearing a top hat and a long coat, carrying a staff and a bundle of tools. He is often shown in various allegorical contexts, representing the nation's strength and character.

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Satire (n): *A poem, novel, film, or other work of art which uses humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize prevailing immorality or foolishness, esp. as a form of social or political commentary.*

Caricature (n): *Grotesque or ludicrous representation of persons or things by exaggeration of their most characteristic and striking features.*

Satire and caricature permeate contemporary culture. From political cartoons and print journalism to television shows and news programs, they are embraced as influential tools of comedic relief, cultural commentary, political protest, and liberated creative expression. In visual art, the two mediums often appear together in symbiotic partnership. Satire provides thematic context, which is enhanced by the additional stylistic element of caricature. The efflorescence of satirical print culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in western Europe provides an enduring template for the expressive range of this relationship. This exhibition presents four masters of the medium in England, Spain, and France: William Hogarth, James Gillray, Francisco de Goya, and Honoré Daumier. The work of these canonical artists, made in response to their social and political circumstances, continues to epitomize the power of visual satire and caricature.

William Hogarth (1697-1764) is considered the father of the satirical print and the beacon of Britain's Golden Age of satire, which traces his prime years of activity from the 1720s to the early 1760s. As a master of the printed series, he spun engaging narratives of moral critique lampooning the vices, follies, and corruption of eighteenth-century Britain. James Gillray (1756-1815) is similarly celebrated as the prolific, and often vitriolic, figurehead of Britain's Golden Age of caricature (1760s-1830s). His work evolved the experiments of Italian masters Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) and Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680), transforming the art of caricature from benign physical distortions into unmistakable polemic critiques.

Francisco de Goya (1746-1828) was one of the most important Spanish artists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Navigating a tenuous boundary between royal patronage and independent creative expression, he self-published three darkly satirical print series critiquing cultural superstitions, religious hypocrisy, and political corruption in contemporary Spain. Honoré Daumier (1808-79) also spent his prolific multi-media career balancing between rebellion and a semblance of conformity in nineteenth century France. He worked closely with liberal newspapers such as *Le Charivari* and *La Caricature* to produce approximately 4,000 lithographs that document the social and political life of nineteenth-century France.

Honoré Daumier (French, 1808-79)



Oh! c'est admirable!, 1839
Plate 2 from Scènes Grottesques
Lithograph

Gift of David and Marcia Hilton;
2012:17.11

Caption: *Oh, it's wonderful!
...except... the mouth seems a
little big... the nose is a little
heavy. And aren't my eyes
somewhat bigger? Otherwise it
shows a perfect resemblance.*



Il est bon que l'homme sache nager, 1839
Plate 5 from Les Baigneurs (The Bathers)
Lithograph

Gift of David and Marcia Hilton; 2012:17.10

Caption: *It's important for a man to know how to
swim... it is not going badly! He looks like a fish, as
long as you support him with a rope. But it will
happen... he is still young.*



**Il est devenu pro-pri-é-taire! (He
has become a landlord!)**, 1846
Plate 18 from Les Bons Bourgeois
(The Petty Borgeois)
Lithograph

Gift of David and Marcia Hilton;
2012:17.12



**Ma femme m'a recommandé de lui
rapporter mon portrait fait à Paris...**, 1859
Plate 2 from Dans la salle de Ventes (In the
auction room)
Lithograph

Gift of David and Marcia Hilton;
2012:17.13

Caption:
- *My wife asked me to have my portrait
made when I am in
Paris... I took advantage of this sale to buy
this one*
- *But it isn't you*
- *I know; I will retouch the figure, it will
cost me less than doing
one in full.*



Il est bon que l'homme sache nager, 1839



Oh! c'est admirable!, 1839



Il est devenu pro-pri-é-taire! (He has become a landlord!), 1846

Daumier's career as a journalistic printmaker was shaped by fluctuating decades of strict press censorship against political caricature. During these periods, he worked primarily (but not exclusively) in social satire. With an alternately benign and biting acerbic wit, these series capture the activities, attitudes, and customs of France's rising middle class, the emergent bourgeoisie, and Napoleonic aristocracy in Paris of the mid-nineteenth century. Subtle caricature strikes a balance with realistic detail in each print. Daumier alludes to immediately recognizable social types through economical motifs like stooped postures, bloated bellies, and comically enlarged facial features. Ego, social class, and gender roles are frequently satirized, often with eccentric displays of fashionable clothing in incongruous environments, as in **Il est bon que l'homme sache nager**; or glaring disparities between the physical stature and wardrobe of men and women, such as in **Oh! C'est admirable!** And **Il est devenu pro-pri-é-taire!** In each series, satire functions as a mirror that exposes the social pretenses, eccentricities, insecurities, and vices to which everyone falls prey. Rather than didactic morality, however, comedic relief is the artist's essential note. Daumier's viewers saw themselves reflected in his work and were given the space to laugh before returning, inevitably, to their quotidian quirks.

The interludes of satirical series in Daumier's career documents the history of the free press in France during the tumultuous decades of the July Monarchy, the short-lived Second Republic, and the Second Empire. Between 1835 and 1848, and again from 1852 to 1866, the French government enforced censorship laws on visual media. Quoting verbatim from the original sentence of 1835, the Act of February 17, 1852, article 22 reads: "No drawings, engravings, lithographs, medallions, prints, or emblems of any kind may be published, displayed, or sold without the prior authorization of the Ministry of the Police of Paris or the prefects of the departments." Censors were free to decide what was considered offensive and images in violation were confiscated, rarely published, and often destroyed; artists, printers, and publishers found in violation were disciplined with prison time and fines. Secret police, surveillance, intimidation, repression, and threats were common. Yet Daumier and his contemporaries continued to create, document, critique, and publish, setting examples for the artists, commentators, and storytellers of the twentieth century through today.

Honoré Daumier, (French, 1808-79)

Baissez le Rideau, La Farce est Jouée (Draw the curtain: the farce is over), 1834

Lithograph on wove paper

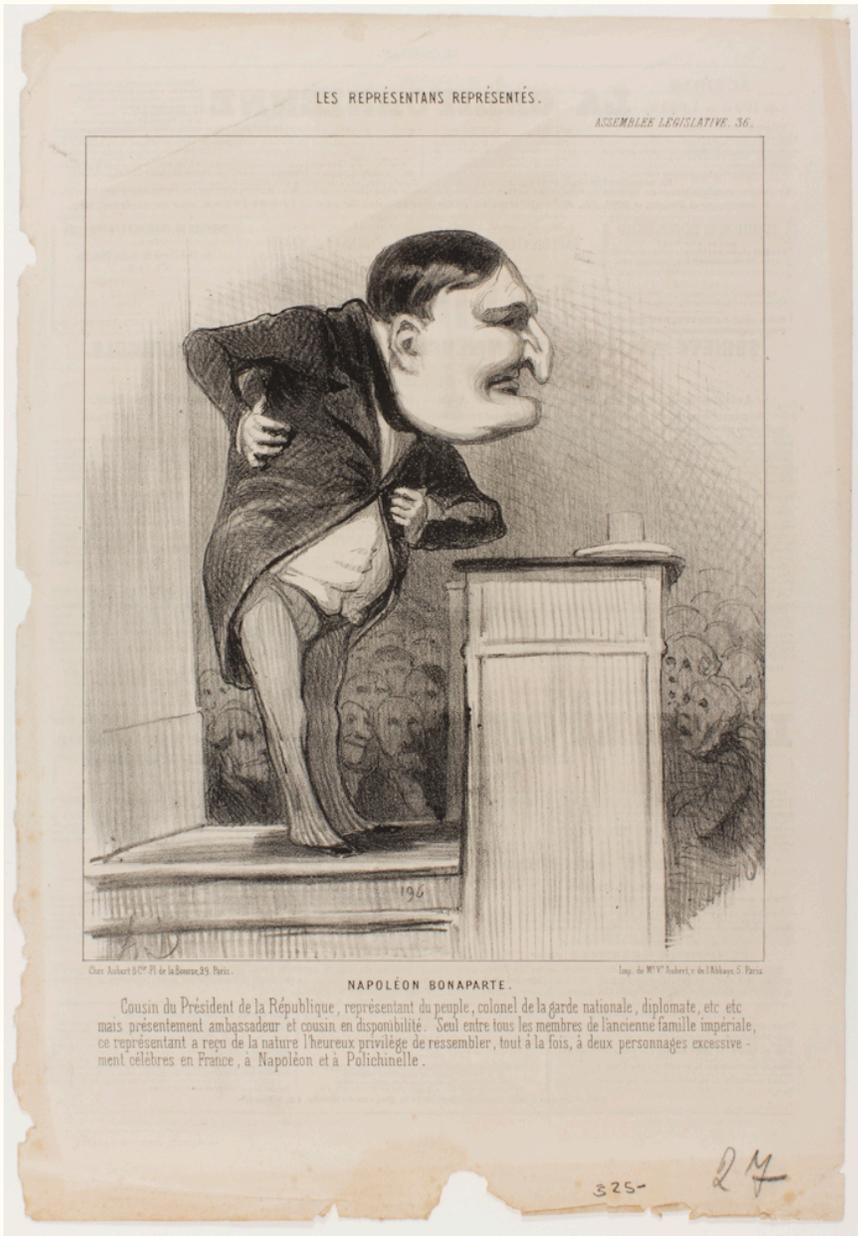
On Loan from the Portland Art Museum: Gift of Lucienne Bloch and Stephen Dimitroff;
L2019:100.1

Published in the satirical weekly *La caricature* (1830-1843) just months before a fifteen-year edict of press censorship against political caricature, this print depicts one of Daumier's favorite political subjects: King Louis-Philippe (r. 1830-48). The king appeared or was referenced in over 100 lithographs between 1831 and 1835; and was the catalyst for the artist's first encounter with censorship in 1831 with the scathing *Gargantua*. **Baissez le Rideau, La Farce est Jouée** is significantly more subdued. Daumier casts the king as Pierrot – the melancholy clown of Molière, pantomime, and commedia dell'arte from the seventeenth century. His polemical caricature distills the corrupt monarch into a swollen figure with an immense belly and a pear-shaped head with drooping jowls. The image offers a satirical pairing of politics and theater – a recurring motif in Daumier's oeuvre. Its stage alludes to the private curtained box in which the king sat, isolated from his parliament during their assembly, which is just visible in the theatrical chambers beyond the drawing curtain. With a confident smirk, the royal clown betrays the lie of his somber pantomime mask as he points to a sculpture of blind justice. Parliament has concluded and the farce of judicial integrity is over.



Gargantua, 1831





Honoré Daumier, (French, 1808-79)

Napoléon Bonaparte, Cousin du Président de la République...Assemblée législative, 1850

Plate 36 from Les représentans représentés (The representative represented)

Lithograph on newsprint

On Loan from Portland Art Museum: Museum Purchase: From the Edwin Binney Fund; L2019:100.2

Caption: Cousin of the President of the Republic, representative of the people, Colonel of the National Guard, diplomat etc. etc. but currently an ambassador and cousin on stand-by. The only one among the members of the ancient imperial family, this representative received from nature the happy privilege of resembling, at the same time, two excessively celebrated figures in France, Napoleon and Polichinelle.

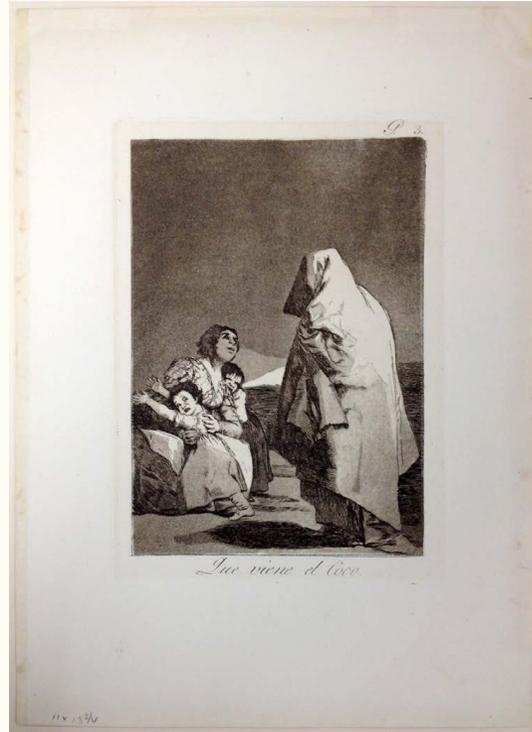
Les représentans représentés, one of Daumier's largest series, was published in Le Charivari between 1848 and 1850 during a lull in press censorship. Exaggerated body parts and facial features define the 109 portraits of political and cultural figures giving speeches. An interplay of satirical reference in this print illustrates Daumier's intelligent maneuvering of censorship dangers through allegory and generalized caricature. Napoléon-Jérôme Bonaparte, the cousin of French President Napoleon III, appears in the image of Polichinelle. Originating in the Italian theatrical tradition of commedia dell'arte, the puppet was known for his large girth, humpback and thin legs, large hooked nose, and big cheeks and mouth. On stage he was a symbol of the populace, notable for his eye toward self-preservation and ability to move between social classes, playing the role of insipid servant or cunning master as needed. As the caption comments, Daumier conflates the president, his cousin, and the puppet in single caricature "through the happy privilege of [resemblance]." The subtle yet cunning sleight of hand establishes Polichinelle as a caricature of the Napoleonic line while maintaining the pretense of political compliance.

Francisco de Goya (Spanish, 1746-1828)



¿No hay quien nos desate? (Is there no one to untie us?), plate 75 from *Los Caprichos*, 1799
Etching and aquatint on laid paper

Special Purchase, Friends of the Museum of Art and the Museum of Art Council; 1990:1.3



Que viene el Coco (Here comes the Bogeyman), plate 3 from *Los Caprichos*, 1799
Etching and aquatint on laid paper

Gift of David and Marcia Hilton;
2012:17.8

Goya self-published *Los Caprichos* the same year he was appointed court painter by Charles IV. The volume of 80 etchings employs Enlightenment philosophy (grounded in the use of logic and reason and embraced during the reign of Charles III in the latter half of the 18th century) to counteract the culture of superstition and religious dogmatism that defined Goya's childhood through the widespread influential remnants of the Inquisition.

Goya's self-penned advertisement appeared on the front page of *Diario de Madrid*, the first daily newspaper in Spain, on Feb 6, 1799, coincidentally just below the day's astronomical charts. The prints could be purchased at a perfume and liquor shop above which Goya lived.

In his ad, Goya announces, quote: "the artist has selected from among the multitude of follies and errors that are common to all civilized societies, and from the particular prejudices and deceitful practices authorized by custom, ignorance, and utility; those that he believes to be the most appropriate for submitting to ridicule, and which stimulate at the same time the imagination of the artist..."

He further states:

"in none of the compositions that form this collection has the author proposed to ridicule the particular faults of one or another individual . . . Painting (like poetry) selects from the universal that which it judges most fitting to its ends; unites in a single fantastic person, circumstances and characters which nature presents distributed among many; and from this ingeniously arranged combination results that fortunate imitation through which a good craftsman acquires the title of inventor and not that of servile copyist."



¿No hay quien nos desate?

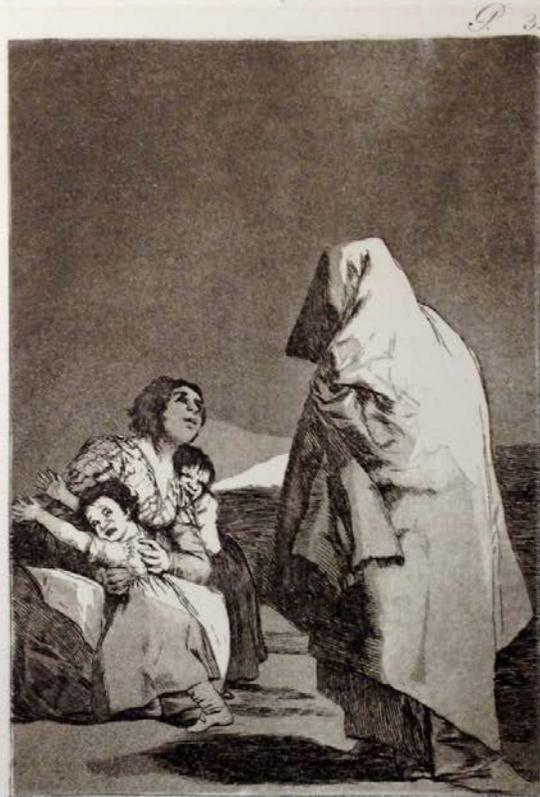
Francisco de Goya (Spanish, 1746-1828)

¿No hay quien nos desate? (Is there no one to untie us?), plate 75 from *Los Caprichos*, 1799

Etching and aquatint on laid paper

Special Purchase, Friends of the Museum of Art and the Museum of Art Council;
1990:1.3

In *Los Caprichos*, Goya utilizes satire as a bridge between the real and the imaginary in order to transcend the limitations of specific reference and craft a narrative of steadfast moral critique. **¿No hay quien nos desate? (Is there no one to untie us?)** mocks marriages of convenience – arranged wedlock based in the desire for money and status. Goya depicts his archetypal couple lashed together with rope to a small tree trunk, struggling to break the literal ties that bind them. Petrified by distress, the woman is a passive entity, no more than an extension of the tree's architecture. Though her arms and hands are free – begging the question, why can't she untie herself? – they only serve to provide footing for a be-speckled owl-like creature. The imaginary bird appears in various guises throughout *Los Caprichos* to signify the flight of reason and the chasm between observation and true understanding. In contrast to his mate, the man exerts a violent effort to free himself. Pressing a harsh fist against the woman's hip for leverage, his face shifts in a series of grotesque distortions to express both the external physical struggle and the internal fallibility at the center of his dilemma.



Que viene el Coco.

Francisco de Goya (Spanish, 1746-1828)

Que viene el Coco (Here comes the Bogeyman), plate 3 from *Los Caprichos*, 1799
Etching and aquatint on laid paper

Gift of David and Marcia Hilton; 2012:17.8

Subtle didactic moralizing permeates *Los Caprichos*, specifically in thematic undertones of Enlightenment philosophy. These are particularly evident in the recurring motifs of education and childrearing, which warn against the use of fear and superstition as didactic tools. Instead of establishing constructive habits and behaviors, such practices reduce the capacity for reason and instill patterns of intimidation that transform free-thinking individuals into passive servile citizens. **Que viene el Coco (Here comes the Bogeyman)** addresses this issue through the cultural fiction of *el Coco* (the Bogeyman), an imaginary figure invented to control children through fear. Goya fills the scene with ambiguity, depicting a woman gathering two frightened children at the feet of a cloaked figure assumed to be the titular phantom. Rapt with awe, even gratitude and affection, the woman's face presents a stark contrast to the young girl and boy, who shrink away from the hooded figure and try to escape their caretaker's clutches. Fear distorts the boy's features into a grotesque mask of aggression while the girl freezes in a pose of wide-eyed peril, both rendered incapable of independent thought and action.



William Hogarth (British, 1697-1764)

Simon Lord Lovat, 1746

Etching

Gift of David and Marcia Hilton; 2012:17.5

Simon Fraser (ca. 1667-1747) was a notorious Scottish Chief (Lord Lovat) of the Highland Clan Fraser of Lovat. Leaving social and political scandal in his wake, Fraser was outlawed in 1700, restored to his title in 1730, and sentenced to death for treason after a bloody campaign at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. Hogarth etched this portrait “from life” as the defendant awaited trial, publishing the final print in conjunction with the verdict put forth in the Act of Parliament August 25th 1746. Fraser was beheaded seven months later on April 9th, 1747 at Tower Hill in London. The seemingly benign documentary portrait sparks with subtle notes of satire and caustic inflections of caricature that impart a didactic moral. The accused chief sits comfortably in his expensive wardrobe and ornate chair, gazing confidently toward the viewer (positioned as the portraitist) without any acknowledgement of his fate or failings. Adding a devious smile, Hogarth distorts his subject’s face into a grotesque leer that conveys the internal defects of character that have led him to this moment. A final touch confirms Fraser’s reputation as a greedy and capricious politician with unsteady allegiances, as he tallies on his fingers any potential supporters who survived Culloden.



William Hogarth (British, 1697-1764)

Five Orders of Perriwigs, 1761

Etching

Gift of David and Marcia Hilton; 2012:17.6

Five Orders of Perriwigs exemplifies Hogarth at the height of his satirical prowess and cultural analysis. Text and image intertwine in layers of comedic critique. The piece is a skilled parody of contemporaneous advertisements for the impending publication of James “The Athenian” Stuart and Nicholas Revett’s *The Antiquities of Athens Measured and Delineated* (1762). Through this direct reference, Hogarth lampoons the history of architectural treatises and the eighteenth-century’s reverence of antiquity. The British class system, contemporary fashion, and the pomp of coronation also receive attention. Hogarth follows the established composition of architectural treatises dating back to the ancient Roman volumes authored by Vitruvius. The page is thus filled with descriptive text, diagrams and sections, perspectival angles, mathematic equations, and anatomical sketches. Mocking the ancient affinity for anthropomorphized columns, he transforms the capitals of the classical orders (the Greek Doric, Ionic, Corinthian; and the Roman Tuscan and Composite) into periwigs (highly stylized decorative wigs popular in western Europe dating back to the sixteenth century). These new “orders” mark various professions and classes of British society and are further categorized as per treatise tradition into nine sections that conflate architectural and hairstyle vocabulary.

A key to Hogarth’s transformation of the classical orders, from the top row of periwigs to the bottom: the simplified Tuscan capital becomes the Episcopal or Parsonic periwig, reserved for clergy; the more detailed Doric order provides lords and council officials with the Old Peerian or Aldermanic periwig. The lawyerly Lexonic wig takes over for the Ionic capital, while noble suitors receive the Corinthian or Queerinthian wig; and the Composite or Half-Natural order is transformed into a periwig for higher nobility.

Along the bottom of the page, Hogarth further satirizes the British compulsion to rank social class with a row of coronets, which are small ornamental crowns worn by noblewomen (as opposed to the formal crowns of royalty). The coronets provide female counterparts to the male periwigs and display portraits of Queen Charlotte’s entourage at the coronation, which the print purports to commemorate. In descending social status from the far right, the coronets adorn recognizable portraits of the princess, duchess, countess, viscountess, and the baroness.

James Gillray (British, 1756-1815)

Weird Sisters: Ministers of Darkness, Minions of the Moon, 1791

Hand-colored etching and aquatint

Gift of David and Marcia Hilton; 2012:7.7

This subtle caricature demonstrates Gillray's keen ability to intertwine art historical reference, literary allusion, and contemporary politics. The title signals William Shakespeare's iconic tragedy *Macbeth* (first performed in 1606) as the satirical motif. Recognizable portraits identify the 1788-89 Regency Crisis of King George III (r. 1760-1820) as the print's subject. Partially shrouded in billowing of dark clouds, three figures – the titular sisters, *Macbeth*'s chorus of prophetic witches – stroke bearded chins and pursed lips with anxious fingers as they gaze with impenetrable expressions at an anthropomorphized moon. In the role of the sisters, Gillray casts three figureheads of the Tory government during George III's reign: Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger, Secretary of State Lord Henry Dundas, and Lord High Chancellor Edward Thurlow. The watched-over moon is carved with the faces of the ruling monarchs. The attentive glowing crescent of Queen Charlotte balances the diminished light of her sleeping husband veiled in shadow, alluding to a six-month period in which the King was declared incapacitated due to a sudden onset of mental illness. Gillray's nuanced interplay with Shakespeare's text intimates at an uneasy analogy: if their "minions" are *Macbeth*'s witches, does that cast the King and Queen as they play's doomed couple?



Inscriptions provide the key for Gillray's nuanced and layered allusions: the close grouping and profile perspective of the titular sisters is borrowed from Swiss Romantic painter Henri Fuseli (born 1741- died 1825), who is commemorated with a dedication above the image. We can assume Gillray's reverence is genuine, since it is known that he admired Fuseli's sublime experimentations and anti-academic tendencies.

Gillray reserves his remaining allusions for Shakespeare's play. An inscription at the bottom of the page quotes directly from the characterization offered by *Macbeth*'s faithful companion Banquo when the two soldiers first encounter the drama's prophetic chorus of witches in Act One Scene Three: Banquo exclaims "you should be women / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so." The title of the print further alludes to the text, quoting Lady *Macbeth*'s first interaction with the sisters when she calls them to her aide as "murdering minions" in Act One Scene Five.