*****The Four Stages of Cruelty***

*The short, brutish*

*The way that leads from force to power life of Tom Nero.*

*Follows a winding, torturous motion.*

*The narrow fury of a river*

*Drowns in the vast, impassive ocean.*

First Stage takes its origin

in the periwigged man with the arrow

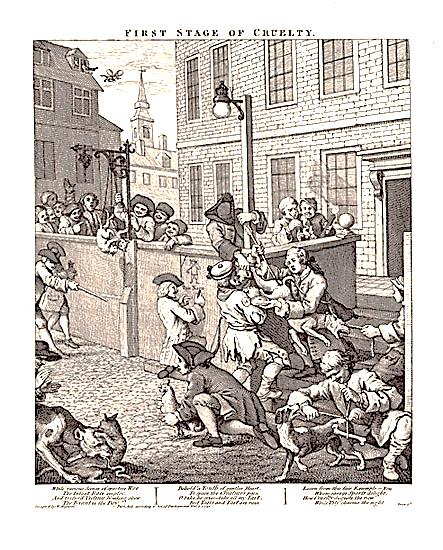
piercing the dog’s anus

in Hogarth’s series of engravings—

you will note, in the lower-lefthand corner,

the meandering guts a cur

has bitten from the belly of a cat.



Hence Stages Two and Three,

where beatings

administered in streets

to horse and sheep

with overturn of carriages

to the scandal of the good

and other tributary evils

lead finally to the unlucky notch

carved into the strumpet’s throat,

the emptying bottle of her veins,

the criminal apprehended,

stunned in lantern light, the knife

held out to him there, to damn him.





Cut to the anatomy lesson,

Stage Four: the table a ship’s deck,

the amphitheater a shore

on which the surgeons sit

collegial and frank,

expertly ogling

in the Royal College of Physicians.

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On that deck

note the criminal catch of the day

with the chum

of its entrails slopping

from belly into bucket.

A dog feasts on the liver.

*Evil redounds to its source*

*With a redoubled force.*

Skulls seethe

in the rendering vat

that stands nearby, waiting.

*From his bones shall rise*

*His Monument of Shame.*

Observe the sturdy screw

implanted in the skull,

how it cranes the thing up

that all may witness

the scooping of the eye

out of its socket like an oyster.