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C O N T E N T S

Articles

“Symbols of embodied agency”: The Reception of William Blake’s Engravings for John Gabriel Stedman’s *Narrative* (1796) in Contemporary Art and Visual Culture
By Caroline Anjali Ritchie

“Unentangled in the intricate windings of modern practice”: William Blake’s Apprentice Copperplates and Engravings
By Mark Crosby

Reviews

Brian Russell Graham, *Speech Acts in Blake’s “Milton”*
Reviewed by Annise Rogers

William Blake’s Universe, Fitzwilliam Museum,
23 February–19 May 2024
William Blake’s Universe, ed. David Bindman and Esther Chadwick
Reviewed by Luisa Calè

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Cover: Side view of “Albion Rose” in the room of the future at the exhibition William Blake’s Universe, Fitzwilliam Museum, 2024.
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“Symbols of embodied agency”:
The Reception of William Blake’s
Engravings for John Gabriel Stedman’s
Narrative (1796) in Contemporary Art
and Visual Culture

BY CAROLINE ANJALI RITCHIE

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Introduction

1 A great deal of scholarly debate has centered on William Blake’s attitudes toward racial difference and racial oppression. Since the time of David Erdman, scholars have endeavored to characterize Blake’s views on the transatlantic slave trade—endeavors that often reveal their own attachments to and disavowals of what Morris Eaves once aptly termed “Blakes We Want and Blakes We Don’t.” Many claim that Blake’s stance was one of radical abolitionism, even if it was not always stated in the plainest terms (for example, Erdman, “Blake’s Vision of Slavery” and *Prophet against Empire*; Simon), while others argue that his abolitionism has been overstated and focus instead on the exoticizing, whitewashing, and otherwise racist leanings in his poetry and visual art (for example, Thiong’o; Mellor; Bindman). For David Bindman, those leanings do not necessarily negate the “sincerity” of Blake’s abolitionism outright, but they do “suggest that Blake was unable to free himself—no more than anyone else at the time—from the complex and often contradictory web of ancient and modern beliefs that had settled around Africa and Africans in the late eighteenth century” (382). These discussions have concentrated particularly on “The Little Black Boy” from *Songs of Innocence* (1789), the illuminated book *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), and the title-page vignette and further sixteen plates either signed by or attributed to

Blake (after now-lost designs by Stedman) in John Gabriel Stedman’s *Narrative, of a Five Years’ Expedition, against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796).¹ It is on the engravings for Stedman, and their recent reception in Britain and the US, that this article will focus.

2 Stedman, it should be noted from the outset, was certainly no abolitionist. He seems to have fallen more on the side of the reform, rather than the elimination, of slavery in the West Indies. A Dutch-Scottish soldier, he had voluntarily served in Surinam in the 1770s as part of the Scots Brigade tasked with suppressing the maroons, the groups of Africans who had escaped enslavement and lived in the sur-

1. The scholarship on these texts is vast, and I offer here a nonexhaustive list of examples.

On “The Little Black Boy”: In his 1924 study, S. Foster Damon suggests that it evinces a negative view of African people (233). In “Blake’s Vision of Slavery” and *Prophet against Empire*, Erdman regards the poem as anti-imperialistic; Alan Richardson similarly argues that it endorses emancipation. Anne K. Mellor makes the counterargument that “Blake here affirms the ideological construction of the African as one who finally benefits from Christianity” (359). By contrast, Morris Eaves contends that “ironic exposure, not advocacy, of the mother’s apology for racism seems far more likely to be the aim of ‘The Little Black Boy’”; a similar position has recently been taken by Jonathan Perris. Saree Makdissi also questions, briefly, the assumption of racism in the poem (252).

On *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*: See, again, Erdman’s optimistic reading in “Blake’s Vision of Slavery” and *Prophet against Empire*. Mellor is more skeptical (359–70), as is Bindman, who finds “the references to physical slavery” in the poem to “add up to little more than a metaphor” (382).

On the Blake-Stedman engravings: Anne Rubenstein and Camilla Townsend identify an abolitionist agenda; see also Marcus Wood (181–94). For a less sympathetic reading, see Mellor’s argument that Blake and Stedman were both complicit in a wider cultural practice of erasing racial “difference” (358). Many of these arguments are revisited by Richard and Sally Price, who suggest, for their part, that the engravings can be understood in terms of “Black stoicism” and “resistance” (Price and Price 296), a point to which I shall return later in this article.

The older scholarly orthodoxy regarding Blake’s antislavery sentiments has also been echoed in art exhibitions. In 2007, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles: William Blake and Slavery* (Ferens Art Gallery, Burrell Collection, and Whitworth Art Gallery, 2007–08) was held in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the British slave trade and the 250th anniversary of Blake’s birth. In the catalogue, Bindman writes that Blake was “strongly opposed to slavery” (Bindman and Pinckney 11), though, as noted in the first paragraph of the present article, in his other writings Bindman has observed the coexistence of this stance with Blake’s recourse to particular English and European racial prejudices. In a review, Jeremy Tambling nuances the notion of Blake’s opposition to the enslavement of black people by questioning the exhibition’s “oversimplifying” conflation of Blake’s ideas about “mental slavery” with historical, physical slavery. Meanwhile, the celebration of the antislavery Blake was also upheld in a press release for 1807: *Blake, Slavery and the Radical Mind* (Tate Britain, 2007), which described his engravings for Stedman as “among the most powerful and shocking anti-slavery images.”

rounding forests, regularly engaging in guerrilla warfare against the Dutch planters. His *Narrative* records in vivid detail the soldiers' and planters' cruel punishment of the enslaved and escapee people for their disobedience. While in Surinam, Stedman had also "married" an enslaved girl named Joanna, who was just fifteen at the time and whom he abandoned, along with their son, when he left for the Dutch Republic in 1777. As Natalie Zemon Davis records, many subsequent abolitionist readers criticized him for his treatment of Joanna as well as his apology for slavery.

3 The manuscript that Stedman composed upon his return to Europe and completed in 1790 differs in important ways from the text published in 1796. In the intervening years, Joseph Johnson asked an editor named William Thomson, an author of proslavery tracts, to revise the manuscript for publication. Stedman was outraged by the alterations and ordered all copies of the work to be destroyed, but the finalized 1796 version still bears clear traces of Thomson's interventions (Stedman xlvi-lv). According to Price and Price, Thomson's views distorted Stedman's original "ameliorationist" intentions; for instance, the 1796 text, in pursuit of "a rigid proslavery ideology," lacks passages in which Stedman had emphasized the humanity and dignity of enslaved people (Stedman lxii). Yet, as Gert J. Oostindie points out, this distinction may be overstated, for "other passages, notably those carrying antislavery messages, were rephrased without substantial changes" (142). In any case, the fact remains that Stedman's descriptions of African people in the manuscript version of the text are often highly derogatory, relying on eighteenth-century European paradigms of racial classification (Oostindie 142). Apparently, for Stedman and many of his contemporaries, there was little contradiction in simultaneously disparaging black men and women and expressing horror at acts of cruelty and violence toward them.

4 In designs that echo the vivid descriptions of violence in the *Narrative*, Blake—along with several other artists, including Thomas Conder, Inigo Barlow, and Francesco Bartolozzi—engraved plates for the quarto edition. Blake began this work in 1791. He and his fellow artists would have based their engravings on paintings and drawings made by Stedman himself, as well as, presumably, the 1790 manuscript. Only one of Stedman's watercolors that were engraved for the work survives.² This illustration was engraved by Barlow, rather than Blake, but it is nevertheless possible to extrapolate from Barlow's print that the artists

2. However, there is also a surviving reproduction of a pen-and-ink sketch by Stedman depicting his house at Plantation L'Esperance, which provided the basis for Barlow's engraving of the half-plate entitled "Rural Retreat—The Cottage"; see Stedman lxxxix, note 35, #2, and White 186.

had opportunities to introduce their own imaginative spin; scholars have noted several disparities between "Manner of Sleeping &c. in the Forest" and the watercolor by Stedman, so Blake's contributions may also contain artistic innovations suggestive of his own reactions to the *Narrative* and his views on slavery and the transatlantic slave trade (Stedman xliii-xlvi).

5 The *Narrative* and its accompanying designs have had a long afterlife in translations, reproductions, adaptations, and scholarly discussions. In an unpublished PhD thesis, Landeg White documents in detail the reception (via translations and creative adaptations) of the text and illustrations during the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Britain and abroad, when the work was often read through an abolitionist lens (White 233-70; Rubenstein and Townsend 273, 296n2). Shirley Dent and Jason Whittaker discuss David Dabydeen's reuse of plates from the *Narrative* in his 1984 poetry collection *Slave Song* (Dent and Whittaker 113-16). When it comes to scholarly responses to the engravings, Blake's plates have received by far the most attention. They have been variously construed as persuasively abolitionist and (sometimes concurrently) as highly suspect representations relying on sexualizing and dehumanizing tropes (see note 1). Recently revisiting these matters, Price and Price have argued "that the Stedman-Blake depictions of the deaths of Neptune (on the rack) and the anonymous Black man (on the gallows) involve more than a trope, and that we can legitimately read in these representations ... something of value about the actors' mindsets, and not just those of the observers"; they find in the depiction of "Black stoicism in the face of being tortured by white oppressors" an "extreme case of resistance" (Price and Price 296). If there is a measure of wishful thinking in such scholarly interpretations, the impulse is shared to some extent in the pop-cultural and artistic legacy of the Blake-Stedman images, which has often sought to locate a sense of resistance or "agency" in them, despite their inherent historical and representational limitations.

6 Indeed, Blake's engravings have had a little-examined legacy within the recent visual culture of protest and counter-culture, as well as in contemporary works of art that are overtly identifiable with affirming black rights and other activist causes. Mike Goode has fruitfully characterized the curious tendency of Blake's pictures to resurface in unexpected places as a "viral capability" inherent to the visual-verbal medium that he employed in his illuminated books. Although the Blake-Stedman engravings present a slightly different case, belonging to Blake's body of commercial book engravings, they typify a much wider phenomenon of the reuse, remediation, and adaptation of his artworks: "His pictures and portions of his pictures have proven no less capable than his words of adapting themselves to live and

evolve in the world's ever-altering media ecologies" (Goode 69). Whatever viral capability we might, with Goode, ascribe to Blake's works on the basis of their formal affordances, part of that capability is surely also attributable to the fact that, in our day, his works undeniably belong to a canon of British art, despite his obscurity in his own lifetime. That status, curiously, both clashes and overlaps with his special posthumous association with counterculture and the political left, and both statuses in their own ways afford the images themselves a degree of authority or cultural capital. In other words, there is a fine line between the democratized virality that Goode seems to have in mind and a more conservative model of canonicity, within or adjacent to which Blake's work admittedly sits uneasily. But this canonical or near-canonical status also makes the images eminently suited to the critical response or subversive rewiring that can be witnessed in the works of the British and American contemporary artists Sokari Douglas Camp, Jazzmen Lee-Johnson, and Hew Locke. Indeed, their reuse of the Blake-Stedman engravings tends to be less a case of elevating or celebrating Blake himself than of evoking the spectre of the transatlantic slave trade and prompting critical modes of thought and action in the present.

7 I do not intend to characterize the work of these artists solely in terms of a homogenizing category of "black art." In practice, taking the Blake-Stedman engravings as an organizing principle or lens for this study runs the risk of perpetuating precisely this misconception, but my intention is not to present this slender vista as a key giving access to, or as a phenomenon generalizable to, all instances of "black art." Rather, in studying this grouping of artworks for the first time, I seek to attend, with Darby English, to "a historical vision of black art that assays the disproportionate influence of a past which creeps forward to speak in the present's voice; a vision that understands this past in terms both of limitations imposed and freedoms won" (English 31). The "past" that resurfaces in this cluster of artworks "speaks" with multiple voices, for it must be understood both as a real historical past and, simultaneously, as an art-historical past, resulting in a layering of mediations that resists unitary meaning.

8 It is in part the very ambiguity of the engravings, and their accrued status as something of an emblem of or dubious proxy for the "past," that allow creative possibilities to multiply. Douglas Camp, Lee-Johnson, and Locke pick up on the engravings' almost emblematic cultural function as spectres of historical violence and its painful legacies and often interrogate the legitimacy of this accumulated authority. Yet the images' visceral forms also occasionally appear to afford a vitality, a life force of sorts, through which artists might access "symbols of embodied agency in the

context of global slavery," as stated in the information page for *re{volt}ing*, a series by Lee-Johnson, which was specifically "created in response to John Gabriel Stedman's Narrative of a Five Years Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam" (Sehgal). In this article, I argue that these contemporary artists have responded to the Blake-Stedman engravings in ways that simultaneously keep in view the designs' historical context and circumstances of production and seek to dislocate them creatively from their original conception by reappropriating, remediating, and recontextualizing the images to model possibilities for ongoing emancipation and social change. In the process, they raise crucial questions about the politics of visual representation and especially the reproduction of or creative response to historical artworks representing slavery and colonial violence. I close with a discussion of these broader concepts.

Counterculture and Protest

9 The recurrent reproduction of the Blake-Stedman images in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century visual culture of protest represents a critical phase in the history of their afterlives. Tracing this part of the images' history will help to set the scene for the political charge that continues to animate the highly complex forms of adaptation found in more recent contemporary art. As Rubenstein and Townsend have written, "From its first publication to the present, its [the *Narrative's*] illustrations by Blake have been used as if they were photographs of the horrors of slavery in works ranging from student textbooks to ACT UP billboards" (273). The ACT UP billboard to which they refer was designed by Julie Carson and Aaron Keppel and mounted in 1991 in New York City. The design featured three pictures, one of which was a depiction by Blake of a tortured enslaved man, along with the text "For 200 years the government has thought of us as expendable" (Atkins). The curious way in which these images have taken on the stature of documentary evidence *as if they were photographs* is not dissimilar, in some senses, from their reuse in contemporary art. However, generally speaking, when they do appear in protest graphics, the intention seems not so much to be the interrogation of the more ethically problematic aspects of the designs, nor the ethics of representation itself, in the manner of the artworks that I discuss later in this article. Rather, these uses arguably seek above all to elicit shock and to mobilize social and political action. They seem also to presuppose a relatively straightforward reading of the original engravings as unproblematic and laudably abolitionist in force, which is therefore taken as investing the images with continued political force in the present. On the other hand, these instances bring the engravings out from the cloistered space of the book or gallery, affording them distinctive potentialities for doing their own work in the world.

10 Whether through creative works like Dabydeen's *Slave Song*, Blake scholarship, exhibitions, or some other means, Blake's engravings for Stedman were evidently in circulation among countercultural networks in 1990s America. The ACT UP billboard attests to this fact, but the images also popped up in the commercial paraphernalia of popular counterculture: the silhouette of the engraving originally entitled "A Negro Hung Alive by the Ribs to a Gallows" appears in miniature in an advertisement, of all things, for t-shirts manufactured by a company called the Never-ending Vegetable, which was printed in issue 8 (1993) of the countercultural zine *Infinite Onion*, produced by Dave Fischer in Colorado Springs.³ The tiny silhouette of the torture victim hangs within a border comprising eight narrow shapes that seem to be based on the much-reproduced eighteenth-century print showing cross-sections of the Liverpool slave ship *Brooks*. Underneath the Blake design is another small vignette, the source for which I have not been able to identify, seemingly depicting an execution or murder by rifle. Above the two are the words "MANIFEST DESTINY"; beneath is the phrase "WHITE MAKES RIGHT?" Viewers are apparently being asked to weigh up these racist slogans against the emblematic depictions of historical violence constellated within the graphic. The Blake image is surrounded by other graphics featuring symbols of resistance, including a fist crushing a swastika and antigovernment proclamations such as "ONLY SHEEP NEED A LEADER." The unmistakable presence of Blake's engraving in this advertisement for anarchist and antiracist paraphernalia suggests the persistent association between the designs and the legacies of slavery and the slave trade within American cultural consciousness: the image appears as a document of historical harm and as a convenient, ready-made shorthand for the prospective wearer's sociopolitical leanings. This reuse in a commercial context seems a far cry indeed from the examples I will discuss below, but it both demonstrates the prevalence of the Blake-Stedman engravings in activist popular culture and prompts, perhaps despite itself, questions about the ethico-political freight of reproducing them, particularly in decontextualized form.

11 Jumping next to Tate Britain in the year 2001, we find a reproduction of the same image in a poster pinned up outside the gallery. It was created by one of a group of protestors who had congregated on the final day of the Blake exhibition (11 February) to oppose the show's sponsorship by the pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline.⁴ Beneath the quotation "Cruelty has a human heart" sat a reproduction of the engraving depicting the brutalized black man being

3. I would like to thank the archivists in the Chapin Library at Williams College for generously giving me access to their zine collection.

4. This event is also discussed by Dent and Whittaker in the introduction to *Radical Blake* (2-3).

hung by the ribs to the gallows, along with the following lines:

18th Century:

William Blake protests against the enslavement of Africans

21st Century:

GlaxoSmithKline deny millions of African people access to life-saving medicines

Protestors handed out a leaflet further detailing the company's failure to license the production of affordable HIV medications for use among badly affected populations in African countries. The leaflet featured a quotation from "Holy Thursday" (*Experience*) and lines from *America* in which Blake imagines the emancipation of enslaved peoples. "While Blake railed against poverty and oppression," it stated, "GlaxoSmithKline is denying millions of African people with HIV access to drugs that could save their lives" ("Spasmachine"). Here we have evidence of an unequivocal belief in Blake's antislavery motivations: the same cannot always straightforwardly be said of the artists whose work I will examine next, who often call into question the representational conventions on which the engravings rely, as well as Blake's and Stedman's positionalities as white chroniclers and creators.

12 Still, a common thread between the adoptions in activist visual culture and in contemporary art can be traced in the frequent association of Blake's engravings with ongoing discursive agitation for black rights in the present, a continuing legacy that scholars have not yet studied in detail. These responses perform a double transformation, as the black bodies given form by Blake's graver are first detached from their original context as plates in a printed book and then, in their new contexts, come to stand in, however inadequately, for the real bodies of enslaved peoples. In the artworks to which I now turn, the images' quasi-documentary function and the silences that they nonetheless mask are foregrounded and thematized. In the process, the works raise important questions about the cultural role of images and the limits and possibilities of their reclamation and adaptation.

Artistic Afterlives: The Blake-Stedman Engravings for the Twenty-First Century

13 In their various ways, Sokari Douglas Camp, Jazzmen Lee-Johnson, and Hew Locke have deployed Blake's engravings as a kind of pivot point through which to pursue both revisionist and utopian imagining. Like the engravings themselves, these simulacra resist any simple resolution or interpretation. Each iteration seems actively to herald its own

status as a copy of a copy of a copy. Their all too familiar shapes signal both presence and absence, evoking at once the vitality of flesh and the loss of human life and liberty, the reality of historical violence and the erasure of its sufferers' voices and perspectives from the historical record. Yet in some senses, what Blake or Stedman meant by the original images is no longer of primary concern: the images take on a life of their own and feature prominently in these artists' depictions of the transatlantic slave trade, its legacies, and ongoing racial inequality in the present.

- 14 In the catalogue for a 2016 exhibition entitled *Primavera* (October Gallery, London, 7 April–14 May), we find mention of Sokari Douglas Camp's steel sculpture *Europe Supported by Africa and America* (2015; illus. 1). The text states the work's revisionist aims:

The Abolitionist Blake's allegorical etching presents the white figure of Europe supported by two darker figures personifying the continents of Africa and America. ... Sokari's main revision is to clothe these figures in a variety of fabrics that denote the material styles of the different continents. The inspiration for these changes came from



1. Sokari Douglas Camp, *Europe Supported by Africa and America* (2015). © Sokari Douglas Camp. All rights reserved, DACS 2024. Photo: Jonathan Greet.

an image of three Nigerian women sumptuously outfitted for a wedding, each wearing a distinctive combination of wrap, bodice and headdress. . . . Sokari's figures dressed in identifying clothing are less vulnerable to misinterpretation than their predecessors, and in her modernised version of the "exchange" that occurs between the three continents, subtle shifts have been introduced to imply that the imbalance and exploitation of former times is at last, finally beginning to be redressed. (Houghton 6)

Houghton clearly positions Blake as an abolitionist; however, the figures' dress and the "subtle shifts" in their relative positions are framed as revisionist corrections to the original design's Europeanization and sexualization of the women and the implied hierarchy between them, which are presumably the elements seen as making the engraving "vulnerable to misinterpretation." On her website, Douglas Camp connects her sculptural group to European iconographic traditions, especially the prototype of the Three Graces, often depicted (for instance, in Antonio Canova's marble sculpture) as naked, classically idealized women. As Mellor writes, Blake's engraving had in the first place channeled this tradition, in ways that whitewashed and homogenized the women, erasing racial and cultural differences: "All three women are represented in a European body type, with the same facial features and physiognomy: all three conform to eighteenth-century neoclassical prototypes of female beauty derived from the Venus of Medici and the Three Graces." For Mellor, this assimilation to a European sexual ideal demonstrates how "both Blake and Stedman participated in a cultural erasure of difference between races and individuals that gave priority to Western, white models" (358). For her part, Douglas Camp represents a sense of the "exploitation of former times" being literally and figuratively "redressed." Charles Omuaru notes that her "fusion" of European and Nigerian cultural models enables her to express "universal concerns" (131-32). Yet, as he also emphasizes (130), she goes to great lengths in her artistic practice to represent "endangered" elements of Kalabari culture, particularly masks and headpieces, thus working against the "erasure of difference" described by Mellor. Omuaru highlights how Douglas Camp reintroduces difference through dress as something to be asserted and respected.

- 15 The hierarchical imbalance at work in the engraving has also been identified by Kara Walker. One of the drawings from the series *Tate Fountain with Venus*, made in preparation for Walker's Tate Modern-commissioned sculpture *Fons Americanus* (2019), bears the inscription

COLUMBIA AND EUROPA BEING SUPPORTED (Somewhat Reluctantly) by AN Allegorical but nameless African goddess Surrounded on all sides by a history of Capitalism and Exploitation upheld and Beautified in The ARTS—or—"The

Impossibility of Blackness in the mind of Someone white." (quoted in Foster)

The composition of the Blake-Stedman engraving was not prominently echoed in the finished sculpture, but this inscriptive framing in a preparatory drawing indicates the artist's deep and critical engagement with the image and its representational premises. Crucially, Walker foregrounds its white authorship in a manner that, as we shall see, resonates with Lee-Johnson's examination of perspectives, subjectivity, and positionality.

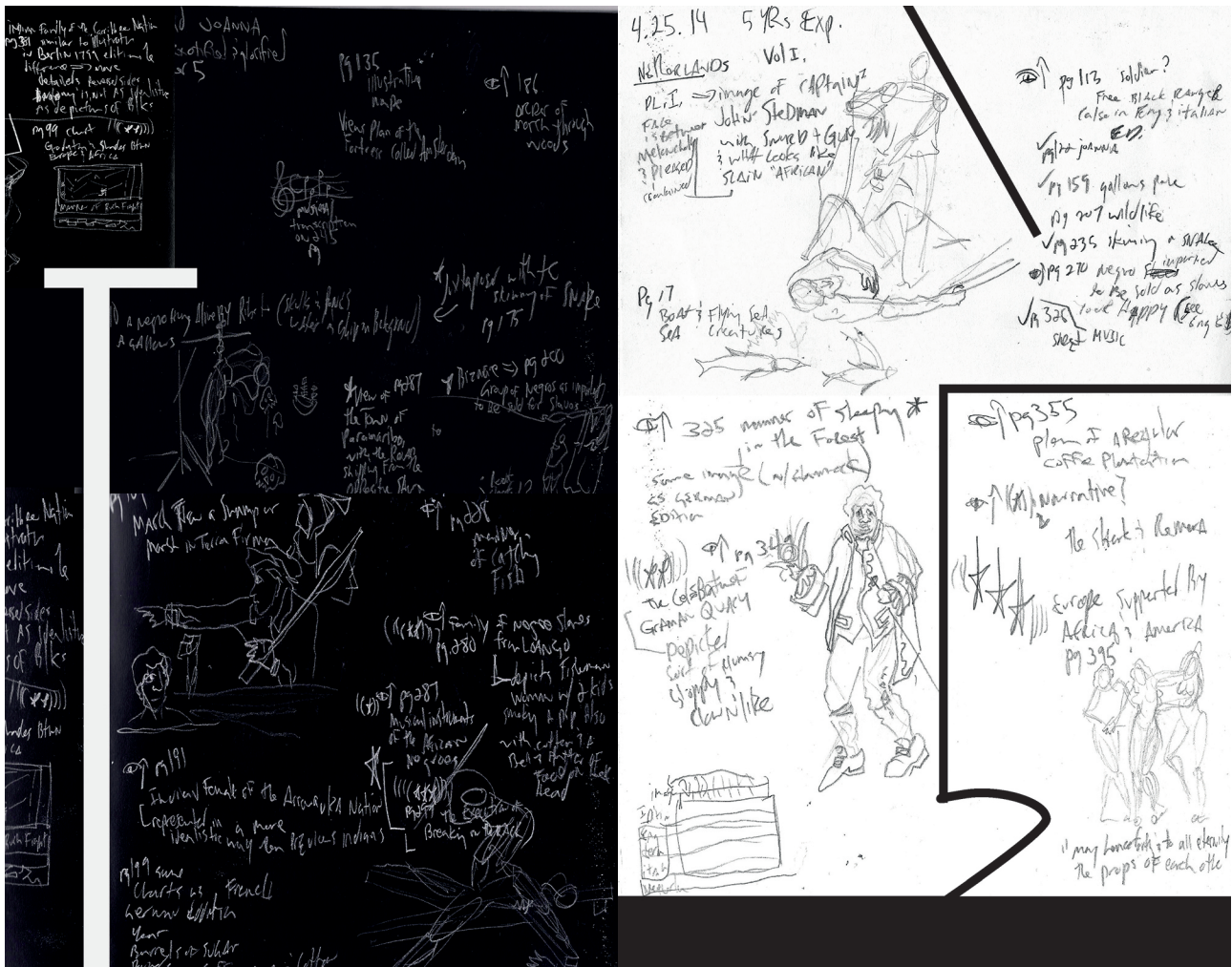
- 16 An article on the Victoria and Albert Museum's website on the occasion of the display of Douglas Camp's *Europe Supported by Africa and America* in 2022 (coinciding with the exhibition *Africa Fashion*, 2 July 2022–16 April 2023) further details the artwork's revisionism:

The figures' outfits denote the material style of each continent: Europe wears a Mondrian-like pattern; Africa a West African *Kente* cloth; but the artist adds to the reading of her work by dressing America in Paisley—a textile whose patterns are of Persian and Indian origins, but whose name derives from the Scottish town and centre of production of that fabric. In doing so, she reminds us that cloth carries within itself interwoven narratives of trade, often complicated by geopolitics.

This historical revisionism goes hand in hand with present-day activist intent. The wreath that the three figures hold terminates in petroleum nozzles, alluding both to "the environmental and human impact of fossil fuel extraction, an economic colonialism perpetuated by multinational oil companies" and to humanity's "shared responsibility to care for the environment" (Victoria and Albert Museum).

- 17 The multimedia series *re{volt}ing* (2018) by Jazzmen Lee-Johnson is similarly poised between past and future, revisionism and utopian potentiality. As I noted in the introduction, *re{volt}ing* was conceived in direct response to Stedman's *Narrative* and its engravings, specifically those produced by Blake. It comprises animations and linocut prints and was accompanied by a visual essay, *The Critical Fables of Captives: Sketches in Potentiality*. Lee-Johnson works here "under the aliases of twin selves: Academia Graphit and Discourse Jockey—one a revisionist, the other a futurist seer" (Sehgal). The title *re{volt}ing*, Sehgal continues, "signals not only a visceral reaction to the disgusting violence perpetrated under racial slavery, but also the insurgent potential of revolution, the energy of the volt."

- 18 Despite this abundant "energy," in conceptualizing *re{volt}ing* Lee-Johnson seems to have gone to great lengths to foreground the epistemic gaps and impossibilities of recovering the perspectives of enslaved peoples. In *Critical Fables*, she



2. Pages from Jazzmen Lee-Johnson, *The Critical Fables of Captives: Sketches in Potentiality* (2018). © Jazzmen Lee-Johnson.

outlines her debt to Saidiya Hartman’s influential notion of “critical fabulation” and views as her task the “reshaping and rectifying” of Blake’s engravings. She “surveyed eleven editions of the [*Narrative*], concentrating primarily on the engravings created by William Blake in concert with the text based on Stedman’s sketches and descriptions of what he witnessed.” Throughout the essay, she reproduces her sketches of those engravings, including “Europe Supported by Africa and America,” “A Negro Hung Alive by the Ribs to a Gallows,” “The Celebrated Graman Quacy,” and “The Execution of Breaking on the Rack” (illus. 2). Recognizing the sexualizing and dehumanizing tendencies of the engravings and dissatisfied with her own reproductive sketches alone, Lee-Johnson, “as an artist, as a descendant of slaves,” produced in the final series what she calls “sketches of potentiality” to draw out “the imagined perspective of the slave.” Her efforts to do so were, she recognizes, inherently limited

from the outset: “My error lies in perspective. I attempt to represent a culture of slavery on its own terms without having access to any accounts from those enslaved, rather I rely on the accounts of a White outsider.” This essential fact is the cause, it seems, of her frustration: “I am still left wanting,” she writes toward the conclusion of the essay, “wanting to treat and heal the wounds of a whipped woman, a hanging man and a bashed man. ... I am not satisfied. I want to see what they saw and understand what they felt. All I can do is imagine.”

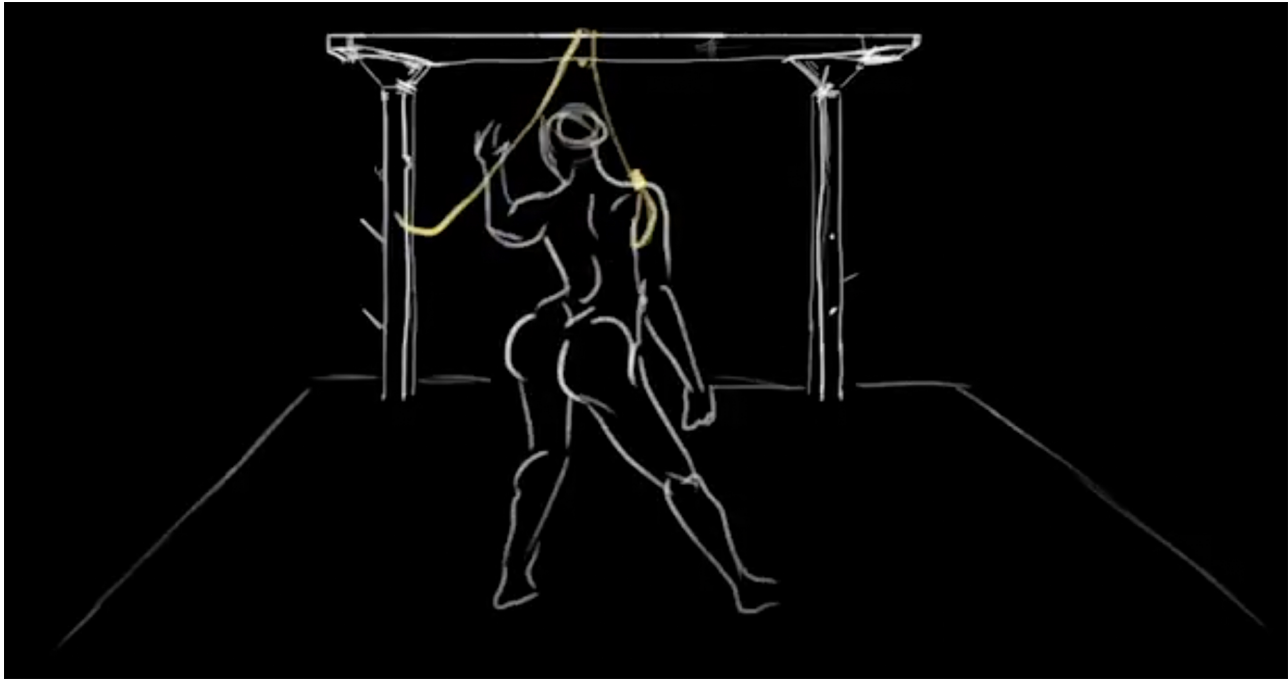
19 Lee-Johnson’s works reconfigure the tortured bodies of Blake’s engravings, exploring different perspectival angles to encourage new ways of looking and to problematize the very act of looking. The lurching perspectives and contorted forms of the bodies in her sketches and prints create visual paradoxes, exemplified by the work entitled “The



3. Jazzmen Lee-Johnson, "The Onlookers" (2018). Linocut print with oil-based ink on BFK rives paper. 45 x 24 in. © Jazzmen Lee-Johnson.

Onlookers” (illus. 3), in which the tortured figure’s extremities are enlarged to the point of incongruity, and we the onlookers are drawn into a struggle between subject and object, reality and imaginative distortion. But the forms are also energized by resilience and rapture, as in the jarring animated loop *Joanna Twerk Left*, in which a naked, dancing woman faces a gallows, “twerking” with her back to the viewer (illus. 4). As Sehgal suggests, “We don’t know if Joanna (Stedman’s long-time sexual partner, an enslaved

black woman), dancing at the gallows, is rejoicing [in] her newfound independence or twerking for her life.” In these moments, Lee-Johnson pushes into the potential for individual agency and power in the present, generating “symbols of embodied agency in the context of global slavery” (Sehgal) through her artistic responses to the engravings, whose corporeality somehow affords a vital force that might be channeled into new forms and possibilities.



4. Jazzmen Lee-Johnson, *Joanna Twerk Left* (2018). Screenshot from a hand-drawn animated loop, chalk on construction paper.
© Jazzmen Lee-Johnson.

20 A kindred duality presents itself in Hew Locke’s works *Washington, Federal Hall* (2018) and *The Procession* (2022), both of which incorporate details from Blake’s engravings for Stedman. *Washington* (illus. 5) is part of a series entitled *Patriots*, based on statues of historical figures (George Washington, J. Marion Sims, Alexander Hamilton, Christopher Columbus, a pilgrim father, and two of Peter Stuyvesant) on display in public spaces in New York, many of which have since sparked debate over potential removal. Locke mounted enlarged photographs of the statues on aluminium and “dressed” them with chains and other accoutrements, including, in the case of *Washington*, metal figures of enslaved people—one of which is based on a Blake engraving—which dangle from the likeness of the slaveholder. The exaggerated pomp and ceremony of the works travesty the pedestalization of these perpetrators of vio-

lence in the name of empire, while the use of chains and the borrowing from Blake-Stedman bluntly proclaim the misguided impulse of this kind of hero worship.

21 Similarly, *The Procession*, produced by commission for Tate Britain and installed in the Duveen Galleries from March 2022 to January 2023, includes 140 figures embodying the legacies of British and European colonial oppression, adorned with reproductions of Benin bronzes, further colonial spoils, newspaper articles, and other historical artifacts and documents (illus. 6). One of the figures wears a headdress that features laser-cut wood reproductions of the tortured figure from “A Negro Hung Alive by the Ribs to a Gallows” (illus. 7), while an etched brass version of the same image is attached to the back of a different figure’s clothing. In addition to *Washington*, Locke had already vi-



5. Hew Locke, *Washington, Federal Hall* (2018). Mixed media (fabric, metal, etc.) collaged on aluminium-mounted C-type photograph. 183 x 122 x 6.5 cm. © Hew Locke. All rights reserved, DACS/Artimage 2024.



6. Hew Locke, *The Procession* (2022), detail. Mixed media, including cardboard, fabric, glue gun, PVA, plastic, fibreglass, wood, metal, resin, and paint. © Hew Locke. All rights reserved, DACS/Artimage 2024.

sually “cited” this particular engraving in *Cui Bono?* (2017), which was originally installed at Rathaus Bremen, Germany, as part of the exhibition *The Blind Spot: Bremen and Art in the Colonial Era*; a version also appears in a recent fabric piece, *Raw Materials 24*. His exhibition at the British Museum, *Hew Locke: What Have We Here?* (17 October 2024–9 February 2025), includes a display of three prints from the Stedman series: Blake’s “An Armed Coromantyn Free Ranger” and “The Skinning of the Aboma Snake,” as well as Bartolozzi’s frontispiece for the *Narrative*. Overall, the exhibition comprises written and sculptural interventions focusing on the colonial histories underpinning the museum’s methods of collecting and displaying objects.

22 At Tate, *The Procession* likewise sought to mediate visitor encounters with the cultural institution. Drawing on a wide range of visual materials, it actively thematizes the histori-

cal relationship between art and empire. In addition to the echoes of the Blake-Stedman engravings, Locke includes a reproduction of John Singleton Copley’s *The Death of Major Peirson, 6 January 1781* (1783), which romanticizes the unity and loyalty of peoples subjected to British rule by depicting the major’s servant, a black man, shooting a French soldier who has just killed Peirson. The reproduction is printed on the fabric of a palanquin carried by two figures representative of Haiti’s colonization and the Haitian Revolution (illus. 8). This visual citation of a painting from Tate’s own collection foregrounded the space of the gallery itself—the institution from which Locke received the commission and also a repository for works of art associated with colonialism, slavery, and empire.

23 Both the assemblage technique and the depth and eclecticism of Locke’s engagement with historic art and visual cul-



7. Hew Locke, *The Procession* (2022), detail of figure 42.
© Hew Locke. All rights reserved, DACS/Artimage 2024.

ture recall other important British and American works of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, many of which have similarly used the “master’s tools” within the “master’s house” of the cultural institution as a mode of critique, to adopt the terms of Audre Lordé’s seminal 1979 lecture. Fred Wilson’s *Mining the Museum* (1992–93) at the Maryland Historical Society provides a particularly striking point of comparison, insofar as Wilson’s onsite intervention took its substance from the objects and artworks housed in the society’s collection, bringing out for display artifacts that had previously been invisibilized, consigned to storage and hence preservation in undisturbed obscurity—including Justus Engelhardt Kuhn’s portrait of Henry Darnall III (c. 1710), which depicts an enslaved, metal-collared black child stooping behind the young Darnall, his enslaver.

24 Locke’s work can also be likened to the collages of Romare Bearden. Bearden’s *Projections* (1964) comprises twenty-one large-scale photographs of collages made from “fragmented images culled from magazines and [his] vast store

of art-historical reproductions” (Glazer 413). According to Lee Stephens Glazer, “This technique, combined with narratives of black life, allowed Bearden to acknowledge the significance of the art-historical past even as he revised its forms to accommodate new representations of African American identity” (411). In contrast to Locke’s reuse of historic artworks depicting black people, Bearden’s works tend to register their relative *absence* in the vast majority of celebrated Western art. His intention was, he explained, to “establish a world through art in which the validity of my Negro experience could live and make its own logic” (quoted in Childs 62). Although differing in kind and cultural moment, Bearden’s and Locke’s engagement with historic artworks points to a shared impulse to revise and remediate canonical art-historical images as a fundamental aspect of their practice and its driving sociopolitical critique.

25 Speaking of *The Procession* in a short promotional film produced by Tate, Locke reflects that “the piece of work has a life of its own. So how this work is perceived over time will change and evolve.” This statement also seems eminently applicable to Locke’s (and, indeed, to Douglas Camp’s and Lee-Johnson’s) incorporation of elements from the Blake-Stedman engravings—the engravings very much take on a life of their own, and function as emblems for the human pain and suffering that were foundational to European colonialism and slavery. However, Locke’s installation is not solely oriented toward the past; its mysterious, carnivalesque explosion of matter is also intended to look to the future: “There’s an energy there which is about hope—the future—let’s make something positive,” he muses at the end of the film. Yet his hope for “something positive” seems to exist in uneasy tension with the tokens of violence that he harnesses toward that hope—the detritus of colonialism could only ever be positioned as positively generative in spite of itself, only through radical disruption and toil. Like Lee-Johnson’s frustration with the limits of imagination alone, Locke appears to dramatize a kind of imaginative toil, along with the ongoing struggle both to recover what has been lost and to body forth something new. In the artworks that I have examined in this article, the spectres of the Blake-Stedman engravings are poised precisely on that fault-line, disclosing violence that is at once unimaginable and impossible to forget.

Coda: On Reproduction

26 Reproduction is central to this article’s thematic emphasis on the reuse, adaptation, and circulation of images. As such, a consideration has been whether I ought to reproduce the engravings themselves as illustrative figures. This practice has certainly been prevalent in Blake scholarship that discusses them—and, of course, it is also enacted in a different context in the visual culture and works of art that I describe

above. I have decided to follow Nicholas Mirzoeff's principle that "placing racist imagery in circulation yet again in order to criticize it ... perpetuates harm" (Mirzoeff viii-ix). In his British Museum exhibition *What Have We Here?*, Locke comments on his firsthand experience of harm when viewing reproductions of the Stedman engravings. Alongside the prints, he has inserted a text panel that reads, "I've chosen not to pick the most violent images of torture because I'm tired of seeing images of broken Black bodies"; however, he decided to include Bartolozzi's frontispiece engraving showing "a dead enslaved person" on the grounds that this "is an image of somebody who fought back"

27 Whether or not we laud Blake as an abolitionist, the Blake-Stedman engravings ultimately cleave to a tendency within

British art of the eighteenth century to routinely represent black people in positions of degradation and subjugation. Reproducing the images merely for the purpose of illustration would perpetuate these representational conventions. However, there is, I think, a difference between the creative reappropriations being enacted by the contemporary artists considered here and the casual reuse of the images in contexts wherein their formal integrity, cultural authority, or ethical premises are neither primarily nor ultimately called into question. For this reason, as well as omitting figures of the engravings, I have also excluded illustrations of the t-shirt graphic and the protest poster mentioned earlier in this article. While these reuses undoubtedly came with strongly politicized, antiracist agendas, which I certainly do not wish to dismiss, in those contexts the Blake-Sted-



8. Hew Locke, *The Procession* (2022), detail. © Hew Locke. All rights reserved, DACS 2024. Photo: © Tate (Joe Humphrys).

man images retained a certain moral and quasi-documentary authority—indeed, their force relied in part on that authority—such that, I believe, reproducing them would in its own way uphold that status.

- 28 My decision not to reproduce the engravings may well seem redundant: clearly, as we have seen, the images are well and truly alive and circulating in various pockets of popular culture and in the art world in Britain and America. Moreover, I have, although indirectly, reproduced them in some sense by including photographs of contemporary artworks that respond to or visually “cite” them in the first place. Indeed, removing the images from circulation entirely would also remove the ability of artists to create new works responding to them. But, since the task of this study has primarily been to trace the engravings’ legacies and the important work being done by artists to interrogate, remediate, and rethink the images critically, it is not necessary to reproduce the originals. That absence is also, I think, fitting for images that have well and truly taken on lives of their own, leaping beyond the confines of their conception as plates designed to illustrate an eighteenth-century book.
- 29 The contemporary artworks discussed here rehearse a vexed, dialectical relation to the Blake-Stedman engravings and to the representational and symbolic authority that has accrued to them since their initial production. Rather than simply reproducing the images wholesale, the artists have radically altered their formal and material composition—from paper to steel, fabric, or animated film; from their originally idealized, congruous proportions to the “impossible,” to quote Lee-Johnson, perspectives of her sketches. These artists refuse to eradicate the Blake-Stedman images, the physical violence that they emblemize, and the discursive violence that they both embody and perpetuate, but the artists also refuse to grant the images gratuitous entry into their expressive, eclectic assemblages. *Pace Mirzoeff*, then, it seems that for them there is something to be said for reproducing such images in certain contexts—but certainly not uncritically, and certainly not without significant intervention. The results are uneven, searching, necessarily irresolvable: Douglas Camp’s rendition of “Europe Supported by Africa and America” is hopeful yet cast in the mold of oppressive Western standards of beauty and embodiment; Lee-Johnson takes the images apart, holds their bodies up to the microscope, listens for their subjects’ voices, and still finds herself “wanting”; and Locke’s emanations are joyous as much as elegiac, seeking novelty as much as they reject complete rupture with the colonial “past,” its enduring artifacts, and its present-day reincarnations.
- 30 Whether or not we need them to be—whether or not we *want* them to be—the images, as the artists well know, are

already there, lodged in a collective imaginary. But the continuation of their presence as cultural actants is far from guaranteed or automatic. They continue to be recycled and remediated—as spectres of violence that they could only ever approximate, and as substitutes for perspectives that are unlikely ever to be recoverable. Yet, as their creative adaptors have amply demonstrated, they are just as meaningful to engage with precisely *because of* their deficiencies and ethical problems. Moreover, they appear at times to afford a space, even if only aporetically, for the kind of “potentiality” or vitality that Lee-Johnson, for her part, seeks out. As much as reproducing the images might allow them to retain their authority, so might removing them from view without direct and serious critique: the arguments for both sides are approximately familiar from recent debates over the memorialization of colonizers and slave traders, including those whose statues have been travestied by Locke. The case is far from closed. Whatever work the Blake-Stedman engravings go on to do in the world, the course of their afterlives seems to have taken a distinctive, and compelling, turn in recent works of art from both sides of the Atlantic. Above all, these artworks represent a phase in the images’ afterlives in which their emblematic, quasi-documentary, and canonical authority, which has for so long characterized the nature of their reception and reuse, is no longer being taken for granted.

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“Unentangled in the intricate windings
of modern practice”: William Blake’s
Apprentice Copperplates and
Engravings

BY MARK CROSBY

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Engraving is Drawing on Copper & Nothing Else
Blake, *Public Address*, c. 1810 (E 574)

1 IN 1809 the antiquarian Richard Gough (1735–1809) bequeathed a substantial collection of preparatory drawings, copperplates, and proof impressions to the Bodleian Library. This material relates to his publications on British history and topography and medieval funerary monuments, as well as his work as the first director of the Society of Antiquaries, which included supervising the publication of both its journal and the occasional papers *Vetusta Monumenta*, along with other projects. During his time as director, Gough also worked on his self-published study *Sepulchral Monuments, in Great Britain* (1786–96). Illustrated with engravings by James Basire, engraver to the Society of Antiquaries and the Royal Society, *Sepulchral Monuments* was conceived as a comprehensive visual and textual account of British royal tombs “from the Norman Conquest to the Seventeenth Century.”¹ Although none of the work was published until 1786, Basire’s studio had be-

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1. Richard Gough, *Sepulchral Monuments, in Great Britain*, 2 vols. (London, 1786–96), vol. 1, part 1, title page.

gun the engraving project in the 1770s, a period that coincided with William Blake’s apprenticeship (1772–79). Among the materials in the Gough Collection are the copperplates after Blake’s preparatory drawings.² On the versos of three of the copperplates are incised linear patterns and motifs made with burins, a drypoint needle, and a compass, suggesting that these plates were used by an apprentice to practice and develop the techniques of line engraving. This article revisits Basire’s studio at 31 Great Queen Street and Blake’s apprenticeship period before describing the markings on these plates and offering evidence for their attribution to Blake.

Blake’s Apprenticeship with Basire

2 When Blake began his apprenticeship in 1772, he overlapped with Thomas Ryder for a short time³ and then was Basire’s only apprentice until James Parker joined the studio in August 1773. The Stationers’ Company records and the Register of Duties reveal that Basire did not take on another apprentice until 1779, when Blake completed his term and was released from his indenture.⁴ The prints issuing from Basire’s studio during Blake’s time were mainly line engravings executed using the mixed method of preliminary etching followed by engraving. Unlike the fashionable aesthetic produced by stipple engraving or mezzotint, line engraving used a variety of linear patterns to represent form and tone. It was an extremely time-consuming technique that took patience and skill to master and ensured that for architectural illustration the print was faithful to the original.⁵ Gough frequently praised Basire

While the title page of the first volume indicates that it is “Part I,” as the work took shape Gough split the volume into two parts: part 1, covering the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, and part 2, covering the fourteenth century. Volume 1, part 1 was published in 1786; volume 1, part 2 was published in 1796. The majority of the engravings after Blake’s drawings are in volume 1, parts 1 and 2. Volume 2, referred to on the title page as “Part II,” deals with the fifteenth century, and was also published in 1796. Gough didn’t complete a third volume, but published an introduction in 1799. There are, of course, examples of bibliographic variations in some copies.

2. Martin Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) #12-47 (for preparatory drawings in the Gough Collection), but see also note 14.

3. G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) [hereafter *BR(2)*] claims that Ryder’s term concluded on 16 August 1772 (16), two weeks after Blake began his apprenticeship, whereas Michael Phillips, *William Blake: Apprentice and Master* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2014) says that there was an overlap of three months (30).

4. Stationers’ Company Apprentice Register, 1 February 1763 to 5 December 1786, p. 15 (National Archives, Kew, INL 1/27, f. 133). Blake’s indenture has not survived; for a re-creation, see *BR(2)* 12-14, and for a contemporaneous example, see Phillips 28 (illus. 14 and caption).

5. Line engravings produce more impressions before needing to be reworked than mezzotints, which are limited to between 100 and 200 impressions.

for his ability to create accurate reproductions, observing that “Mr. James Basire[s]’ . . . burin will do credit to every individual or body of men who employ it.”⁶ While much of Basire’s work came from the Society of Antiquaries and the Royal Society—particularly the illustrations for their respective journals, *Archaeologia* and *Transactions of the Royal Society*—his workshop also produced a range of prints to illustrate popular journals like the *European Magazine*, as well as portrait engravings of aristocrats and notable literary figures, including Andrew Marvell, John Dryden, and James Thomson. Many of these portrait engravings were exhibited at the Free Society of Artists.⁷ Basire was also a specialist in executing large-scale prints, such as “The Stoning of St. Stephen” (1753) after Raphael and “Pylades and Orestes” (1771) after Benjamin West’s famous painting. Beginning in the early 1770s, the Society of Antiquaries commissioned from him a series of large engravings of paintings depicting scenes from the lives of Henry VIII and Edward VI. His studio illustrated several popular travel narratives during the same period, such as James Cook’s hugely successful *A Voyage towards the South Pole, and round the World* (1777). In addition to the frontispiece, Basire contributed six engravings, including the large fold-out plate “The Landing at Mallicolo, One of the New Hebrides,” which was exhibited to much acclaim at the Free Society of Artists in 1778.⁸

- 3 In the same year, Charles Rogers’s *Collection of Prints in Imitation of Drawings* was published. This was a series of finely etched prints with mezzotint borders after the drawings of Renaissance masters, executed to replicate the aesthetic of the originals.⁹ Basire contributed eighteen engravings after Raphael and Caravaggio, among others, using stippling in combination with lines and other illusionistic effects.¹⁰ When taken with his other work, these prints demonstrate the breadth of his technical skill as an engraver utilizing a

6. John Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, 9 vols. (London, 1812–15) 2: 586.

7. See Algernon Graves, *The Society of Artists of Great Britain, 1760–1791; The Free Society of Artists, 1761–1783: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and Their Work from the Foundation of the Societies to 1791* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1907) 24–26.

8. See *A Catalogue of the Pictures, Sculptures, &c. by the Society of Artists* (London, 1778) 4 (#16).

9. Many of these prints were produced in the 1760s and evince a range of techniques that imitate the autographic gestures associated with sketching on paper. These techniques give, as Viscomi observes, “the illusion of spontaneity” (e-mail correspondence, 1 October 2024).

10. See Charles Rogers, *A Collection of Prints in Imitation of Drawings*, 2 vols. (London, 1778) 1: 46, 57, 71, 105, 111, 114, 136, 151; and 2: 27, 32, 33, 34, 99, 134, 166, 182, 187, 228. William Wynne Ryland engraved most of the plates in this publication. According to Alexander Gilchrist, James Blake first approached Ryland, “a more famous man than Basire,” to take his son William as an apprentice (see *Life of William Blake*, 2 vols. [London: Macmillan and Co., 1863] 1: 13).

specific range of tools to create a visual language capable of reproducing original images on copper. He could employ firmly etched lines and simple hatching patterns to illustrate antiquarian and architectural subjects, or take a more sophisticated approach with the large historical plates that required smoother lines and intensely detailed hatching and cross-hatching. He was equally capable of creating the loosely and heavily etched lines typical of popular caricatures such as “The Farmer’s Return” after Hogarth (1762) and the forceful curved lines, careful stippling, and elaborate cross-hatching necessary for portrait engravings. Basire passed on these techniques, enigmatically described in the records of the Stationers’ Company as the “Art and Mystery” of engraving, to his apprentices.¹¹

- 4 Two years into his apprenticeship, Blake was sent to Westminster Abbey by his master to make preparatory drawings of the medieval royal tombs to illustrate Gough’s *Sepulchral Monuments*. The main source for our knowledge about his time in the abbey is Benjamin Heath Malkin, who almost certainly gathered the information directly from Blake:

He was employed in making drawings from old buildings and monuments, and occasionally, especially in winter, in engraving from those drawings. This occupation led him to an acquaintance with those neglected works of art, called Gothic monuments. There he found a treasure, which he knew how to value. He saw the simple and plain road to the style of art at which he aimed, unentangled in the intricate windings of modern practice. The monuments of Kings and Queens in Westminster Abbey, which surround the chapel of Edward the Confessor, particularly that of King Henry the Third, the beautiful monument and figure of Queen Elinor, Queen Philippa, King Edward the Third, King Richard the Second and his Queen, were among his first studies. All these he drew in every point he could catch, frequently standing on the monument, and viewing the figures from the top. The heads he considered as portraits; and all the ornaments appeared as miracles of art, to his Gothicised imagination. He then drew Aymer de Valence’s monument, with his fine figure on the top. Those exquisite little figures which surround it, though dreadfully mutilated, are still models for the study of drapery. But I do not mean to enumerate all his drawings, since they would lead me over all the old monuments in Westminster Abbey.¹²

The painter J. T. Smith recalls a conversation with Thomas Stothard that goes some way toward corroborating Malkin’s earlier account. According to Smith, Stothard considered that “Blake made a remarkably correct and fine drawing of the head of Queen Philippa” (illus. 1) from her effigy.¹³

11. BR(2) 13.

12. BR(2) 563.

13. BR(2) 615.



1. *Queen Philippa* (c. 1773–77). Pencil on paper, sheet 48.8 x 30.5 cm. Gough Maps 225, f. 205. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

5 Malkin's account has been taken as the primary authority for attributing to Blake some of the preparatory drawings of the royal tombs in the collections of the Bodleian Library and the Society of Antiquaries, although most of the drawings are, by convention, signed "Basire." Based on Malkin's description, Blake started sketching the tombs in 1774. Over a span of three to four years, he produced more than fifty drawings.¹⁴ Malkin's observation that Blake spent time, "especially in winter, ... engraving from those drawings" has been used to attribute to him some, but not all, of the engravings after his sketches. For instance, Roger Eason and Essick ascribe twenty-three engravings in *Sepulchral Monuments* to Blake, although only those of the six oval portraits of kings and queens have been widely accepted as his work.¹⁵ Question marks hover over the attribution of the rest of the engravings after his drawings.¹⁶ This is partly because volume 1, part 1 of *Sepulchral Monuments* was published in 1786, seven years after Blake completed his apprenticeship, and volume 1, part 2 appeared in 1796. One of the engravings, of the monument of Queen Eleanor after his drawing, is dated 1783, which appears to preclude him as the engraver of this print. Like the preparatory drawings, all the engravings after Blake's sketches bear Basire's signature, using variations of the formulation "Basire del & Sc" to denote authorship or delineation (del) of the drawing and the engraving (Sc). It was common practice for the master engraver to sign all the work coming from his studio, and in the case of the engravings for *Sepulchral Monuments*, Basire's signature was an imprimatur of accuracy. According to Gough, the undertaking would not have been feasible without Basire. Recalling his conception of the project in 1772, Gough relates in his manuscript autobiography that "M^r. Basire's Specimens of drawing & engraving gave me so much satisfaction th it was impossible to resist t impulse of carrying such a design into executi" [*sic*].¹⁷ In

14. Forty-seven are in the Gough Collection at the Bodleian. There are also nine, of effigies, wall paintings, and tombs, at the Society of Antiquaries. My figure for the Bodleian differs from Butlin partly because it includes works hitherto not attributed to Blake. For these new attributions, see Crosby, "The Gothic Artist: William Blake's Apprentice Drawings and Copperplates in the Bodleian Library," *Bodleian Library Record* (forthcoming).

The Society of Antiquaries drawings are highly finished and were displayed during Joseph Ayloffe's lecture to the society on 12 March 1778. His *Account of Some Ancient Monuments in Westminster Abbey* was published with illustrations after Blake's preparatory drawings in 1780 and reissued in the second volume of *Vetusta Monumenta* in 1789.

15. Roger R. Eason and Robert N. Essick, *William Blake, Book Illustrator*, vol. 2 (Memphis: American Blake Foundation, 1979) 57-61; Robert N. Essick, *William Blake's Commercial Book Illustrations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) 118-20.

16. See also Robert N. Essick, *William Blake, Printmaker* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) 30-32.

17. Bodleian Library, Gough Middlesex 11, ff. 25-26. For Gough's inception of *Sepulchral Monuments*, see Nichols 6: 622.

Sepulchral Monuments, Gough praises him for being "faithful in his transcripts and modest in his prices."¹⁸ As engraver to the Society of Antiquaries and the Royal Society, Basire was considered one of Britain's foremost practitioners of intaglio graphics at the time and, as such, would have appealed to the connoisseur collectors and antiquarians who were members of the societies, or subscribed to their publications.

6 The Gough correspondence in the Bodleian reveals that drawings of tombs to illustrate *Sepulchral Monuments* were being prepared for engraving by Basire's studio as early as October 1773.¹⁹ By 1773, Blake had learned the basic techniques of line engraving, to judge from the first of two states of "Joseph of Arimathea among the Rocks of Albion," his engraving after a figure from Francesco Rossi Salvati's copy of Michelangelo's *The Crucifixion of Saint Peter* (1549). The first state (illus. 2) is undated but contains a manuscript inscription in Blake's hand: "Engraved when I was a beginner at Basires". On the second, he has incised "Engraved by W Blake 1773 from an old Italian Drawing". There are differences in the linear patterns between the states, but the first shows that he was able to execute dense webs of hatching and cross-hatching.²⁰ Blake covered the entire surface of the plate with various hatching systems to represent different features, such as rock, water, clothing, hair, and skin. The coherence between these systems is inconsistent and, as such, the tonal scale is limited compared with the second state.²¹ Nevertheless, the first state demonstrates that he had learned the basic methods of hatching to create form and tone as early as the year following the start of his apprenticeship.

18. Gough, *Sepulchral Monuments* vol. 1, part 1, p. 9.

19. Writing to Rev. Michael Tyson on 27 October 1773, Gough mentions having the drawings of the "Essex monuments" prepared for engraving (Nichols 8: 608). The Essex monuments refer to the tombs of Robert and Thomas de Vere; there is an unsigned and undated preparatory drawing by Tyson of the Robert de Vere tomb and effigy (Gough Maps 225, f. 131). Both monuments were engraved and published (*Sepulchral Monuments* vol. 1, part 1, p. 68, pl. 24; vol. 1, part 2, p. 130, pl. 52). Also see Tyson to Gough, November 1773, about having Tyson's preparatory drawing of the Hawkwood tomb (Nichols 8: 609) engraved for *Sepulchral Monuments* (vol. 1, part 2, p. 153, pl. 59). For Gough's correspondence with Tyson, including discussions of drawings and engravings for *Sepulchral Monuments*, see Bodleian Libraries, MS. Gough gen. top. 44, ff. 477-532.

20. For differences between the two states, see Essick, *Printmaker* 185-86.

21. Some of the darker areas in the first state, such as the folds of clothing, may have been made by touching up the plate with a burin; that is, Blake etched the first state and may have added some engraving work to deepen lines so that they would hold ink and print more darkly. I'm indebted to Ad Stijnman for this observation.



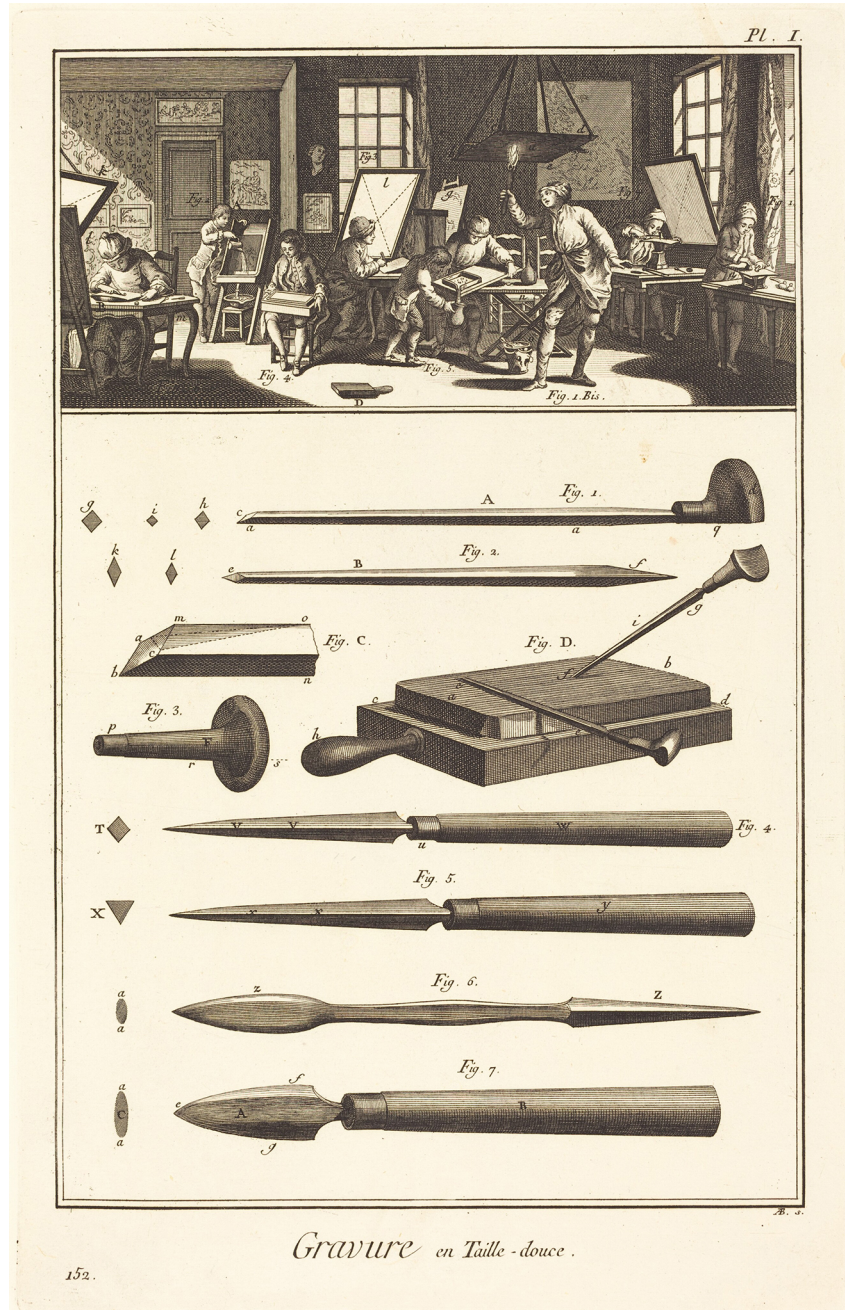
2. "Joseph of Arimathea among the Rocks of Albion," first state (c. 1773). Line engraving, sheet 26.6 x 15.6 cm. Fitzwilliam Museum, P.391-1985. Photo: © Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge.

Three Copperplates

- 7 As noted, on the versos of three copperplates after Blake's Westminster Abbey drawings there are hatching and cross-hatching patterns and other incised markings that suggest the hand of an apprentice. To make these incised markings,

apprentice engravers had a range of tools available, such as burins, needles, scrapers, and burnishers (illus. 3).²²

22. On Blake's engraving techniques, see <<https://www.blakearchive.org/exhibit/illuminatedprinting>>.

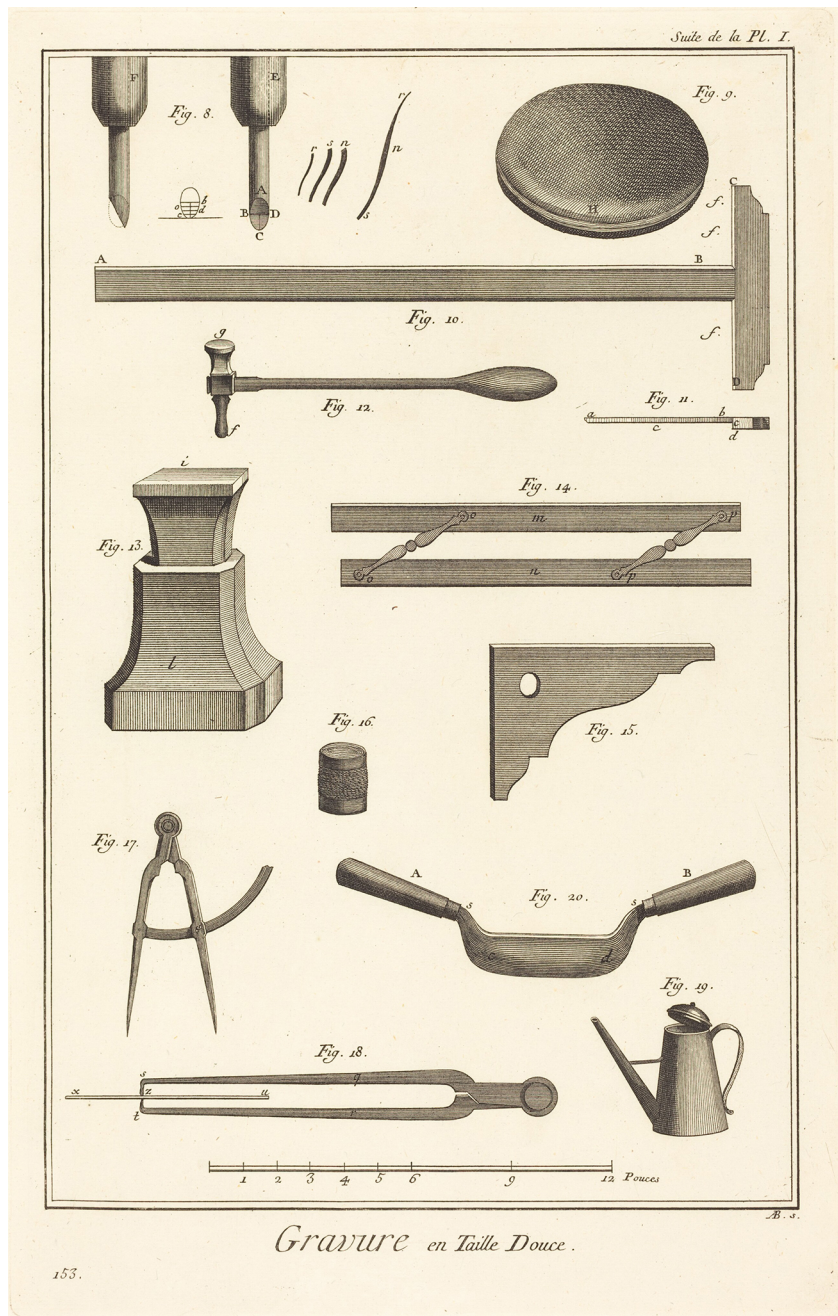


3. Antonio Baratta after A.-J. de Fehrt, "Gravure en Taille-douce: Pl. I," *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert. Sheet 40.2 x 26.3 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 1996.20.1.

Many of the copperplates after his preparatory drawings also contain evidence of *repoussage*, a technique that uses a small ballpoint hammer (illus. 4) on the verso of the plate to rework or correct areas on the recto.²³ Much of this reworking corresponds to decorative details of the tombs, including Latin inscriptions, or the titles of the images.

While it is tempting to attribute *repoussage* to the hand of an apprentice rather than a master engraver, it was com-

23. For discussion of *repoussage* in Blake's extant copperplates, see Mei-Ying Sung, *William Blake and the Art of Engraving* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009) 73-118.



4. Antonio Baratta after Benoît-Louis Prévost and A.-J. de Fehrt, "Gravure en Taille Douce: Suite de la Pl. I," *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert. Sheet 40.2 x 26.3 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 1996.20.2. Fig. 12 in this print depicts the ballpoint hammer.

mon practice for plates to be corrected.²⁴ *Repoussage* is discernible with the naked eye, but the incised linear patterns and markings are difficult to see without the assistance of magnification.

- 8 In early 2022, the Bodleian established a collaborative research and development partnership with the Factum Foundation—ARCHiOx (Analysis and Recording of Cultural Heritage in Oxford)—to trial a prototype three-dimensional imaging system that records the microtopography of copperplates. The Selene Photometric Stereo System captures both color and surface data simultaneously at over one million pixels per square inch. Recordings map the surface of the copperplate, making it possible to measure not only the width but also the depth of an etched or engraved feature by examining a cross-section. For example, Selene enabled the analysis of line depths from the copperplates of the six oval portraits of monarchs after Blake's sketches. For each portrait, measurements were taken through the lines forming the eyebrows, cheek, and hair; they revealed a uniform depth of approximately 40 microns,²⁵ indicating a consistency of technique and application. To offer some context, the indentations made by a rocker from a selection of mezzotint plates held at the Bodleian measure approximately 20 microns, while the lines on Basire's engraved facsimile of the Gough Map of Great Britain measure between 90 and 150 microns in depth.

Aymer de Valence and John of Eltham

- 9 Selene also mapped the incised patterns and markings on the versos of the three copperplates under consideration. Most of the lines have tapered ends and a uniform depth of 250 microns, suggesting the use of a burin, although this finding doesn't rule out the possibility that there was an initial drypoint stage. The versos of these plates were never intended to be printed and appear to have been practice spaces for an apprentice to learn the basics of intaglio graphics. One of the first lessons was, as Stijnman observes, "to engrave straight and curved lines."²⁶ The linear patterns on these versos are consistent with those on the rectos of

24. See Ad Stijnman, *Engraving and Etching, 1400–2000: A History of the Development of Manual Intaglio Printmaking Processes* (London: Archetype Publications, 2012) 172–73.

Proof impressions in the Gough Collection of engravings published in *Sepulchral Monuments* reveal that prior to the addition of titles and page and plate numbers, Gough inspected and annotated the prints. Most of these annotations are of titles and page numbers and, in some cases, Basire's signature as author of the original drawings and the engravings (see Bodleian Library, Gough Maps 227, f. 68; Gough Maps 228, ff. 68, 118).

25. A micron is a unit of measurement equating to 1/1000 mm.

26. Stijnman 87.

the copperplates (and printed impressions) of the six oval portraits and the first state of "Joseph of Arimathea." For instance, on the verso of the copperplate of the figures on the tombs of Aymer de Valence and John of Eltham, there is a small area of dense cross-hatching approximately 5–10 mm. in length, with lines 250 microns deep and 170 microns wide (visible in *illus. 6*). There is also a cluster of seven lines with tapered ends, some of which overlap, approximately 30 mm. long and the same depth and width as the cross-hatching. More centrally, an ovoid shape 14 mm. in length, with lines 130 microns deep and 250 microns wide, could be a quill or the fletching of an arrow (*illus. 5*).

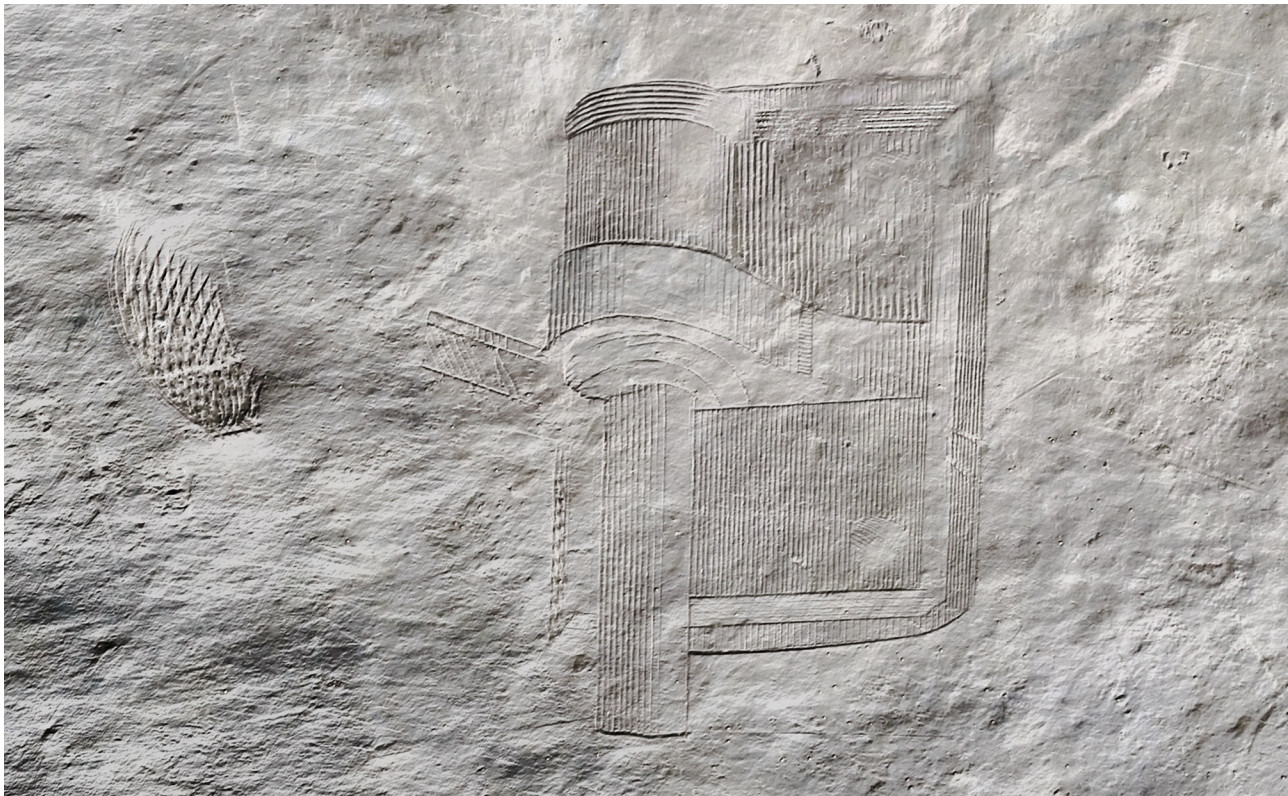


5. Copperplate of the tombs of Aymer de Valence and John of Eltham, magnified detail of the verso, showing fletching. To the left is a cluster of *repoussage*. Gough Copperplate d. 86. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

The microtopography of the printing plate was recorded with a method of three-dimensional acquisition called photometric stereo. This technique involves the capture of four aligned images, each lit at intervals of ninety degrees. Software is used to calculate the position and intensity of the shadows cast over the surface of the plate.

A rectilinear shape that possibly represents a classical column, approximately 33 mm. high by 23 mm. wide, is delineated with vertical and horizontal parallel lines with squared ends, some curved lines, and areas of cross-hatching (*illus. 6*).²⁷ These lines are shallowly incised, 35 microns

27. Basire's studio engraved plates depicting classical columns for both *Ionian Antiquities* and James Stuart and Nicholas Revett's *Antiquities*



6. Copperplate of the tombs of Aymer de Valence and John of Eltham, magnified detail of the verso, showing an area of cross-hatching on the left and a rectilinear shape on the right. Gough Copperplate d. 86. ARChiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

The shading scale has been adjusted in this image so that the incised markings are visible. To create the shading scale, depth maps were generated to encode relative height at each pixel, storing three-dimensional data within two-dimensional image files. Using these depth maps reveals the shallow etching. Such renders can be made either in the absence of the printing plate's color or with some of the color added to the shading.

deep and 170 microns wide. As with the other linear patterns on this plate, there is no burring.²⁸ Areas of the rectilinear shape are worn, with some lines closed up and flattened. This could reflect deliberate reworking of the plate by an apprentice using a burnisher or be the result of work on, and printing from, the recto.²⁹

of Athens. See *Ionian Antiquities* part 1 (1769), chap. 1, pls. 5-6, and chap. 3, pls. 3-6; *Antiquities of Athens* vol. 1 (1762), chap. 1, pls. 2-4, and chap. 2, pls. 6-7.

28. When a burin incises lines into the surface of a copperplate, it pushes the copper up on either side of the line to create burring. When a line is incised with a drypoint needle, a burr is formed on one side. All burring on this plate has been removed, probably by burnishing, scraping, or during the etching and printing of the recto. It was common practice for eighteenth-century printmakers to create clean lines by removing burring during the final stages of engraving. Evidence of burr in a print was considered a defect.

29. For discussion of the burnisher as a method of correction, see Stijnman 172.

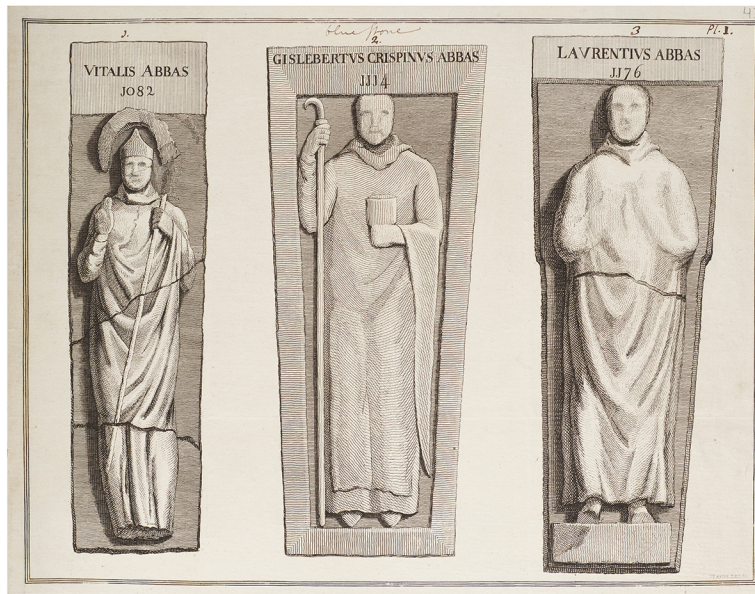
Three Abbots

- 10 Extensive evidence of an apprentice's using a copperplate to hone techniques is on the verso of the plate depicting the three abbots in Westminster Abbey (illus. 7 and 8),³⁰ which is filled with a variety of patterns, including hatching, cross-hatching, curved lines, semicircles, and round holes. Many of the lines have tapered or squared ends, indicating the use of a burin.³¹ Each pattern is accorded a distinct area of the plate, with occasional overlap; multiple areas of hatching and cross-hatching show that this was an intentional practice space for an engraver to learn through repetition.³² With

30. For the attribution of the preparatory drawing to Blake, see Crosby, "The Gothic Artist."

31. There is no evidence of burring.

32. There is no evidence of ink in any of the incised lines, suggesting that the verso was never printed. Specks of white chalk can be seen in



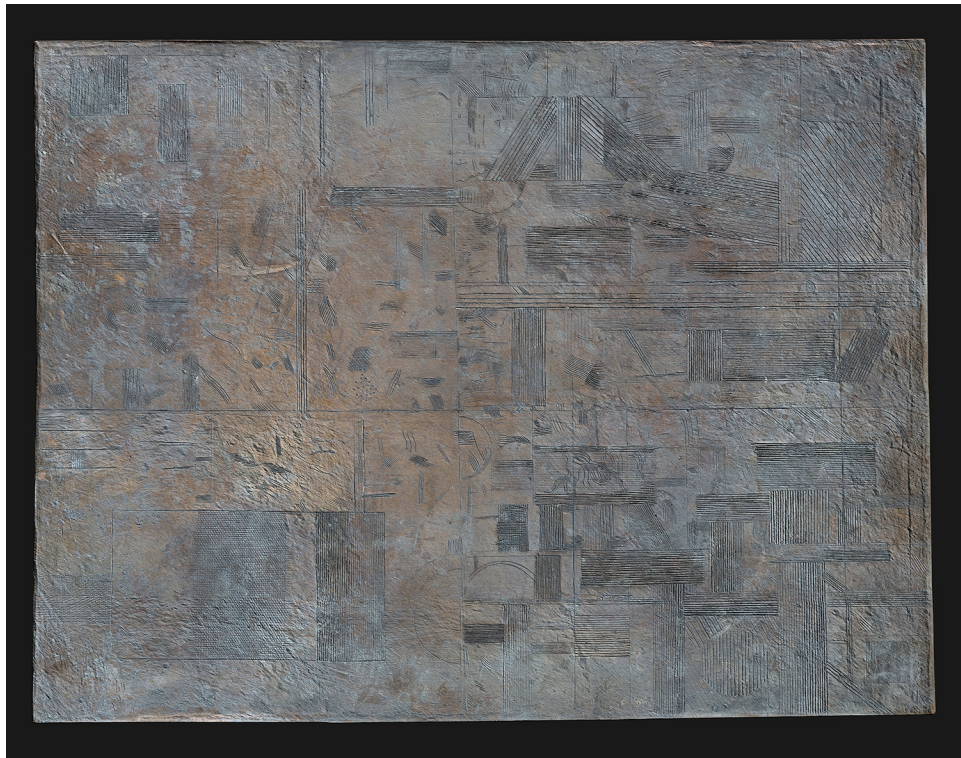
7. Clockwise from top left: drawing (Gough Maps 225, f. 56), detail of the recto of the copperplate (Gough Copperplate d. 57), and print (*Sepulchral Monuments* vol. 1, part 1, p. 10, pl. 1) of the tombs of three abbots. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

data from the three-dimensional recording made by Selene, Adam Lowe created a functional facsimile of the verso of this plate (illus. 9). The facsimile plate was created with UV-cured elevated printing, a process involving hundreds of layers of UV-cured ink, each layer 8 microns thick. It was then inked and printed on a traditional copperplate rolling

press; the resulting print (illus. 10) has a marginally stronger plate tone because of the slight stipple on the surface of the UV-cured material.³³ The images generated by Selene, in concert with the facsimile of the verso and prints pulled from it, yield more details than are discernible with traditional forms of magnification.

the deeper hatched lines. Chalk would have been used to transfer the image from the preparatory drawing to the copperplate or to clean the plate. For transfer and counterproving methods, see Essick, *Printmaker* 12-15.

33. If the plate was rematerialized in copper and the surface polished, this plate tone could be removed.



8. (above) Copperplate of the tombs of three abbots, verso. Gough Copperplate d. 57. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.
9. (below) Adam Lowe, facsimile of the verso of Gough Copperplate d. 57. Factum Foundation.





10. Adam Lowe, print from the facsimile of the verso of Gough Copperplate d. 57. Factum Foundation.

11 The most conspicuous incised markings are horizontal and vertical parallel lines and hatching (illus. 11). The majority of the lines are equidistant and form distinct rectilinear areas, with each area incised to line depths of 250-70 microns and widths of 250 microns. The consistency of depth indicates that the engraver was practicing applying uniform pressure; the consistency of width we see in the lines and in the space between them suggests that the engraver was attempting to create an even tonal effect. There is one cluster of sharp-pointed parallel lines varying in length, creating the illusion of a circle (illus. 12). This cluster is approximately 27 mm. in diameter, with lines that are 270 microns deep and 300 microns wide; it reveals that the engraver was perfecting line lengths with uniform depth and width to form a circular shape with consistent tone. For an engraving studio such as Basire's, where lines and linear patterns

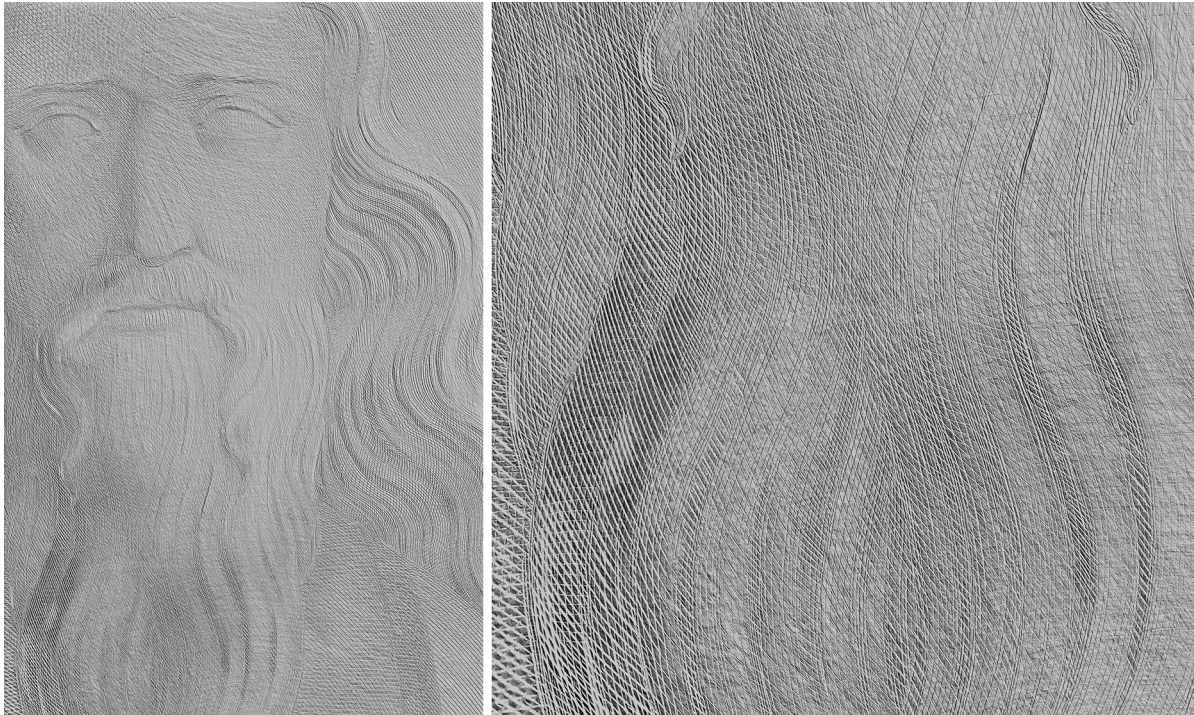
were the foundation of the house style—and would become for Blake a tenet of his artistic theory—incising equidistant parallel lines into the surface of a copperplate would have been one of the first skills an apprentice needed to acquire. The copperplates after Blake's drawings, particularly the images of the tombs, are circumscribed with double or triple line borders, and there is extensive use of parallel lines and hatching in the engraved oval portraits to delineate, for instance, areas of Edward III's beard and clothing (illus. 13). In his earliest attributed engraving, Blake employed parallel lines in combination with dense webs of hatching and cross-hatching to represent the figure and background of Joseph of Arimathea.



11. Copperplate of the tombs of three abbots, magnified detail of the verso, showing horizontal and vertical parallel lines. Gough Copperplate d. 57. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



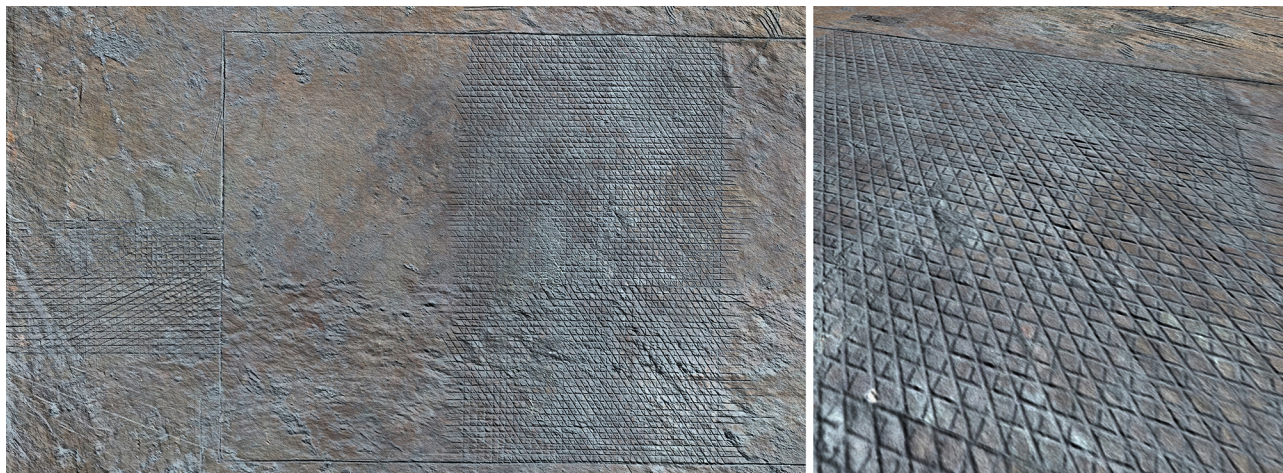
12. Copperplate of the tombs of three abbots, magnified detail of the verso, showing parallel lines creating a circle. Gough Copperplate d. 57. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



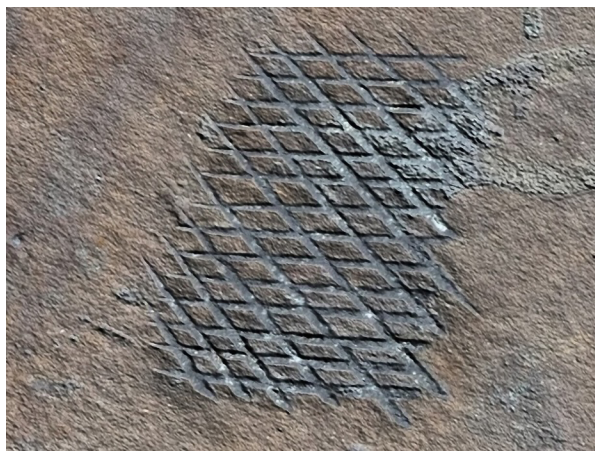
13. Copperplate of the portrait of Edward III from his monument, magnified detail of the recto, showing his beard. The shading scale has been adjusted in this image so that the etched markings are visible. Gough Copperplate d. 107. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

12 There are two rectangular areas of cross-hatching (illus. 14), as well as some smaller areas similar in size to the cross-hatching on the verso of the copperplate depicting the tombs of Aymer de Valence and John of Eltham (see the cross-hatched area on the left of illus. 6). The smaller rectangle is a grid of horizontal and vertical parallel lines 250 microns apart and 170 microns deep; over most of it the engraver added diagonal lines of the same dimensions. He

followed a similar approach with the larger area. Some of the horizontal and diagonal lines extend beyond this rectangle, suggesting that he was less concerned with creating the illusion of the rectangular shape than with maintaining consistency in the depth and width of the cross-hatched lines. Such consistency was crucial, as we have seen, to achieve an even tonal effect.



14. Copperplate of the tombs of three abbots, magnified detail of the verso, showing (left) two rectangular areas of cross-hatching and (right) a detail of the larger. Gough Copperplate d. 57. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



15. Copperplate of the tombs of three abbots, magnified detail of the verso, showing area of cross-hatching. Gough Copperplate d. 57. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

In the case of the cross-hatched rectilinear shape shown in illus. 15, the shallow depth of the lines indicates that a drypoint needle was utilized to score the lozenges. The copperplates of the oval portraits after Blake's sketches all display extensive use of cross-hatching to create form and tone. And, like Blake's "Joseph of Arimathea" print, the dot and lozenge technique is employed on the facial features and clothing on those copperplates. While there are no examples of dot and lozenge on this practice plate, there is a cluster of round holes with slightly raised edges that are connected with shallow scratches made with a drypoint needle (illus. 16).

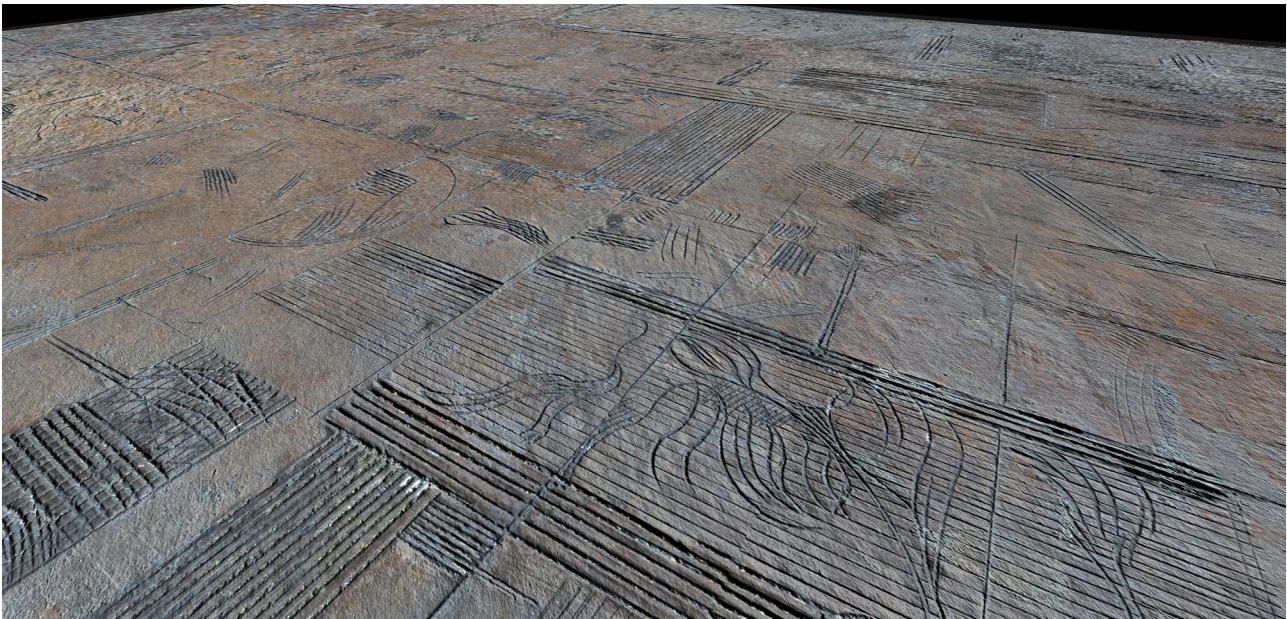


16. Copperplate of the tombs of three abbots, magnified detail of the verso, showing a cluster of dots or flicks. Gough Copperplate d. 57. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

13 This verso contains curved lines approximately 300 microns deep and 200 microns wide (illus. 17), some of which appear to form vegetative shapes (illus. 18). In the copperplates of the oval portraits, such lines delineate hair (illus. 19); the moustaches and beards of Richard II and Edward III, for example, consist of a series of curved lines augmented with cross-hatching. In “Joseph of Arimathea,” Blake uses curved lines for the beard and to depict the lips and eyes.



17. Copperplate of the tombs of three abbots, magnified detail of the verso, showing curved lines. Gough Copperplate d. 57. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



18. Copperplate of the tombs of three abbots, magnified detail of the verso, showing vegetative shapes. Gough Copperplate d. 57. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



19. Left: Copperplate of the tombs of three abbots, magnified detail of the verso, showing vegetative shapes. Gough Copperplate d. 57. Right: Copperplate of the portrait of Richard II from his monument, magnified detail of the recto, showing his moustache. Gough Copperplate d. 111. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



20. Copperplate of the tombs of three abbots, magnified detail of the verso, showing frond. Gough Copperplate d. 57. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

The vegetative shapes on the practice plate, including what seems to be a frond (illus. 20), could also relate to some of the plant decorations on the tombs sketched by Blake, such as Queen Eleanor's monument (illus. 21),³⁴ and anticipate the tendrils in the illuminated books, such as on the title page of *Songs of Innocence*.

34. Leafy oak branches extend above the decorative shields on the monument of Queen Eleanor (Bodleian Library, Gough Maps 225, f. 126) and decorate the trefoil arches above Countess Aveline's and Aymer de Valence's tombs (Gough Maps 225, ff. 134, 145); on the monument of Elinor of Bohun (see Crosby, "The Gothic Artist," for the attribution of the drawing to Blake), tiny flowers and other vegetation are inscribed into the copper (Gough Maps 225, f. 210; *Sepulchral Monuments* vol. 1, part 2, p. 159, pl. 60).



21. Clockwise from bottom left: Drawing (Gough Maps 225, f. 126) and the recto of the copperplate (Gough Copperplate d. 12), plus details, of the monument of Queen Eleanor (side view). ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

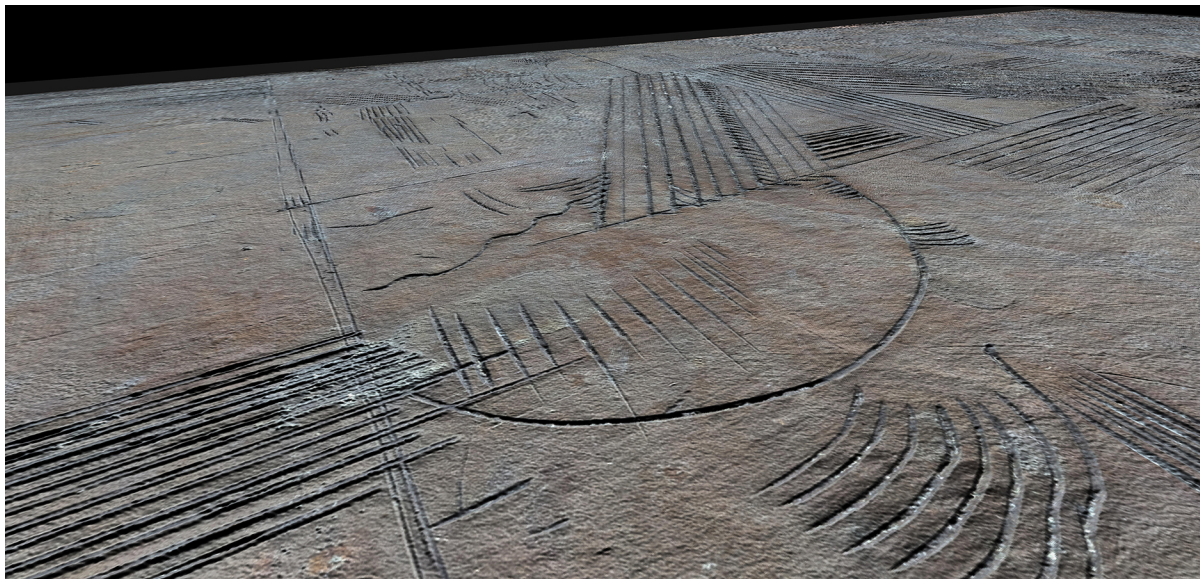
In the drawing, to the left of the upper plinth of the tomb, is an outline in pen and ink of a heraldic cross that enlarges the minute shaded heraldic cross prefacing a Latin inscription on the upper plinth. The outline cross gestures to the high degree of accuracy that Basire (and Gough) expected for these preparatory drawings.

14 Semicircles with puncture holes on their central axes indicate the use of a compass (illus. 22). They are shallowly incised to a depth of 15-25 microns and are uniformly 24 mm. in diameter. The ability to create semicircles and circles would have been important in Basire's studio; a number of the engravings for publications sponsored by the Society of Antiquaries were of architectural plans and Ro-

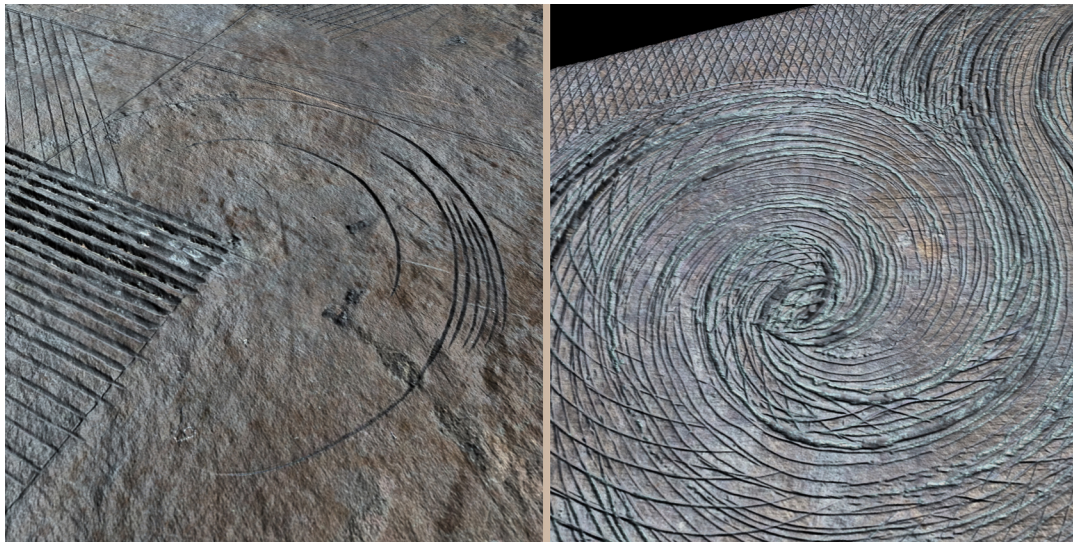
man coinage.³⁵ We can also see the utilization of semicircles in the six oval portraits, particularly for the swirls and curls

35. See, for instance, *Archaeologia* vol 2. (1773), pls. 1-2, 18; vol. 4 (1777), pls. 3-5, 20-21.

For other publications, not sponsored by the society, containing architectural prints produced by Basire's studio of classical monuments and cross-sections of columns, see note 27.



22. Copperplate of the tombs of three abbots, magnified detail of the verso, showing semicircles. Gough Copperplate d. 57. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



23. (above) Left: Copperplate of the tombs of three abbots, magnified detail of the verso, showing semicircles. Gough Copperplate d. 57. Right: Copperplate of the portrait of Henry III from his monument, magnified detail of the recto, showing his hair. Gough Copperplate d. 77. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.
 24. (below) Drawing of Aymer de Valence's tomb, detail of the trefoil, showing *pentimento* semicircles (lower left). Gough Maps 225, f. 144. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

of the hair of Henry III (illus. 23). Circles are a decorative feature of some of the tombs that Blake sketched, such as the roundels containing trefoil motifs adorning the sedilia.³⁶ His preparatory drawing of Aymer de Valence's effigy, for example, includes a trefoil containing a knight riding a horse (illus. 24); there is evidence of *pentimento* in the outline, with faint pencil semicircles discernible under magnification to the left of the lower left lobe, indicating that he made an initial attempt at drawing this part of the trefoil. Blake used a compass in some of his post-apprenticeship commissions; for instance, he incised semicircles on his plate for Henry Emlyn's *Proposition for a New Order in Architecture* (1781) (illus. 25).³⁷ In his illuminated books, he frequently employs circles as motifs of light and containment structures, and, indeed, the compass became a pictorial motif in his work.³⁸



36. Bodleian Library, Gough Maps 225, ff. 49, 117, 125.

37. For Emlyn, see Essick, *Commercial Book Illustrations* 22-23.

38. The frontispiece to *Europe a Prophecy* (1794) depicts the white-bearded Urizen circumscribed in a circle, possibly the sun, wielding a golden compass; in *Jerusalem* (c. 1804-20) pl. 12, an inverted figure holds a compass against a globe.

See also his watercolor designs for Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1795-97), Night VII, p. 21 and Night VIII, p. 14; Ode to Adversity, p. 4 from his watercolors illustrating Thomas Gray's *Poems* (1797-98); and his color-printed drawing *Newton* (c. 1795-1805), in which the titular figure uses a compass to draw an arc within a triangle.



25. Pl. 2 in Henry Emlyn, *A Proposition for a New Order in Architecture* (London: Printed by J. Dixwell, 1781). Blake used a compass to inscribe the shallow semicircles at the top and bottom of the design. Collection of Robert N. Essick.

Richard II and Queen Anne

- 15 The verso of the copperplate after Blake's sketch depicting the monument of Richard II and Queen Anne (side view) also contains markings suggestive of apprentice work. There are the letters "I x B" (probably the Latinate formula for the initials of James Basire), a loose-looped spiral, and the numbers "1" and "2" (illus. 26) incised by a burin with a round or oval tip, called a scorper. To achieve the zigzag effect, the engraver placed the tip of the scorper at an angle

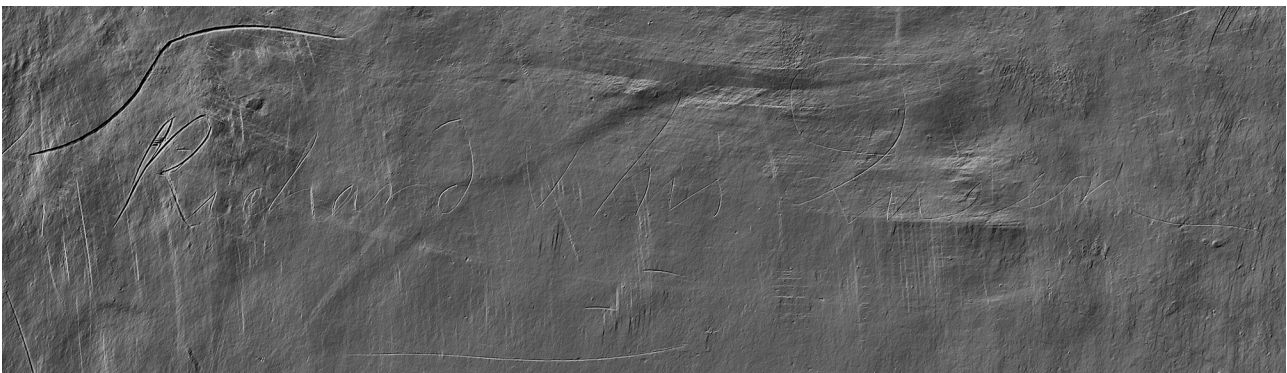
against the surface of the plate and wiggled from left to right (known as "trembling"), slowly moving forward to create rows of semicircular grooves.³⁹ In addition, there are incised lines with tapered ends and a group of small holes made with a drypoint needle, similar to the cluster on the verso of the three abbots plate. A faint drypoint inscription reads "Richard X his Queen" (illus. 27). Running left to

39. See Stijnman 164 and n327.



26. (above) Copperplate of Richard II and Queen Anne, magnified detail of the verso, showing the letters "I x B", a loose-looped spiral, and the number "1" (the number "2" is not shown in this image). Gough Copperplate d. 109. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

27. (below) Copperplate of Richard II and Queen Anne, magnified detail of the verso, showing the scratched inscription "Richard X his Queen". The shading scale has been adjusted in this image so that the drypoint markings are visible. Gough Copperplate d. 109. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



right and in the normal orientation (as opposed to reverse, or mirror, writing), the inscription was never intended to be printed but served simply as a label to identify the subject on the recto. With lines approximately 35 microns deep and 170 microns wide, it was scratched to the same depth and width as the rectilinear shape that appears to represent a classical column on the verso of the plate illustrating the tombs of Aymer de Valence and John of Eltham. The inscription is less controlled than the rectilinear shape and was almost certainly done quickly.⁴⁰

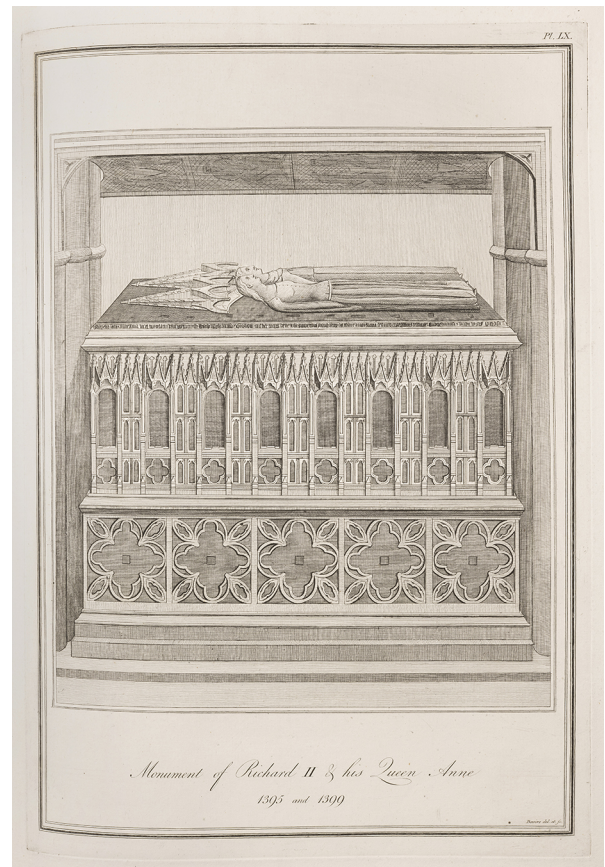
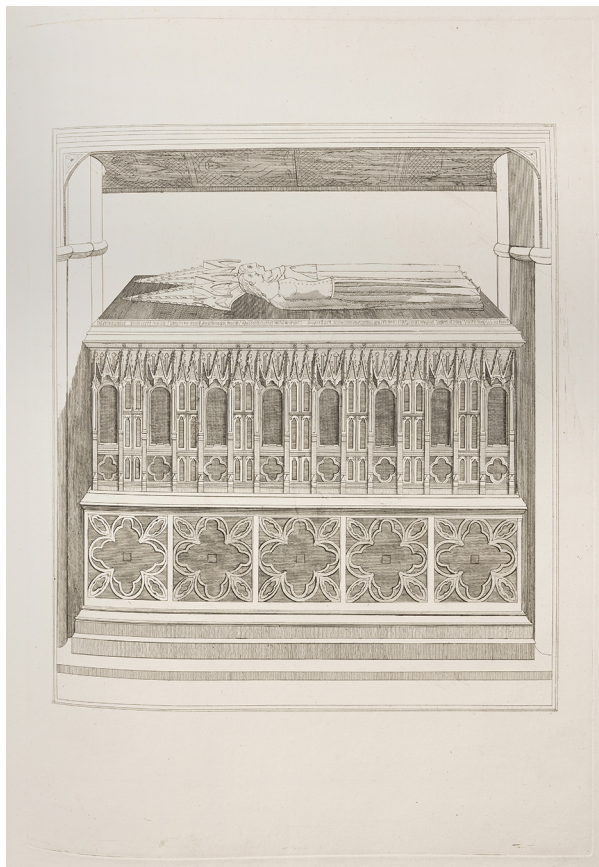
- 16 There are two proof impressions of this plate in the Gough Collection (illus. 28). One is an early state with the effigies partially etched and before any lettering; the other is a later state with the effigies fully etched and the border and lettering of the title in place. Based on these proofs, the scratched

40. A less likely scenario is that it was made prior to etching to denote the intended subject for the plate. No other example of such an inscription is evident in the copperplates after Blake's preparatory drawings.

inscription would most likely have been made after the initial etching stage. The first proof allowed the engraver to check his work against the original drawing before finishing the effigies and adding the border and letters. Blake's preparatory sketches of Richard and Anne were, according to Malkin, "among his first studies" and were part of the initial tranche of drawings (c. 1774–75) comprising the monuments in the chapel of Edward the Confessor.⁴¹ After he drew these tombs, he moved to the area before the high altar to record the wall paintings and monuments that were revealed when the wainscot and tapestries were removed in 1775.⁴² The existence of the two proof states and the inscription suggests an apprentice carefully checking his

41. For Malkin, see *BR(2)* 563. Blake made four sketches of the monument of Richard and Anne, including two oval portraits from the effigies (Bodleian Library, Gough Maps 225, ff. 211-13, 215). For the dating of these drawings, see Crosby, "The Gothic Artist."

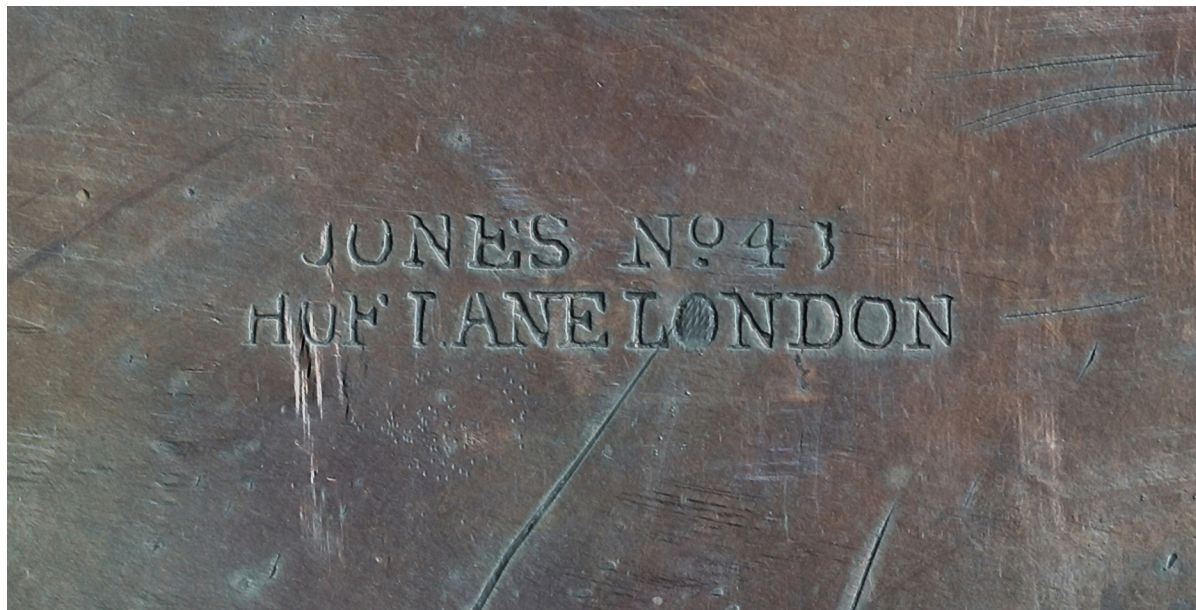
42. As documented in Joseph Ayloffe, *An Account of Some Ancient Monuments in Westminster Abbey ... Read at the Society of Antiquaries March 12, 1778* (London: J. Nichols, 1780) 1.



28. Proof impressions of the monument of Richard II and Queen Anne (side view). Gough Maps 228, ff. 190-91. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

work during the etching process. As Blake was responsible for the drawing of Richard and Anne's tomb, he may have been, if we believe Malkin, the engraver of the etching on

the recto of this plate. If so, then he was likely also behind the scratched inscription and the other incised markings on the verso.



29. Copperplate of Richard II and Queen Anne, magnified detail of the verso, showing the platemaker's mark. Gough Copperplate d. 109. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

- 17 Some small areas of hatching, most notably in the first O of "London" on the platemaker's mark stamped in the center, appear on this verso (illus. 29).⁴³ The O is 1.5 mm. in diameter and contains tightly hatched lines 50 microns deep created with a sharp-tipped burin. Incising lines in confined spaces allowed practice with engraving tools in a controlled way. These marks are also suggestive of an apprentice practicing patterns spontaneously and playfully. Such playfulness is further hinted at by two incised motifs, the first of which is a short-shafted arrow or dart with extensive fletching and a triangular tip (illus. 30). Approximately 18 mm. in length, the lines have been incised to a depth of 350-80 microns. The lower area of fletching is flat, indicating that a burin with a straight end at the tip was used. Arrows or darts are a recurring pictorial and textual element in Blake's work.⁴⁴ If he produced the incised markings on the verso of

this plate, then the arrow may be considered one of the earliest documented instances of this motif.

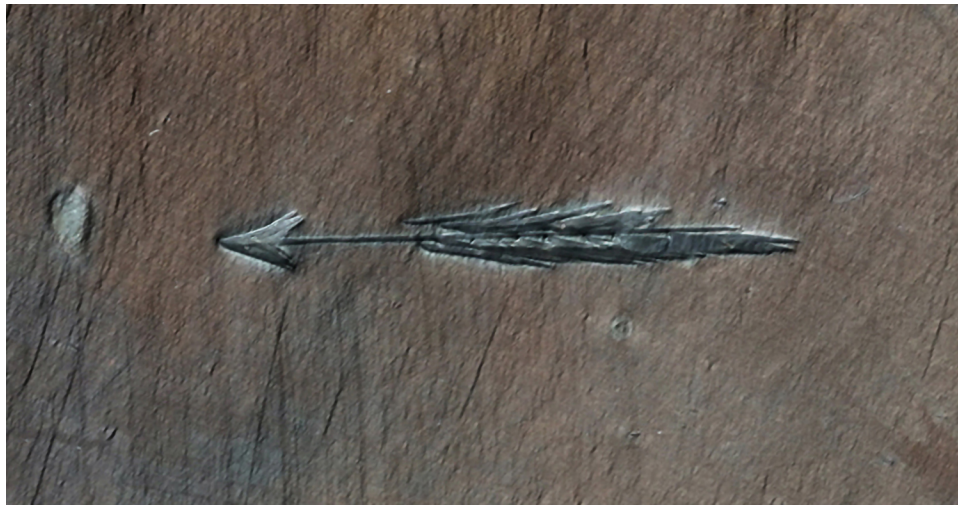
flaming dart, and *The Rout of the Rebel Angels*, in which the Son draws back a large bow armed with seven arrows. In his watercolor designs for *Night Thoughts*, Blake depicts Christ armed with a bow, drawing an arrow from a quiver (Night VII, p. 53); the figure of Death with short-shafted arrows or darts (see Night I, p. 15, which he engraved for the 1797 edition; Night V, pp. 38, 45, 47, 51); and a bearded soldier with a spear (Night IX, p. 63).

He incorporated arrows or arrow-headed darts in other engravings after his own designs, such as "My Son! my Son!" from the emblem book *For Children: The Gates of Paradise* (1793), which shows a male youth raising a dart at a bearded older male, and two illustrations for Hayley's 1802 ballad "The Lion."

Arrows appear frequently in Blake's poetry, including some of his most famous lines—"Bring me my Bow of burning gold: / Bring me my Arrows of desire" (E 95)—and one of his earliest poems, "A War Song to Englishmen" from *Poetical Sketches*: "The arrows of Almighty God are drawn!" (E 440). According to the advertisement for *Poetical Sketches*, Blake "commenced" the poems and dramatic fragments in his "twelfth" year and "occasionally resumed" work on them "till his twentieth year," indicating that some composition occurred during his apprenticeship. "A War Song to Englishmen" was probably intended to be included in the dramatic fragment "King Edward the Third." Blake made three sketches of the effigy of Edward III in the chapel of the Confessor between 1774 and 1777, including a large oval portrait (Bodleian Library, Gough Maps 225, ff. 202-04).

43. While some of the copperplates bear the platemaker's stamp, they are all undated. For copperplate suppliers during Blake's time, see G. E. Bentley, Jr., "Blake's Heavy Metal: The History, Weight, Uses, Cost, and Makers of His Copper Plates," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 76.2 (spring 2007): 714-70; and Sung, chap. 4.

44. They feature in two watercolors illustrating episodes from Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1807): *Satan, Sin, and Death: Satan Comes to the Gates of Hell*, in which Satan is confronted by his son, Death, wielding a



30. Copperplate of Richard II and Queen Anne, magnified detail of the verso, showing arrow. Gough Copperplate d. 109. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



31. Copperplate of Richard II and Queen Anne, magnified detail of the verso, showing tiny face. Gough Copperplate d. 109. ARCHiOx / © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

The short double arcs that form the upper lids of both eyes are suggestive of the almond eye shape that we see in Blake's self-portrait and in his 1810 tempera *Adam Naming the Beasts*. All three portraits also convey a degree of intensity, with eyes framed by arched eyebrows staring directly at the viewer. I am indebted to Robert N. Essick for this observation.

18 The second motif is almost impossible to see with the naked eye because of substantial *repoussage*. Selene revealed two drypoint lines, 30-40 microns in depth, that run across the verso of the plate as a guide for the *repoussage*. Either side of these lines is a series of curved incisions or arcs,⁴⁵ the tapered ends of which indicate that they were made with a burin. Hidden among this cluster of lines and *repoussage* is a miniature face approximately 18 mm. high, with uniform line depths of 100 microns (illus. 31). The face is a simplistic representation, delineated with the patterns familiar from the versos of these plates: for instance, three curved lines above the eyes denote eyelids and eyebrows, with an area of cross-hatching above the right eye, between the second and third lines. Hatched lines, consistently 92 microns deep, depict the right eye, while cross-hatching, consistently 96 microns deep, represents the left; the use of hatching for one and cross-hatching for the other imbues the face with an expressive character. Around the nose there is considerable cross-hatching,⁴⁶ averaging 95 microns in depth; beneath the nose, three slightly curved lines denote an upper lip or closed lips. Below, at least two shorter, shallower lines 40 microns deep, as well as a third, slightly longer line 90 microns deep, may represent the bottom lip or chin. *Repoussage* covers and distorts much of the nose, indicating that the face was incised first and therefore before the recto of the plate was finished. Unlike the more finished oval portraits, the miniature face does not represent a specific model or individual; the lack of a continuous circle around the features reveals that the curved lines preceded the face, which was possibly added as a doodle by a young apprentice. Its minute size, like the hatched O of London in the platemaker's mark, indicates an engraver capable of working in a controlled manner at a minuscule scale, possibly with the aid of magnification.⁴⁷

45. There are overlapping arcs 17.5 and 10 mm. in length above the eyebrows, together with a curved line that extends to the right beyond the uppermost arc. A slightly offset arc 10 mm. in length is below the mouth area.

46. This is consistent with the equidistant cross-hatching around the nose areas in the six oval portraits and the "Joseph of Arimathea" print.

47. In four of his preparatory sketches in the abbey, Blake drew figures and faces on a similar scale as he copied the decorative features of the tombs of Aymer de Valence, John of Eltham, and Countess Aveline (Bodleian Library, Gough Maps 225, ff. 54, 146, 156, 157).

He often employed pen-and-ink handwork in his illuminated books to delineate facial features, including those of the tiny figures that lounge among vegetation or populate interlinear areas, and at the turn of the nineteenth century he embarked on a brief career as a miniaturist under the guidance of his then-patron, William Hayley (see Crosby, "A Minute Skirmish: Blake, Hayley and the Art of Miniature Painting," *Blake and Conflict*, ed. Sarah Haggarty and Jon Mee [Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009] 164-84; and "William Blake's Miniature Portraits of the Butts Family," *Blake* 42.4 [spring 2009]: 147-52).

Conclusion

19 Incised markings on the versos of these three copperplates suggest that an apprentice engraver initially used the plates as practice spaces to learn and hone the linear patterns of his profession. The plates were then reused to etch images after Blake's preparatory drawings to illustrate Gough's *Sepulchral Monuments*. Was the apprentice who made the preparatory drawings also responsible for the practice work? The evidence presented above encourages the tentative attribution of the markings on the versos to Blake. It is important to note, however, that they could have been the work of one or more of Basire's other apprentices, or Basire himself.⁴⁸ Copper was expensive, so utilizing the versos of plates to train apprentices prior to etching the rectos was likely encouraged. Because of that expense, an engraving studio such as Basire's would buy copper from a platemaker when it was required for specific commissions, which reduces the possibility that the markings pre-date the period of Blake's apprenticeship.⁴⁹ We know that Blake began sketching in Westminster Abbey in 1774 and, according to Malkin, engraved some of his drawings, "especially in winter." Before he could engrave the drawings, he needed to practice the techniques of line engraving.

20 The work on the verso of the three abbots plate is methodical and structured, with specific areas dedicated to different hatching systems, curved lines, circles, and semicircles. The area of dense cross-hatching on the verso of the plate with the tombs of Aymer de Valence and John of Eltham likewise reveals an apprentice deliberately practicing one of the foundational techniques of line engraving, while the nearby fletching seems to be a more spontaneous attempt at a specific motif. Playful designs (or motifs) on the verso of the copperplate depicting the monument of Richard II and Queen Anne are also indicative of an apprentice; the miniature face appears to be a doodle that was, to quote Blake's own phrase, drawn "on Copper" (E 574). The engraver who incised the markings on the versos of these plates did so not with the intention that the shapes, patterns, and motifs would be printed. The repetition on the three abbots plate gestures to the nature of reproductive engraving, which uses a series of repeating linear patterns to reproduce accurately an original image. In the case of the arrow and the tiny face on the Richard and Anne plate, the minute scale is

48. It is improbable, although perhaps not impossible, that a master engraver such as Basire would have needed to spend time practicing basic patterns.

49. For the cost of copperplates, see note 43. It is likely that Basire's studio would also have scraped and polished the surface of already etched plates so that they could be reused. On Blake's preparation of copperplates for etching, see Joseph Viscomi, *Blake and the Idea of the Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 47-49.

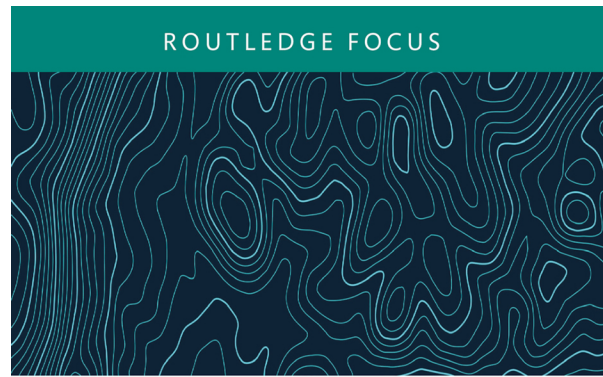
suggestive of private and personal art created to experiment with motifs or for amusement during the long hours of an apprentice's day. If this is the work of a young Blake refining his craft, the versos of these copperplates grant us access to a privileged space that sheds light on how an eighteenth-century apprentice learned the techniques of his profession. The doodles reveal more personal, intimate moments that were not meant to be seen by anyone other than the artist. For the first time since they were made, we can now see the practice work and doodling of an apprentice responsible for, among other things, the tiny visionary face that emerges from the copperplate to return our gaze across two and half centuries.

Brian Russell Graham. *Speech Acts in Blake's "Milton."* New York: Routledge, 2023. 128 pp. \$61.99/£45.99, hardcover; \$26.99/£19.99, paperback; also available as an e-book.

Reviewed by Annise Rogers

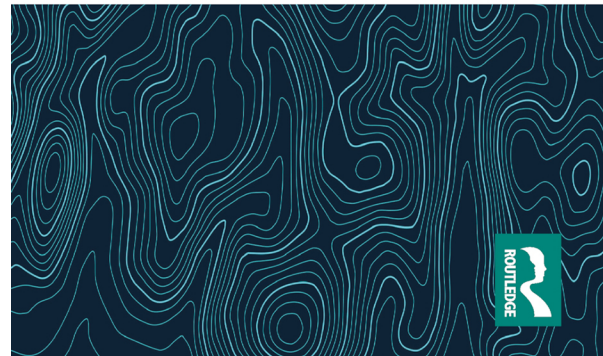
ANNISE ROGERS (arogers@lincoln.ac.uk) is an ECR whose doctoral thesis explored *Vala*, or *The Four Zoas* in connection to biblical poetic forms, as well as reexamining the role of Urizen. Her most recent research pursuit examined the links between the visual art of William Blake and J. R. R. Tolkien.

1 BRIAN Russell Graham expertly examines *Milton a Poem* through a close reading that engages with performative speech act theory, using it to demonstrate the importance of the characters' spoken lines and also to explain how the lack of any direct speech can help to bring about, or forestall, the impending apocalypse. It is this apocalypse that Graham makes the center of his argument, rather than, as one might expect, the overall value of the speech acts themselves. By structuring his theoretical approach around the observation that "everything that happens in Blake's Prophetic Books either results in progress towards apocalypse or serves to frustrate that process" (1), he is able to create a clear boundary, one that he sticks to throughout. Building on the work of Susan Fox (*Poetic Form in Blake's "Milton"*) and Angela Esterhammer (*Creating States: Studies in the Performative Language of John Milton and William Blake*), he devotes a separate section in his introduction to each, detailing what his argument shares with, and how it differs from, their criticism. For any reader unfamiliar with Blakean scholarship on the performative, this is informative and easily comprehensible. By contrast, it is almost shocking that there is no section on J. L. Austin, whose work is not only the cornerstone of performative speech theory, but whose terms and ideas are used throughout the book. Indeed, while it might be understandable for Austin not to appear in the bibliography, for he is never directly quoted from, his value to Graham's argument cannot be overstated. The endnote explaining Austin's vocabulary and theory is exceptional (16n3), but I did feel that it should have been included in the main body of the text.



Speech Acts in Blake's *Milton*

BRIAN RUSSELL GRAHAM



- 2 The advice on "How to Use This Book" at the end of the introduction (15) is refreshingly honest in suggesting that "Blake scholars may happily ignore" the contextual sections of the chapters, which give an overview of what is happening at that point in the poem. I, however, urge *all* Blake scholars to read those parts, for they also elucidate Graham's formulation of the close readings that follow. In fact, the contextual sections are as much a part of his overall argument as the close readings, helping the reader to explore how the speech(es) discussed relate to the three areas or "subcategories of speech act in *Milton*" (5): agonistic speech, non-combative speech, and the soliloquy. That "everything is achieved through speech" (7) is perhaps the best way to express Graham's use of these categories to demonstrate that Blake's prophetic books are about producing, or trying to stop, the apocalypse.
- 3 In the first two chapters he examines the role of the Bard's Song, exploring multiple close readings that engage with ideas regarding "speech acts integral to the story of Los and his sons" (19). Chapter 1 looks at what happens before Milton's introduction to those characters, covering the Fall and

the creation of Time and Space—all of which, as Graham reveals, come about through performative speech acts. Chapter 2 expands on this and has Milton's response. Graham's examination in the first chapter of the three-way relationship between Los, Satan, and Palamabron is perhaps the most extensive, as it deals with all three of the subcategories, explaining how a speech act can be just as important even when "it does not have the perlocutionary effect ... wanted" (25). Furthermore, chapter 1 discusses many speeches for which Blake gives the aftermath alone, with the words often "only alluded to" (27); the reported speeches are treated as being as important as those that are spoken, with the causes and effects of the non-spoken words seen as crucial to this interpretation of the poem. Graham does not give a poststructuralist reading and instead focuses on the "perlocutionary" outcome of the missing words, rather than the words themselves. In this way it is obvious that he is exceptionally knowledgeable in speech act theory, because he does not feel the need to defend his position, and also that he is confident that his argument stands together without a detour into explanation.

- 4 The third and fourth chapters follow the chronology of *Milton*. Each character that Milton engages with—whether helping or hindering him—is examined in terms of the outcome of that encounter and what it means in the context of Graham's overarching argument about the apocalypse. His discussion of Rahab and Tirzah, following one about Orc and the Shadowy Female, identifies that Milton is being given an "invitation" (64) to join them; Graham follows Northrop Frye's idea that "natural religion is symbolically female" (61), and thus "the two think they have a fighting chance of tempting Milton ... because his Puritanism was marked by a strong admixture of natural religion" (62). This is a good assessment of such a speech act, and yet, like many others in the book, it relies almost entirely on Frye's analysis of the poem's plot and meaning, with much less space given to any other critic.
- 5 In chapter 5 Graham breaks away from the chronology of the poem and instead focuses on Ololon. In this way he is able to examine the character as a whole and help the reader to recognize that her descent into Ulro is caused by her own soliloquy, in what he calls "the perlocutionary effect of the speech" (92). However, what makes the chapter so interesting is that although Ololon remains the central figure, Graham explores how more than this one event is "rendered an effect of Ololon's words" (94). When combined with his analysis of Ololon's interaction with the Polypus and her later "non-combative statement" to Blake (the character in the poem), this illustrates the strength of his ideas about performative speech acts and demonstrates why this book was so needed. Further depth is added in chapter 6, when the character of "Milton secures the instant

before apocalypse" (106), which was Graham's argument from the very first page. That ultimately the poem's "finale is non-verbal" (116) allows him to move away from speeches and instead look at the words of *Milton* as a whole, and in "Coda: *Milton* as Speech Act," we are given a sweeping overview of the power of words, and also where and why the reader fits into Blake's use of performative language.

- 6 Some readers might be surprised that most of the critics discussed are not those who would be considered contemporary, and it would be easy to disregard this book as the work of someone who is not up to date, as it were. To do so would be a great disservice to both the writer and his argument. Graham himself acknowledges the point, explaining that "three of the four monographs about Blake's *Milton* ... were written in the seventies, and they are fine works of literary criticism" (8). Added to this is what he calls "substantial use of" Frye, making the book to some degree a strange read. It has the structure of those earlier works, with its dense close reading and engagement with the scholars, and yet it is also refreshingly modern, with a clear and easy to understand literary style. Graham's vocabulary is perfectly chosen; each word is the precise and correct choice, and he does not overwhelm with overly complicated words for no reason, although the reader may wish to consult a dictionary for the linguistic terms. Do not think because this is a short book that it is an easy read. Graham presents a dense and invigorative argument that needs to be followed both carefully and slowly. Readers who are interested in either *Milton* or performative speech acts will find it a perfect example of how to do a very thorough analysis of Blake's poem, whether or not they fully agree with everything that Graham argues.

William Blake's Universe. Curated by David Bindman and Esther Chadwick. Fitzwilliam Museum, 23 February–19 May 2024.

William Blake's Universe. Ed. David Bindman and Esther Chadwick. Cambridge: Fitzwilliam Museum in association with Philip Wilson Publishers, 2024.

Reviewed by Luisa Calè

LUISA CALÈ (l.cale@bbk.ac.uk), Birkbeck, University of London, writes about practices of reading, viewing, and collecting in the Romantic period. Her monograph, entitled *The Book Unbound: Material Cultures of Reading and Collecting, 1750–1850*, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, is forthcoming from Cambridge University Press. She is the exhibitions editor for *Blake*.

1 WILLIAM Blake's Universe at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge was structured as a three-colored path through a blue-coded classical past, a fiery present, and a radiant-yellow future. The vision for the exhibition had been gestating for years as a way of rethinking Blake as a European artist by positioning him in dialogue with German art through a collaboration with the Hamburger Kunsthalle. This partnership revived an earlier collaboration with the Kunsthalle's former director Werner Hofmann, curator of Kunst um 1800, a series of exhibitions including Blake (1975) and John Flaxman (1979), both curated by David Bindman.¹ The 2024 exhibition stemmed, partly, from a reaction to the Brexit referendum in 2016, with Bindman joining forces with Esther Chadwick when she was working at the British Museum.² Hamburg was the central point of reference not just because of this museum partnership and its curatorial tradition, but also because of the seminal role that the port city had as a nodal point for

1. On Kunst um 1800, see David Bindman, "Blake in Germany: The William Blake Exhibition at the Hamburg Kunsthalle and Städel Museum, Frankfurt, 1975," *The Reception of William Blake in Europe*, ed. Sibylle Erle and Morton D. Paley, 2 vols. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019) 1: 255–59.

2. Luisa Calè, "William Blake's Universe: An Interview with David Bindman and Esther Chadwick," *Blake* 57.3 (winter 2023–24).

European Romanticism, and for the reception of Blake in Germany in particular.

2 Through important shared sources, inspiration, and affinities, the exhibition invited comparisons and outlined a story of parallel trajectories and missed encounters: the mysticism of Jacob Böhme; a classical idiom taking shape through similar academic training and the international style of line engraving associated with Flaxman's outlines; Henry Crabb Robinson's essay on "William Blake: Artist, Poet, and Religious Enthusiast" appearing in the Hamburg-based *Vaterländisches Museum*, which published some covers illustrated by Philipp Otto Runge. Yet Blake and Runge never met. This exhibition brought them together at the Fitzwilliam, offering a unique opportunity to introduce Runge to the British public.

3 The vestibule announced the fundamental point of the exhibition by means of a partition wall structured as a slightly open book, with James S. Deville's life mask of Blake (1823), his eyes closed to suggest the visionary power of his inner world, on a pedestal to the right and Runge's self-portrait to the left. Around them, on the two side walls, self-portraits of James Barry, Flaxman, Henry Fuseli, Samuel Palmer, Asmus Jakob Carstens, and Caspar David Friedrich, along with portraits of Blake by John Linnell, Flaxman, and Catherine Blake, announced the cast of characters that made up Blake's universe within a European context.³ Openings to the side of the introductory presentation wall led through an intimate space where viewers could watch an informative animation about Blake's work by Laurie Avon and Peter Chownsmith,⁴ before entering the gallery representing the past.

The Past: Antiquity and the Gothic

4 To compare academic training milieus, practices, and models at the Royal Academy in London and at the Copenhagen Academy, the wall to the left featured Edward Francis Burney's watercolor of *The Antique Room at New Somerset House* (c. 1780; no. 13) and Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg's *Satire on the Life Class at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts* in Copenhagen (1805; no. 14); Runge's drawings of the head of Antinous and Belvedere Torso from classical casts

3. *William Blake's Universe*, ed. David Bindman and Esther Chadwick (Cambridge: Fitzwilliam Museum in association with Philip Wilson Publishers, 2024) 26–35, nos. 1–11. Catalogue numbers will hereafter be cited in the text.

4. To learn about and view the animation commissioned by the museum, illustrated and directed by Laurie Avon, animated by Peter Chownsmith, and produced by Brilliant Artists in conjunction with the exhibition William Blake's Universe, see <<https://brilliantartists.co.uk/laurie-avon-x-william-blakes-universe>>.



All installation photographs are by Thomas Adank and are reproduced by kind permission of the Fitzwilliam Museum.

in the Copenhagen Academy, and his heads from Raphael; Blake's *The Resting Traveller* from Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel mediated by an engraving by Adamo "Ghisi" Scultori; Blake's and Runge's drawings from the Hamilton Vases set against Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein's and Pierre-François Hugues d'Hancarville's reproductive volumes open in a vitrine beneath them; and Barry's "Sacra Familia Christi" after Raphael and Giulio Romano (no. 24). How that practice of copying translates into new classical and biblical subjects was documented by Benjamin West's *Christ Healing the Sick* (no. 25), Blake's watercolors of the story of Joseph (nos. 26a-c), Runge's *Diomedes and Odysseus* (no. 27) and *Achilles and Scamander* (no. 28), and Carstens's *Night and Her Children, Sleep and Death* (no. 29).

- 5 Flaxman's central role in European neoclassicism was documented by a slightly oblique long vitrine at the center of the long gallery, which enabled comparisons with the works on view on the walls. In the same line of sight as the

classical apprenticeship works were his pen and ink and gray wash drawings, including two subjects from Chatterton: *Queen Kenewalcha* and *A Massacre of Britons at Stonehenge* (nos. 31a-b); next to them was the Swedenborgian subject *The Ascension of the Soul* (no. 32). On the other side, the Flaxman vitrine featured a series of graphite drawings and plaster models for funerary relief monuments, and his Dante illustrations and Dante notebook.

- 6 A viewer facing Flaxman's funerary and medieval subjects could also see a wall hang starting with a more muscular engagement with the human form characteristic of Blake's relationship with Fuseli, from Fuseli's drawing of the back of a woman's torso to Blake's *Hyperion* ("The Bowman"), which is a study toward an extra-illustration for the altered copy of Thomas Gray's *Poems* that he produced for Flaxman's wife (nos. 41, 8). Blake's engravings after Fuseli were documented by "Tornado" for Erasmus Darwin's *The Botanic Garden* and the spectacular, oversized "Satan, or Head



of a Damned Soul,” which Blake engraved, after an oil sketch by Fuseli, in a format that was too big to fit the dimensions of Johann Caspar Lavater’s *Essays on Physiognomy* (1789–98). At this point, a window-shaped opening through the wall offered a glimpse into a radiant-yellow future. This architectural feature remediated Blake’s *A Vision: The Inspiration of the Poet (Elisha in the Chamber on the Wall)* (c. 1819–20, Tate Britain), yet the view of plates from *Jerusalem* also evoked the use of holes in walls to offer city dwellers a view of the celestial Jerusalem.⁵ Depending on their orientation, viewers peering through the hole cut through the gallery of the past could see one of two numinous relief etchings from *Jerusalem*: either “Los at the Forge,” his spectre hovering bat winged above him and “suggesting murderous thoughts against Albion” (*Jerusalem* 6.7, E 149; no. 93d), or “a dying swan and a fish-like

5. Anthony Bale, “From Nidaros to Jerusalem; from *Feginsbrekka* to Mount Joy,” *Tracing the Jerusalem Code, Volume 1: The Holy City: Christian Cultures in Medieval Scandinavia (ca. 1100–1536)*, ed. Kristin B. Aavitsland and Line M. Bonde (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021) 191–97.

spirit,” positioned as head and tail vignettes with text in between, an impression of plate 11 of *Jerusalem*, which the curators titled “The River Spirits” (no. 93e). Beyond the window hung two of Blake’s seven engravings from Dante, “The Circle of the Corrupt Officials: The Devils Mauling Each Other” (*Inferno* 22; no. 45) and “The Circle of the Lustful” (*Inferno* 5; no. 46), and versions of the subject of Ugolino and his sons (*Inferno* 33) from the 1780s, as well as a late tempera (1826–27).

- 7 The transition between the past and the present was taken up by Blake’s engagement with the sculptural group of the Laocoön, documented through commissions to illustrate Flaxman’s essay on sculpture for Abraham Rees’s *Cyclopædia* (1815–16) and the large etching “ η & his two Sons Satan & Adam as they were copied from the Cherubim of Solomons Temple by three Rhodians & applied to Natural Fact. or History of Ilium,” Blake’s own image-text Laocoön invention. His graphite and watercolor drawing of the Laocoön next to the door to the present represents a free version capturing the vehement passions and power of pain in Laocoön’s predicament, in radical contrast to theories of

beauty advocating containment of emotion and the composure of the classical ideal associated with Winckelmann. This drawing (no. 50) was one of the works that the Fitzwilliam was proud to display as items from the collection of Geoffrey Keynes that have recently come into the possession of the museum.⁶

- 8 Blake's contrast between "Grecian ... Mathematic Form" and Gothic's "Living Form" in the single-sheet relief etching *On Homers Poetry* [and] *On Virgil* (1822) on the same wall cued the reader to look back to the opposite wall, which documented a *longue-durée* engagement with the subject of "Joseph of Arimathea," developed from the figure of a soldier in Michelangelo's fresco *The Crucifixion of St. Peter* in the Cappella Paolina in the Vatican. This composition was represented by three versions: a Renaissance print

6. Other such works mentioned by Luke Syson and Alexander Klar in their "Directors' Foreword" (*William Blake's Universe* 6) are the first state of "Joseph of Arimathea" (no. 12b) and the first state of the frontispiece to *Jerusalem* (no. 93b).

of the single figure abstracted from Michelangelo's work, attributed to Nicolas Beatrizet, which is the likely source; an engraving (1773) with Blake's caption "Engraved when I was a beginner at Basires from a drawing by Salviati after Michel Angelo" proudly entered in black ink in the lower margin; and a later version (1810–25) with the following lettering beneath the printed area: "Engraved by W Blake 1773 from an old Italian Drawing | This is One of the Gothic Artists who Built the Cathedrals in what we call the Dark Ages | Wandering about in sheep skins & goat skins of whom the World was not worthy | such were the Christians | in all Ages," and the authorship of the composition proclaimed in larger letters below: "Michael Angelo Pinxit." These two wall displays synoptically captured phases and processes of copying and invention at the heart of Blake's relationship with classical and Gothic forms.

The Present: Europe in Flames

- 9 The idea of the present as Europe in flames was powerfully conveyed by a fiery-colored room with a thunderbolt-





shaped partition wall in the middle hosting a disbound copy of Blake's *Europe a Prophecy*. Printed on rectos only, copy K achieved an architectural rebinding of sorts through the structure of the concertina wall that made it possible to pair plates placed one next to the other in a format that evoked book openings. This late copy, printed in 1821, is one of only two that include "Five windows light," a text setting up a fairytale scene of inspiration reminiscent of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which is a source for Blake's choice of a dreamscape timescale revolving around the sleep of Enitharmon. The first half of the poem faced a selection of plates from *America a Prophecy* copy O on the left wall. Both illuminated books have been in the Fitzwilliam collection since 1950, thanks to the bequest of T. H. Riches, whose Blakes constitute one of the nuclei of the museum's Blake collection represented in the exhibition, alongside Keynes's.

- 10 The next section in the display of the present featured Blake's relationship with race. *America's* hopes for the end of empire—"Let the slave grinding at the mill, run out into the field" (6.6, E 53)—are complicated by the treatment of

race and slavery in his corpus. "The Little Black Boy," placed on a vertical stand, acted as a partition, making both recto and verso visible and thus capturing problematic constructions of race that contrast blackness of skin complexion with whiteness of soul, evidenced in this Fitzwilliam copy by the black boy turning white in contact with Jesus on the second page. The racial power dynamic of the poem and its illustrations is carefully identified in the catalogue (no. 54), as is the "objectification and eroticization of the enslaved" in Blake's illustrations to John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative, of a Five Years' Expedition, against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796), on which Blake worked in 1792–93 (nos. 53a–c). The Fitzwilliam's own entanglement with capital deriving from the slave trade translated in the adoption of the decolonial practice of the trigger warning: "The objects in this case include outdated racist and derogatory terminology."⁷ What is achieved by this trigger-

7. Wall caption above the Stedman vitrine. The museum's association with slavery stems from the wealth that the founder, Richard Fitzwilliam, derived from his maternal grandfather, Sir Matthew Decker,



warning caption is questionable. By contrast, recent decolonial engagements with the Stedman plates articulated a poetics of appropriation and dissemination through practices of remixing in the Black Atlantic exhibition that closed the month before the opening of William Blake's Universe.⁸ Yet the empty space in this part of the wall was a powerful curatorial decision: placing these plates in a vitrine, rather than hanging on the wall, reflected not only the

director of the Royal Africa and East India Company. This connection was the motivation behind the exhibition *Black Atlantic: Power, People, Resistance* (8 September 2023–7 January 2024): see <<https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2023/06/fitzwilliam-museum-explores-founders-links-to-slavery-in-new-exhibition>>.

8. Regular visitors to the Fitzwilliam would remember an installation by Jacqueline Bishop in the Black Atlantic exhibition. Her *History at the Dinner Table* features dinner plates illustrated with “beautiful botanical images overlaid with . . . very traumatic images,” detailing a “history of enslavement and violence against women”: see Jacqueline Bishop and Victoria Avery (keeper of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts at the Fitzwilliam), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tiW-vhUF9l0>>.

materiality of the work as a bound book, but also the curators’ ethics of horizontality. In line with recent decolonial interventions to topple statues of people involved in slavery, including the decision to institutionalize the horizontal ruination of the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol, the Stedman illustrations were denied the verticality associated with the heroic form.⁹

- 11 Blake’s engravings for Stedman offer a powerful window on the work of the commercial engraver. While the vitrine stated that they “were based on Stedman’s original drawings, which are now lost,” some Stedman watercolors are available at a click through the digitization of the Stedman Archive at the University of Minnesota. Although these designs are not the basis for Blake’s engravings, noting their existence could open up questions about the impulse to

9. See “Figure 13: *The toppled Edward Colston statue on public display at M Shed, Bristol, 7 June 2021*,” in Edwin Coomasaru et al., “Monuments Must Fall,” *British Art Studies* 24 (2023). On the curators’ ethics of horizontality, see Calé, “William Blake’s Universe: An Interview.”

eroticize slave bodies. The intersection between visionary and commercial invention in Blake's engagement with slavery is explored in Richard Price and Sally Price's edition of Stedman's manuscript, which sheds light on competing interests within the publishing world of Joseph Johnson, evidenced by the deletion of criticism of plantation brutality and the insertion of a position against immediate abolition in the 1796 preface.¹⁰ Yet this powerful record of the ideologies of publishing was not distilled in the exhibition display, nor in the catalogue.

- 12 More resonances with Blake's engagement with slavery in the Continental Prophecies might have articulated the relationship between commercial commissions and prophetic invention by placing *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* closer to the Stedman plates and by displaying the Africa section of *The Song of Los*, represented by the title page and full-plate designs of copy A, on loan from the British Museum. Instead of opting for paraphrases, whose summaries are often debatable in themselves, captions to individual plates could have drawn out revolutionary connections in the *Preludium* to *Europe*. Christine Gallant points out that the figure about to knife the traveller is racialized and Blake's reference to "dark and desolate mountains / In forests of eternal death" (*Europe* 2.5-6, E 61) is "curiously close to the guerrilla techniques of warfare employed by Surinam Maroons that Stedman describes," as are the fires, while the signet is a well-known tool of slave ownership.¹¹ The entangled economy of slavery in the global eighteenth century might have been more in focus in the shift from Blake's *Europe* to the Continental Prophecies and Blake's universe.
- 13 Blake's millenarian approach to the revolutionary process is explained in Bindman's catalogue essay, which provides a broader understanding and evidence of further works treating subjects appearing in the prophetic books, such as the plagues in *Europe*, in relation to longer histories of natural and political cataclysms within which to situate "the destroying angels' work" in the present moment.¹² The revolutionary process in the making was captured through competing commercial, satirical, and apocalyptic encodings of the history of the present. Blake's commercial illustration of

10. "Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam," *Transcribed for the First Time from the Original 1790 Manuscript*, ed. with introduction and notes by Richard Price and Sally Price (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988) xlix, l. Digital reproductions of Stedman's watercolors are available at <<https://umedia.lib.umn.edu/item/p16022coll187:968>>.

11. Christine Gallant, "Blake's Coded Designs of Slave Revolts," *Wordsworth Circle* 42.3 (2011): 211-17.

12. David Bindman, "Blake's Continental Prophecies: Apocalypse and Revolution," *William Blake's Universe* 84-89.

the French Revolution after Charles Reuben Ryley for *Belamy's Picturesque Magazine* (1793; no. 58) represents the royalist trope of Marie Antoinette as a damsel in distress to be protected from the mob attacking Versailles in October 1789. Evidence of the changing resonances of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse was provided through a *gouache* by West (1783-1803; no. 60) that documented a commission for the Chapel of Revealed Religion at Windsor Castle, conceived in the late 1770s, whose millenarian composition came to be felt so close to the revolutionary process as to be shelved. The apocalyptic subject's potential application to contemporary events was evident in James Gillray's satire "Presages of the Millennium" (1795; no. 59). Both images provide a spectrum of possibilities for the number of figures and their grouping, conveying the kinetic and catastrophic energy of biblical and historical painting and its satire. By contrast, the concentrated, pared-down composition of Blake's watercolor *Death on a Pale Horse* (1800; no. 61) stood out for its dramatic and meditative depth. Garnet Terry adopted a different approach in his diagrammatic "Prophetic Vision: Daniel's Great Image," a large allegorical image folded into twelve to fit the size of the accompanying open pamphlet: such is the scale required for "Daniel's Great Image of the Mystical Body of Babylon, Shewing the Destruction of Antichrist, the Beast, the Whore, and the False Prophet; According to Rev. XIX:20" (1793; no. 62).

- 14 The final *mise-en-scène* for the present featured a selection of prison images, starting with George Romney's drawings of Howard visiting prisons and lazarettos (1790-95; nos. 63a-b). A stipple engraving by Moses Haughton (1813; no. 64) documented Fuseli's lost painting *The Vision of the Lazar House*, inspired by one of the scenes of futurity that the archangel Michael reveals to Adam in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (11.477-90), which was ready by January 1795 and on view as picture 24 at Fuseli's Milton Gallery at James Christie's auction rooms in 1799 and 1800, one of the literary gallery schemes that Blake was originally associated with. Although, oddly, neither *Paradise Lost* nor the Milton Gallery is referenced in the catalogue, this is the context in which Blake produced three versions of the large color monotype *The House of Death* (1795), one of the twelve large color prints from "Historical and Poetical Subjects" (1795/1805), here represented by the extraordinary version owned by the Fitzwilliam, from the same bequest that brought the late *Europe* and *America*.
- 15 After following the path through "Europe in Flames" around the central partition, viewers saw the dividing wall between the present and the galleries of the past and the future, which were parallel to each other. It displayed two arresting approaches to mediate the genealogies and prospects of the present. The first, Barry's etching and aquatint "The Phoenix, or the Resurrection of Freedom" (1776; no.

51), draws on a classical idiom to visualize the rebirth of revolutionary time embodied in the temple of American liberty beyond the waters, hailed by a transhistorical group of “friends of liberty” gathered by the tomb of Britannia, including Algernon Sidney, John Milton, Andrew Marvell, John Locke, and a self-portrait of Barry himself. The radical caption marks out the publisher John Almon, known for his radical Whig network and as a publisher of newspapers and pamphlets, including Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*. The bust of an oddly hovering, winged allegorical figure of Old Father Time, scythe in hand, comes into the composition from the top-left corner, a tuft of hair on his bald head identifying his association with Kairos and the need to seize the moment to secure this ephemeral moment of fugitive freedom. The cross-Atlantic poetics and politics of this fascinating print are magisterially researched by co-curator Esther Chadwick in her book *The Radical Print*; Sarah Haggarty’s essay in the exhibition catalogue integrates the print’s reference to Kairos within a wider discussion of tem-

porality in Blake’s corpus.¹³ A different, future-oriented image of man’s revolutionary resurrection was represented by a bold pairing architecturally structured as a diptych to the left of the entrance to the future: Jacques-Louis Perée’s “Droits de l’homme” (Rights of Man) (1795–96; no. 122), featuring a male nude that the curators associated with the Apollo Belvedere, one arm holding a pickaxe, the other thrust upwards with a scroll inscribed “Droits de l’homme,” in dialogue with Blake’s “Albion Rose” (“Glad Day” or “The Dance of Albion”) (1794–96). Placed next to Perée’s revolutionary icon, Blake’s Albion stood as a more abstract image of transcendence, the dawn of a new world, ushering the viewer into the future. While Perée was the only non-British element of the revolutionary present, the future was Anglo-German.

13. Esther Chadwick, *The Radical Print: Art and Politics in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2024); Sarah Haggarty, “Blake, Time and the Present Moment,” *William Blake’s Universe* 18–25.



The Future: Spiritual Renewal

- 16 The radiant-yellow future began with a room devoted to “Blake’s new religious style” in a range of formats, from poetical and biblical series to compositions toward public works. The first works to meet the eye of the viewer entering the future were three New Testament watercolors selected from the eighty biblical subjects that Blake painted for Butts in the early 1800s: *The Soldiers Casting Lots for Christ’s Garments* (no. 68), *The Angel of the Divine Presence Clothing Adam and Eve with Coats of Skins* (1803), and *The Ascension* (1805–06). On the right-hand side of the room hung *An Allegory of the Spiritual Condition of Man* (1811?), from Graham Robertson’s collection, Blake’s largest extant composition. Bindman’s catalogue entry presents this work “as an exercise in public art,” citing Blake’s *Descriptive Catalogue* (1809), in which he compares his paintings of the “Spiritual Forms” of Nelson and of Pitt to “those Apotheoses of Persian, Hindoo, and Egyptian Antiquity” and envisages producing works

“on a scale that is suitable to the grandeur of the nation ... [with] the figures ... one hundred feet in height.” Blake was also working on a lost painting of the *Last Judgement*, for which a number of watercolors survive. This suggests some kind of Sistine Chapel-like structure, adorned with large ‘Fresco’ paintings that would act as a permanent public reminder of the nation’s true path to redemption.¹⁴

While the Tate Britain Blake retrospective in 2019–20 focused on the contrast between the “originals seen in my visions” and the space Blake had available by reproducing the dimensions of the actual display of 1809, the focus at the Fitzwilliam was on religious iconography across formats and genres. The opposite wall featured twelve watercolors from Milton’s *Paradise Regained* (1816–18), perhaps originally intended for Butts, but bought by Linnell in 1825. A selection from *Illustrations of the Book of Job* (1825–26) captured a different engagement with the biblical canon, which the curators put into dialogue with “Runge’s ambitions for a *Gesamtkunstwerk*,” especially connecting plate 14, “When the Morning Stars Sang Together,” with Runge’s depiction of “Night” in *Tageszeiten* (*Times of Day*, 1802–10; nos. 73c, 79b).

- 17 The second room of the future concentrated on the mystical print and visual culture produced by the corpus of the seventeenth-century German cobbler turned Christian philosopher Jacob Böhme. His work was introduced by an

14. David Bindman, *William Blake’s Universe* 135 (no. 72), citing *A Descriptive Catalogue of Pictures, Poetical and Historical Inventions, Painted by William Blake* (London, 1809) 3, E 530; 5, E 531.

allegorical portrait by Nicolaus Häublin, which “presents Böhme as a prophet of Christ’s second coming,” first published in 1677, then used as a frontispiece to *Mysterium Magnum* in 1679 (no. 74). Cecilia Muratori’s fascinating and beautifully illustrated catalogue essay illuminates the visual appeal of artisanal material culture mediating Böhme’s philosophy by means of the three-dimensional, movable-flap engineering of Dionysius Andreas Freher (1649–1728). To represent “Man in his different three-fold State,” Freher produced three tables—which the catalogue reproduces through photographs featuring closed and open flaps (no. 75 and figs. 15–18)—accompanied by “an extensive unpublished treatise, which Freher titled *An Explication of Three Very Different Tables*.” However, as Muratori notes, the tables also circulated as independent works: “Holes at the top of these three cardboard sheets suggest they may have been pinned to a wall and viewed as devotional images,” but they were “best known through their inclusion as spectacular engraved flap-prints in the Law edition of Böhme” (1764–81).¹⁵ Crabb Robinson noted that Blake commented on “the figures in Law’s translation as being very beautiful. Michael Angelo could not have done better.”¹⁶ Copies of this edition from the Cambridge University Library and from Trinity College, Cambridge, were open to the title page and to diagrams of “The Tree of the Soul” and “The True Principles of All Things,” which invited comparisons to the diagram of the four zoas in Blake’s *Milton*. “The Third Table”, with its slightly raised flaps, held the promise of layers designed to be lifted to reveal the threefold state of man from macrocosm to the body’s interior. Although this potential could not be fulfilled within museum conditions, the mobile engineering of the illustrations was demonstrated on a copy of the Law edition owned by the Ritman Library in Amsterdam in a video projected on the opposite wall.¹⁷

- 18 This material culture of mysticism was the shared source underpinning the next and final move in this fascinating exhibition, the comparison between Blake and German mysticism in the long gallery of the future. Chadwick’s catalogue essay sheds light on visionary experiences of nature in response to the predicaments of the present: “When

15. Cecilia Muratori, “‘Michel Angelo could not have done better’: Dionysius Andreas Freher and the Visual Transmission of German Mysticism in Eighteenth-Century England,” *William Blake’s Universe* 146–52 (on 149).

16. Reporting a dinner that took place at the London home of the German collectors Karl and Elizabeth Aders on 10 December 1825; see Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence*, ed. Thomas Sadler, 3 vols. (London, 1869) 2: 305; *William Blake’s Universe* 142.

17. This animation was produced for the Böhme exhibition Alles in Allem, curated by Claudia Brink, Lucinda Martin, and Cecilia Muratori at the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden in 2017.



Blake imagined heaven in a wildflower, Europe had been at war for over a decade.¹⁸ A view from the future opened a window onto classical training through the wall shared with the parallel gallery of the past, reversing the view from the past, which set the expectation of seeing the heavenly Jerusalem in the *Jerusalem* plates hanging in the room of the future. The connections made in this section of the exhibition are underpinned by James Vigus's catalogue essay on Crabb Robinson's role in introducing Blake to the German reading public. Vigus reconstructs Crabb Robinson's Anglo-German cultural ties, going back to his studies at the University of Jena, then detailing his connections with Hamburg, including with the bookshop of Friedrich Christoph Perthes in 1805. Crabb Robinson's Blake essay was published in the second volume of Perthes's *Vaterländisches Museum* (1810–11), a periodical "dedicated to cultivating German patriotism as an anti-Napoleonic weapon."

18. Esther Chadwick, "Introduction: Blake, Runge and Visionary Art in Europe c. 1800," *William Blake's Universe* 10-17 (on 11).

To make a case for "Blake as a European artist," Crabb Robinson noted the influence of Albrecht Dürer, Moravian hymns, and Emanuel Swedenborg.¹⁹

- 19 A wall devoted to Runge's work on *Times of Day* activated a productive dialogue of forms with Blake's Job plates. In addition to the connection made in the catalogue between Runge's "Night" and Blake's engraving of the morning of creation in *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, Runge's naked female personification of Aurora in preparatory studies for and paintings of *The Morning* (nos. 81-85) recalls a design for Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1797). Blake illustrates the asterisked line "Where sense runs savage broke from reason's chain" (Night III, line 22), visualizing sense through a female personification of sensory mysticism, thus working against the negative connotations that Young's text emphasizes in the following line, "And sings false peace, till smoth-

19. James Vigus, "Henry Crabb Robinson, William Blake, and Anglo-German Cultural Relations," *William Blake's Universe* 153-55.



JOHN FLAXMAN

Flaxman and Blake both studied at the Royal Academy in London. Flaxman was an engraver and architect, while Blake was a poet and artist. Both artists were interested in the work of Shakespeare. Their shared interest in Shakespeare's works and their dedication to their art forms led to a close relationship between the two artists. Blake's interest in Shakespeare's works and his dedication to his art forms led to a close relationship between the two artists.

er'd by the pall."²⁰ Consider Runge's versions of Aurora: Jan Steinke notes associations with both Venus and Mary in the first version (1808; no. 81); in a construction drawing from 1808, "several lines ... intersect at her groin" (164, no. 82b); a composition study dated 1809 positions Aurora on a vertical central axis, using triangulation to relate elements of the composition by means of lines converging in her womb (no. 85).²¹ Runge's iconography and geometry of composition suggest an embodied mysticism that can be compared with Blake's approach to bodily organs as mystical gates to transcendence. Actual points of contact between the two artists are not known, nor whether Runge had a chance to see a copy of the *Night Thoughts* engravings, although the volume was among Blake's best-known works. On the basis of similarities with the framing borders of the Job engravings, Sibylle Erle wonders whether Blake saw engravings of Runge's *Times of Day*, given that the German collectors Karl and Elizabeth Aders owned a copy, which he might have seen when he dined at their house in London in December 1825.²² In bringing such a rich apparatus of works associated with *Times of Day* in dialogue with Blake, the exhibition raised questions that will nourish research to come.

- 20 Joseph Leo Koerner's catalogue essay on "Runge's Times" illustrates the convergence of botanical, folk, mystical, and craft engagement with plants, from scissor-work and silhouettes to drawing, in the attempt to capture images of becoming and epochs, and "portray the experience of time in the medium of images."²³ Runge's botanical vision of the hours differs from neoclassical personifications drawing on classical mythology visualized by Flaxman, while both also translated into motifs for interior decoration, as they did in Goethe's house in Weimar. In Runge's botanical symbolism Koerner observes the phases of the plant cycle compressed in the image of the plant "radically reimagining" Lessing's notion of the point in time or "fruitful moment." In its theorization of experiential, natural, and mystical time, Koerner's reading of Runge offers a fascinating counterpoint to Haggarty's essay about Kairos, or the fugitive, climactic moment in Blake. While Runge's mysticism of the lily peopled with diminutive allegorical human forms is quite different from Blake's dynamic Darwinian loves of the plants, comparison between the two artists invites renewed attention to the mysterious full-plate illustration to *The Song of*

20. Edward Young, *The Complaint, and the Consolation; or, Night Thoughts* (London: Edwards, 1797) 46.

21. For a technical description of this drawing, see Peter Prange's entry in the Hamburger Kunsthalle's online collection, <<https://online-sammlung.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/de/objekt/34194>>.

22. Sibylle Erle, "Blake in Hamburg," *VALA* 5 (November 2024) 135-36 (on 136); see note 16 for evidence of Blake's visit to their home.

23. Joseph Leo Koerner, "Runge's Times," *William Blake's Universe* 178-85 (on 182).

Los retitled "King and Queen on a Lily" in the room of the present, and to "Lovers in the Water Lily," the head vignette to chapter 2 of *Jerusalem*, positioned on the other side of the dividing wall of the future.

- 21 To look back from the end of the future was to see a new dawn, embodied in the engraving, etching, and drypoint print of "Albion Rose" (c. 1804, but captioned "WB inv 1780"; no. 94) hanging on the end of the partition wall. Blake's iconic image is often used as a framing device for his corpus: while Tate Britain positioned it at the entrance of their 2019-20 retrospective, the curators of William Blake's Universe used two versions to mark the beginning and ending of the room of the future. The transition from political to mystical inflections of the composition was told through a contrast with the earlier, color-printed version, juxtaposed with Perée's "Droits de l'homme" at the threshold from the revolutionary present to the future. At the end of the future room, by contrast, the curatorial line of sight invited a comparison between Runge's female body of Aurora and Blake's male personification of "Albion Rose" as a different kind of "Glad Day," with a newly added bat-like moth and worm indicating resurrection from the physical world of mortality. The penultimate four lines of *Jerusalem* provided an evocative wall inscription to capture the mysticism of natural history: "All Human Forms identified even Tree Metal Earth & Stone. all / Human Forms identified, living going forth & returning wearied / Into the Planetary lives of Years Months Days & Hours reposing / And then Awakening into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality" (*Jerusalem* 99.1-4, E 258).

- 22 The choice to have Blake's *Jerusalem* facing Caspar David Friedrich's *Lebensalter*, literally "Ages of Life" but translated as *The Ages of Man* in the exhibition and catalogue (c. 1826; no. 86), produced a startling contrast in modes of attention. Friedrich's seven sepia sketches were received as "dream images": such "riddles or artistic hieroglyphs ... exercise the imagination far more than they satisfy the eye," said a contemporary reviewer.²⁴ These essential elemental compositions in which the human form is diminutive, almost accessory, could not be more different from the compressed intensity of the *Jerusalem* plates. Positioned in a section on Romantic nationalism, *Jerusalem* was also in dialogue with other approaches to national identity. William Vaughan's catalogue essay offers a helpful comparative framing for converging and diverging ways of seeing the nation refracted in the elements of nature featured in the exhibition, from iconographies of the fatherland that Runge produced for Perthes's *Vaterländisches Museum*, and Friedrich's patri-

24. Cited by Andreas Stolzenburg in his catalogue entry for Friedrich in *William Blake's Universe* (172).



otic and obliquely anti-French German landscapes, to Samuel Palmer's conservative organic rural idylls.²⁵

25. William Vaughan, "Romantic Nationalism in Germany and Britain," *William Blake's Universe* 204-11.

23 While Blake's engagement with Böhme and Swedenborg is often discussed, in drawing German connections within Blake's universe, this bold, imaginative, original, and elegant exhibition offered new ways of seeing and stimulated formal, historical, and metaphysical questions about Romantic art in a millenarian European art world.

