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**The imagery of travel in British painting: with particular reference to
nautical and maritime imagery, circa 1740-1800**

in two volumes:

Volume One: text

by

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Summary

The dissertation is divided into two sections, dealing with the positive and negative faces of travel and the sea in visual art, each further subdivided by chapter.

Following the introduction, Chapter 2 deals with cartography, providing a broad context for the cultural reception of travel imagery. Chapter 3 discusses Thames imagery. It is argued that the increased interest in the river as a pictorial subject was part of a growing view of London as the metropolis of a grand commercial empire, whereby the Thames was aligned to the construction of the imperial nation. Chapter 4 examines metropolitan contexts for travel and maritime imagery. Conflicts are noticed between the image of navigation as a sign for commerce, and the marginalization of marine artists from polite artistic society. Patterns of patronage also indicate an ideological and actual distancing of the maritime nation from maritime communities.

The second section turns to the image of the sea as a negative force in British culture. After an introduction, Chapter 5 examines the problematic depiction of the lower deck sailor, as a contradictory figure in national culture. Chapter 6 looks at how smugglers and wreckers were visualized, as wreckers both of individual ships, and of the larger ship of the commercial state, which assumed markedly political connotations in the 1790s. Chapter 7 considers the slave trade, especially the implications of the absence of imagery dealing positively with such an important component of the maritime nation's prosperity. It is argued that the force of abolitionist images relies upon inversions of pictorial conventions. Chapter 8 examines the wider significance of shipwreck imagery, in relation to shipwreck literature. Discussion of illustrations to Falconer's poem, *The Shipwreck*, is extended to the wider field of the shipwreck narrative. By providing a vehicle for the expression of native virtues, shipwreck reinforced British identity's being located with the sea, at the same time as it was shown stricken by disaster.

The Conclusion considers further how national concerns and values were mediated by the image of maritime disaster. Through a consideration of Louthembourg's work of the 1790s, it is argued that the aesthetic of the maritime, by being increasingly interleaved with the sublime, permeated a wide variety of imagery. But the naturalization of the nation in the sublimity of the sea represented it continually on the verge of disintegration. For a maritime nation enduring the crises of naval mutiny and continual threat of invasion by sea, this was peculiarly apposite.

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141. Robert Pollard and F. Jukes after Robert Smirke, *The Halsewell East Indiaman . . . wreck'd off Seacombe in the Isle of Purbeck on the 6th of Jany. 1786*, aquatint and etching, publ. 17 March, 1786, 44.3 x 55.2cm., London, National Maritime Museum
142. Landseer after Philippe-Jacques de Loutherbourg, *Headpiece to the Book of Daniel*, engraving, publ. Thomas Macklin, 25 June, 1797, illustration for Macklin's *Bible*
143. Philippe-Jacques de Loutherbourg, *Allegory of the Battle of the Nile*, c.1805, pen and ink and wash, 51.4 x 38.1cm., London, British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings
144. Pouncy after Philippe-Jacques de Loutherbourg, *The Shipwreck of St. Paul*, engraving, publ. Thomas Macklin, 1 March, 1794, illustration for Macklin's *Bible*

145. Benjamin West, *St. Paul Shaking the Viper from his Hand after the Shipwreck*, oil on canvas, signed and dated 1789, 762 x 427cm., Greenwich, Royal Naval College, Chapel of Sts Peter and Paul
146. Benjamin West, *John Called to Write the Revelation*, oil on paper on panel, 1797, 144 x 65cm., Houston, The Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation
147. Philippe-Jacques de Louthembourg, *The Great Fire of London*, oil on canvas, c.1797, 59.7 x 71.3cm., New Haven, Yale Center for British Art
148. James Gillray, *New Morality; - or - The Promised Installment of the High Priest of the Theophilanthropes, with the Homage of Leviathan and his Suite*, engraving, signed, publ. J. Wright, 1 August, 1798, for *The Anti-Jacobin Magazine & Review*, 20.3 x 61.0cm., London, British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings
149. Philippe-Jacques de Louthembourg, *The cutting out of the French Corvette 'La Chevrette' by English sailors, with portraits of the officers engaged, 21st July 1801*, oil on canvas, signed and dated 1802, 106.7 x 151.1cm, Bath City Art Gallery

Acknowledgements and Declaration

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Completion of this dissertation would not have been in any way possible without the unfailing support and encouragement of Gill, who has contributed - to its being attempted, never mind completed - more than she can realise. The dissertation is, naturally, dedicated to her, but with a sizeable mention for Caleb, who is almost exactly the same age as this work, and without whose preternatural consideration in sleeping all night from the age of three months, it would not have stood a chance.

Declaration

Part of Chapter 3 is published as “All Ocean is her own’: the image of the sea and the identity of the maritime nation in eighteenth-century British art’, in Geoffrey Cubitt (ed.), *Imagining Nations* (Manchester University Press, 1998). The complete essay is attached as a separate appendix at the end of the dissertation (pp.376-402). It was submitted for publication during the period of study for this dissertation and has not formed part of any work submitted for previous examination.

Part One

Chapter One: Introduction

In 1789 the chapel at Greenwich Hospital, regarded as the ‘boast of Britain as an institution’, and the epicentre of British naval expansion, received Benjamin West’s monumental altarpiece *St. Paul Shaking the Viper from his Hand after the Shipwreck* (fig.145), celebrating the miraculous deliverance from shipwreck and serpent of London’s patron saint. Its scale and subject, painted by the foremost history painter of the day, formed a suitable counterpart to Thornhill’s extravagant allegory of the nation in the Painted Hall, though of a quite different aesthetic order.¹ It will be one of the contentions of this dissertation that the aesthetic difference between them, from, as it were, ‘emblem’ to ‘expression’, corresponds not just to developments in taste and visual style over an extended period, but rather to a changed and problematic perception of the nature of the maritime nation, and the functions that art could have in providing an aesthetic articulation of subjective membership within it. West’s altarpiece, I shall argue, addresses several second-order sign-systems by which the identity of Britain as a maritime nation was being increasingly naturalized and homogenized in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

¹ [W. Combe], *An History of the River Thames* (London, 1794), p.243. H. von Erffa and A. Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven and London, 1986), cat. no.397, pp.384-6: the authors note the importance of this altarpiece both to the nation, and to West’s own career. Apart from cartoons for stained glass, it was ‘by far the largest picture painted by the artist prior to the last decade of his life’ (p.385). See also Jerry D. Meyer, ‘Benjamin West’s Chapel of Revealed Religion: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Protestant Religious Art’, *Art Bulletin* 57 (1975), pp.247-65.

For Thornhill and the Painted Hall, see Ellis Waterhouse, *Painting in Britain 1530-1790* (Harmondsworth, 4th edition, 1978), pp.131-3.

Greenwich was not the only site of prime national importance where maritime art was being publicly instituted towards the end of the century. West had also been commissioned by George III to complete an ambitious cycle of paintings for a proposed (though never accomplished) ‘chapel of revealed religion’ at Windsor, which included scenes of *The Deluge* (fig.99) and *Noah Sacrificing*.² At St. Paul’s Cathedral and Westminster Abbey monuments to naval heroes of the Revolutionary War were being proposed and put in place from the late 1790s (fig.131). And in the years around the turn of the century many grandiose proposals were made for the erection of a monument or temple of naval glory, the purpose and character of which was likewise the subject of extended public debate.³ Their national public profile complemented the longstanding marine iconography in the Houses of Parliament, where the prestigious set of Armada tapestries had been placed in the House of Lords in 1650, and had been

² Von Erffa and Staley, *op. cit.*, cat. nos.235 and 236. West was also commissioned by perhaps the most important private patron of the arts at this period, William Beckford, to complete another cycle of paintings, for a planned, though also unrealized, ‘Revelation chamber’ at Fonthill, several of which made conspicuous use of maritime imagery. These are discussed in detail in chapter 10, below. See also Nancy L. Pressly, *Revealed Religion: Benjamin West’s Commissions for Windsor Castle and Fonthill Abbey* (exhibition catalogue, San Antonio, Texas, 1983).

³ Margaret Whitney, *Sculpture in Britain, 1530-1830* (Harmondsworth, 1964), pp.361-74; John Physick, *Designs for English Sculpture 1680-1860* (exhibition catalogue, London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1969), cat. nos. 122, 123, 127, 129, 130. For discussion of the cultural and patronal context of the naval monuments and projects, see A.W. Yarrington, *Commemoration of the Hero 1800-1864: Monuments to the British Victors of the Napoleonic Wars* (New York and London, 1988), pp.61-78, 338-46.

given a greater currency among the eighteenth-century public by the publication in 1739 of John Pine's splendid set of engravings after them (fig.52).⁴

Pine's engravings and West's paintings for Beckford mark the approximate terminal dates of the period under study here. And in what follows I shall seek to analyse the character and cultural significance of the visual representation of the sea, in painting and the graphic arts, between circa 1740 and 1800; questioning how the discrete but highly important maritime content of British art could assume such a prominent place by the end of the century. As this is so very large and complicated a field of study, I shall explain the dissertation's motivation, methods, and inevitable restrictions.

Imagery evocative of the sea was to be found in the most significant public or national contexts, suggest that within late-eighteenth-century British culture the sea had a recognizable, multilayered ideological load, by which it articulated in various ways, but at some fundamental level, a collective cultural acknowledgement that the character and nature of the nation, its defining traits and aspirations, was irrevocably connected with the ocean. As Linda Colley has argued, the construction of the nation as essentially insular, and thereby unified, was only made possible by the 1707 Act of Union, after which the supposedly natural maritime disposition of the nation was increasingly invoked to play down the differences between the countries comprising the British Isles, and to distinguish them as a larger collectivity from the rest of the

⁴ M.J. Rodríguez-Salgado, *Armada 1588-1988: An International Exhibition to Commemorate the Spanish Armada* (exhibition catalogue, London, National Maritime Museum, 1988), pp.248-51.

world and of Europe, in particular France.⁵ One of my prime contentions will be that the cultural understanding of the sea in relation to national character changed markedly over the period in question, and was articulated at a profound level by its visual representation.

The construction of the nation as *naturally* maritime also disguised the heterogeneous and dialectical positions that the maritime sphere could have within the broader culture. Particularly in the earlier part of the period, but to some extent all the way through it, navigation and its related practices tended to be associated with a distinct and specialist group of naval and mercantile people, identifiable and particularized by the localities in which they lived and worked, their dress, speech and behaviour. In this respect the artistic sphere echoed the larger social structure. Marine art was separated as an aesthetic category, regarded as important but subsidiary to the polite and virtuous forms being practised or preached by Reynolds, Mortimer, Hogarth, Hayman, or Gainsborough, and later by Barry, Fuseli, West or Opie. Marine painting was a clearly defined category in the hierarchy of art, having, ostensibly, straightforward guidelines. The greatest exponents so far had been seventeenth-century Dutch artists, in particular the Van de Veldes, therefore they set the standard. Willem van de Velde II was seen as ‘the father of all English marine painting’, and even

⁵ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992), pp.5-6, 11-18. A refinement of Colley’s position, arguing for much greater regional diversity in the understanding of Britain’s relation to the world, is presented by Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.24-5.

Reynolds, in a letter to the marine artist Nicholas Pocock, directed him to follow 'the practice of Van Der Velde'.⁶

Alternatively, Claude's harbour scenes and the tradition of storm imagery from Salvator Rosa to Claude-Joseph Vernet had invested the iconography of the sea with a greater imaginative potential, similar to that of the highest forms of landscape painting, which was basic to the later representation of the sublime sea, and provided an alternative aesthetic for maritime imagery to the descriptive mundanity of the Dutch-derived tradition.

Yet neither of these aesthetic positions, as Reynolds was at pains to point out elsewhere, could aspire to the 'grand style'.⁷ Neither Van de Velde nor Vernet, therefore, could be usefully invoked in the interpretation of West's paintings or

⁶ *'Shock of Recognition': The Landscape of English Romanticism and the Dutch Seventeenth-Century School* (exhibition catalogue, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1971), cat. no. 97. Reynolds' letter to Pocock is cited in full in David Cordingly, *Marine Painting in England, 1700-1900* (London, 1974), Appendix 1.

⁷ Sir Joshua Reynolds, edited by Robert R. Wark, *Discourses on Art* (New Haven and London, 1975), Discourse III, pp.51-2: like other Dutch artists, such as Teniers, Ostade or Brouwer (with whom he pointedly links Hogarth), Reynolds says that, while marine painters may be excellent in their 'department' of painting, their overall achievement will be necessarily circumscribed by the formal limitations of the style. This principle

may be applied to the Battle-pieces of Bourgonne, the French Gallantries of Watteau, and even beyond the exhibition of animal life, to the Landscapes of Claude Lorraine, and the Sea-Views of Vandervelde. All these painters have, in general, the same right, in different degrees, to the name of a painter, which a satirist, an epigrammatist, a sonneteer, a writer of pastorals, or descriptive poetry, has to that of a poet.

Westmacott's, Banks' or Bacon's monuments. More strikingly, these were categorically not marine artists. Nor was Louthembourg, who was nevertheless the most admired painter of naval battles in the 1790s and 1800s. Nor, of course, was Turner, in any specialist sense of the term, despite his prolific output of maritime-related imagery.

The several points requiring further investigation here bear materially on what follows. The most obvious concerns the problematic aesthetic of the maritime: how do we account for the apparent anomaly in eighteenth-century Britain between the obvious national importance of all activities connected with the sea, expressed visually in art of the highest rank, and the low position occupied by marine art in the academic hierarchy? I shall suggest that this conundrum was unavoidably implicated in a *general* cultural ambiguity about the maritime sphere, which was also reinforced by the character and conditions of production of maritime imagery. Paradigmatic of this ambiguity was the difficult social status of the sailor, whose representation attempted to negotiate two contrary aspects of his personality, from the heroic protector of the nation's coasts, to the disruptive, antisocial reveller within them.

However, it is more complicated than that. Maritime iconography, as will be already apparent, was integrated at fundamental and transparent levels of social life. Whether in the form of naval ceramics, sea-songs (notably in the 1790s those of Dibdin), nautical melodrama, catch-penny prints, or the prominence in popular political discourse of issues to do with trade and navigation, the idea or image of the sea permeated all aspects and all levels of society.⁸ This complemented a pervasive, almost

⁸ For ceramics and decorative arts, see G. Pugh and M. Pugh, *Naval Ceramics* (Newport, 1971); Rina Prentice, *A Celebration of the Sea: The Decorative Art Collections of the National Maritime Museum*

obsessive cultural interest in all aspects of travel, most obviously witnessed by the demand for literature, especially travel narratives.⁹ One must question therefore whether the aesthetic relegation of marine art was not so much symptomatic of a broad

(London, 1994), *'Rule, Britannia!': A Loan Exhibition of Marine Works of Art* (exhibition catalogue, London, Sotheby's, 1986). For nautical melodrama, see H.F. Watson, *The Sailor in English Fiction and Drama, 1550-1800* (New York, 1931); C.N. Robinson, *The British Tar in Fact and Fiction* (London, 1909); J.S. Bratton, 'British heroism and the structure of melodrama', in J.S. Bratton *et al.*, *Acts of Supremacy: The British Empire and the Stage, 1790-1930* (Manchester, 1991), pp.18-61; George D. Glenn, 'Nautical "Docudrama" in the Age of the Kembles', in Fisher, J.L. and Watt, S. (eds.), *When They Weren't Doing Shakespeare: Essays on Nineteenth-Century British and American Theatre* (Athens, Ga. and London, 1989, pp.137-51. For a sample of catch-penny prints, see *163 popular engravings from the eighteenth century, originally published by Bowles and Carver* (New York, Dover Publications, 1970), pp.2, 11-13, 23, 34-5, 38, 43, 47, 81, 101, 113, 125, 143, 153-5, 159, 161. A comprehensive collection of sea-songs is given in C.H. Firth (ed.), *Naval Songs and Ballads* (London, 1908). On issues of trade and navigation in popular politics, see particularly Linda Colley, 'Whose Nation? Class and National Consciousness in Britain 1750-1830', *Past and Present* 113 (1986), pp.97-117; Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp.140-63; idem, 'Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon', *Past and Present* 121 (1988), pp.74-109; idem, 'Empire of Virtue: The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture c.1720-1785', in Lawrence Stone (ed.), *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London and New York, 1994), pp.128-64.

⁹ On the rise of travel literature, see P.J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (London, 1982); G.R. Crone and R.A. Skelton, 'English Collections of Voyages and Travels 1625-1846', in E. Lynam (ed.), *Richard Hakluyt and His Successors* (London, Hakluyt Society, 1946), pp.63-140; Philip Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage: Sea-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1994); Percy G. Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars 1660-1800* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962).

cultural rift, but rather a gloss disguising a highly complex set of dialectical relationships between sea- and land-based values, in which the subject of the sea, far from being marginalized, was in fact integral to eighteenth-century society in a variety of material and ideological ways. As will, I hope, become clear, I believe both of these apprehensions of the maritime to be true: what concerns me is how the representation of the sea functioned in negotiating and reconciling the multiple, changeable and often contradictory meanings which the maritime sphere had for eighteenth-century culture.

There is, however, a clear danger in assessing eighteenth-century maritime culture, of applying retrospectively an anachronistic cultural understanding which sees an essential dichotomy between maritime and landed social values, but in so doing reflects a twentieth-century lack of material connection with the sea and shipping. It is no longer the case, as was observed of early nineteenth-century Britain, that 'every individual is either immediately or remotely concerned with the fortune of the sea'.¹⁰ While the social distinction between maritime and polite society was, as I shall argue, very real, it was enacted within a much broader cultural sympathy for, and interest in, all aspects of nautical experience, which pervaded the whole of British society, and contributed to Britain's developing identity as an imperial nation. Individual interest ranged from direct experience on board ship through travel overseas or around the coast, to family connections with naval or colonial communities, to an implicit concern

¹⁰ [Sir J.G. Dalryell], *Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea' or the Historical Narratives of the Most Noted Calamities and Providential Deliverances which have Resulted from Maritime Enterprise* (Edinburgh, 1812), xi.

in the ‘fortune of the sea’ through financial investment in, or trading connections with, some form of imperial enterprise.¹¹

An example from the art world is that apparently most urbane of commentators and diarists, Joseph Farington, who was concerned in several ways with the sea. Together with the marine artist Nicholas Pocock, he completed a series of bird’s-eye views of the royal dockyards in the 1790s. He produced, besides, the illustrations, engraved by Stadler, for Boydell’s publication of *An History of the River Thames* (1792-4). Like others, he also displayed acute interest in the 1797 mutinies and their implications.¹² Farington’s concern with the maritime was by no means unusual: his interest was doubtless fuelled by having direct family connections with the navy. In this respect his experience must have been a common one, in a society where

before 1793 there were more men serving on the high seas during wartime than the populations of either Bristol or Norwich: by 1815 the navy had increased to a total of 179,000 men.¹³

¹¹ H.V. Bowen, *Elites, Enterprise and the Making of the British Overseas Empire* (London, 1996), pp.32-6, 47-100.

¹² David Cordingley, *Nicholas Pocock 1740-1821* (London, 1986), pp.66-8. *An History of the River Thames* is discussed in chapter 3, below. For a more extensive discussion see Sven H.A. Bruntjen, *John Boydell, 1719-1804: A Study in Art Patronage and Publishing in Georgian England* (New York and London, 1985), pp.158-96. On Farington’s concern with the 1797 mutinies, see below, Chapter 9.

¹³ Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society, 1793-1815* (Oxford, 1995), p.7. See also John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (London, 1989), pp.36-7; C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London, 1989), p.3

Yet overseas travel functioning as a kind of everyday individual and cultural consciousness (or sub-consciousness), providing an ideological context for miscellaneous intellectual, socio-political or aesthetic experience and discourse, tends either to be taken for granted or overlooked altogether by art historians and historians, despite the wealth of recent scholarship devoted to analysing eighteenth-century social life and experience in terms of that society's 'consumption' of 'a world of goods'.¹⁴ While Farington and his associates were, one suspects, steeped in the transoceanic and imperial fortunes of the nation, the conventional historical value placed upon his life is that of a detached recorder of the aesthetic life of the metropolis, to the exclusion of virtually all else.¹⁵

¹⁴ The most pertinent recent examples of the maritime being overlooked art-historically are: David Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London, 1993) and Matthew Craske, *Art in Europe, 1700-1830* (Oxford, 1995). Despite the primary concern in both of these books with the impact of commerce on artistic theory and practice, they pay little or no attention to the significance of navigation.

From a large and ever-increasing literature on the subject of the eighteenth-century 'consumer society', the most important and relevant works for the present dissertation are: Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, J.H. Plumb (eds.), *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1982); John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London and New York, 1993); John Brewer and Ann Bermingham (eds.), *The Consumption of Culture* (1995); Carole Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford, 1990); Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680-1768* (New Haven and London, 1988).

¹⁵ Bruntjen has remarked on Farington's involvement and interest in a variety of artistic projects undertaken by Boydell in the 1790s, of a distinctly nationalistic character: Bruntjen, *op. cit.*, pp.159-62.

In a certain sense, the example of Farington correlates with the general bias of the history of eighteenth-century Britain, whose imperial dimension has only recently begun to be seriously re-examined, in the wake of thirty years of introspective, micro-historical scholarship, which has focussed on Britain, or more often, England, detached from any imperial or colonial context.¹⁶ By contrast with the nineteenth century, when British fortunes are acknowledged to have been inextricably connected with the global empire, the idea of eighteenth-century Britain 'as an imperial nation' has yet to gain a similarly uniform acceptance.¹⁷ Nonetheless, as Kathleen Wilson has recently written, ideas of empire and imperial values were embedded in British popular consciousness:

¹⁶ For a lucid summary of the principal lines and developments of this historiography, with copious references, see Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan (eds.), *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill and London, 1991), pp.1-32.

¹⁷ The transition of British imperialism between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries is addressed in Bayly, *op. cit.* The most recent historical works devoted to re-assessing the status of British imperialism in the eighteenth century are Wilson, *Sense of the People*, and Bowen, *op. cit.* The degree of contention such an idea provokes is indicated by the fact that it could be the focus of a recent high-profile symposium, convened by Frank O'Gorman and Diana Donald, and with, as contributors, such luminaries as P.J. Marshall, Patrick O'Brien, H.V. Bowen, and James Raven (which names also suggest the degree to which discussion of the subject is still largely confined to the sphere of economic history): *Eighteenth-Century Britain as an Imperial Nation*, one-day conference, Manchester Metropolitan University, 9 November 1996.

In the area of art history, the outstanding work remains that undertaken by Bernard Smith and Rüdiger Joppien: Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas* (2nd edn., New Haven and London, 1985); idem, *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages* (New Haven and London, 1992); Rüdiger Joppien and Bernard Smith, *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages*, 4 vols. (New Haven and London, 1985-8). These have the drawbacks, from

The broad social basis within Britain of investment in the imperial project, from the financing of ships and investment in slave cargoes to colonial land speculation, as well as the distribution, consumption and population patterns which spread colonial and British goods and people across regions, oceans and nations, helped ensure that trade and empire were potent political issues throughout the eighteenth century, argued about and debated in a proliferation of printed materials as well as in artifacts, street theater and demonstrations. But interest in the empire was never solely a product of material involvement. Rather, it shaped the national imagination in ways that gave it a particular salience within domestic politics and culture.¹⁸

It is evident, too, that the sense of isolation created by Britain's insular geography, formally sundering the metropolis from the colonies, was not as great as previously thought. By 1740 there were 1500 ships crossing the Atlantic each year, compared with 500 in 1675. This, combined with a shortened voyage time, the increased tonnage of vessel in the eighteenth century, and improvements in ship design, meant that the amount of goods and people being transported from Britain to, at least, the American colonies, increased considerably, such that

the perspective of this dissertation, of being either too narrowly or too broadly focussed: while *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages* concentrates on a single aspect of British imperial enterprise, *European Vision* is concerned with the view from the periphery of the historical impact of European visual culture in general.

¹⁸ Wilson, *Sense of the People*, p.24.

the Atlantic was to some travellers, and an increasing number of modern historians, almost as easy to traverse as the Severn or the Tay.¹⁹

From an alternative perspective, the sheer scale of the slave trade suggests a substantially increased and rationalized volume of shipping, and a concomitant narrowing of the distance - psychologically, if not physically - between metropolis and colonies.²⁰

All of which re-emphasizes the high value that the subjects of navigation and travel had in the eighteenth-century public and popular consciousness. Which, in turn, might provoke something of a reconsideration of the visual culture, and in particular the fine art, of the period: whether it be to highlight the imperialist investment represented in the tea service and sugar caddy in Devis' *Mr and Mrs Hill* (1748-50, New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection), or to question the ideological configurations between grandfather, grandson and the marine pictures hanging on the wall in Zoffany's *Sir Lawrence Dundas with his Grandson* (1760-70, private collection), or to notice that the oaks in Gainsborough's *Cornard Wood* (1748-

¹⁹ Bowen, *op. cit.*, p.118. Bowen also notes Bernard Bailyn's recent opinion on this issue (p.119), a telling comparison in the present context, that 'The Atlantic . . . was a highway rather easier to cross, despite all the dangers of ocean voyages, than the land passages across the British Isles': Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of North America: An Introduction* (London, 1987), p.26. On increased shipping tonnage, size of vessel, and changes in ship design, see Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1962), pp.20-3; Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge, 1987), pp.301-3; J.H. Parry, *Trade and Dominion: The European Oversea Empires in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1971), pp.274-83.

²⁰ For the image of the slave trade, and references, see below, Chapter 7.

50, London, National Gallery), more than being conventional symbols of British statehood and naval power, are fine trees, in a practical sense, for the needs of ship-building, with their tall, straight trunks and outspread branches comprising the necessary lengths for the hull, and the curved timbers for the knees of the ship; or to suggest that Louthembourg's *The Evening Coach* (fig.1), fine landscape in the Italianate style as it may be, also represents a complex pictorial essay on the character of Britain - or England - as an imperial nation.

This picture has wider implications regarding art and imperialism, and offers insights for understanding the art of the previous era. It has no obvious narrative subtext. Rather, its ideological load is derived from the apparently arbitrary, or potential and unrealized relationships between the principal figures and groups and the prominent features of the landscape in which they are placed. The setting is Blackheath, made clear by the sight of the river Thames at Greenwich in the background, populated with ships - the perennial 'forests of masts' found in virtually any eighteenth-century description of the Pool of London and the river's lower reaches - one of which is in full sail in prominent profile. The foreground action, in contrast, focusses on the rapid passage through an extravagantly rural landscape of a coach carrying a group of six young middle-class or gentry figures. At the front the driver points out some feature of interest to his female companion. What he is indicating is unclear; maybe something on the road ahead and beyond the frame of the image. But his gesture directs the viewer to a complementary, though unrelated group in the bottom left corner, also travellers (though of a very different class), gathered in a clearing at the edge of the wood behind them. One of these, a young girl, stands apart from the rest, looking across the picture, seemingly at the coach as it passes. But her

solitary stance and gaze also respond to another figure, in the highlighted bottom right foreground, the uniformed figure of a sailor. These three sets of individuals are visually connected in terms of colour, through their commonly red garments: the gypsies' shawls and their donkey's pannier, the bright shawl of the topmost figure of the pyramidal group of the coach, and the sailor's red neck tie, all of which stand out markedly against the dominant greens, yellow, pinks and blue of the landscape and sky. Despite these compositional connections, however, there is a discontinuity between the figures. While it appears that the girl and the sailor have stopped and turned to see the coach, they are unusually passive in their reaction. They do not hail it, and they might equally be ignoring the carriage altogether and looking at each other. The rest of the gypsy group are singularly unconcerned with anything but themselves. Similarly, the figures in the coach either talk amongst themselves, or gaze ahead at the unseen landscape, ignoring the other figures in it. The galloping horses form a rude interruption of the possible recognition between the sailor and the girl.

Any narrative structure to the image, therefore, is disrupted at the outset. We are left with a series of unrelated figures, distinct from each other both pictorially and socially - they comprise an ambiguously wide cross-section of society - who are recognizable as discrete social types, and whose problematic conjunction in the same landscape frame can only be resolved ideologically.

This recognizability arises because both figures and landscape are highly allusive to earlier pictorial forms. The gypsy group is directly reminiscent of Morland's pictures of gypsies from the 1790s, particularly *The Gypsy Encampment* (Detroit Institute of Arts) with its similar figure composition, though Louthembourg's group has more the idealized tone of Ibbetson's or Wheatley's peasant pictures. The coach party,

similarly, picks up from Ibbetson's numerous and popular coaching scenes of the late eighteenth century, while the gesturing figure amongst a bourgeois group in the landscape recalls Zoffany's landscape conversation pieces, or, more pertinently, Feary's group ranged under the tree at One Tree Hill, Greenwich (fig.44). Finally, the sailor answers to a longstanding eighteenth-century pictorial type of the loyal 'heart of oak', the emblematic icon of numerous political prints (figs.66, 67, 71). His hinted recognition of the girl is made more credible by the way it fits with the commonplace narrative of 'the sailor's return': in Wheatley's version (fig.10) the returned tar brings his sweetheart a red shawl very similar to the gypsy girl's. But gypsies are commonly portrayed in this way, and there is nothing else in the picture to substantiate the idea of the sailor's return, leaving the figures' narrative relationship once again open and unfixed.

In a similar vein, the landscape, though owing a debt to Salvator Rosa and Vernet, more readily recalls Gainsborough or Wilson, in its colouration, and in the way the coach emerges from its winding, ambiguous spatial depth, at an angle towards the spectator. The resemblance, in particular, to Wilson's Roman views suggests the longstanding comparison of London with Rome, which is strengthened by the fictional exaggeration of the hills in the distance. Lastly, focussing all is the silhouetted profile of St. Paul's, forming its ideological lynch-pin.²¹

The picture corresponds variously to the principal elements of national identity constructed in the eighteenth century, what might be termed, after Barthes, the

²¹ The way in which this picture may be placed in an iconographic tradition of picturing London as the new Rome is discussed in more detail in chapter 3, below.

'mythology' of the maritime nation.²² Fundamentally, this was based upon the triangulated interconnections between what were seen as the essential features of Britishness; that which distinguished it from, and elevated it above, all other countries, past and present: the constitution, the Anglican Church, and maritime supremacy.²³ This last, in turn, manifested three basic aspects: firstly, the God-given geographical insularity of the nation, and its ideal location at the north-western tip of Europe, to conduct transoceanic voyages with equal facility, both east and west, as well as to maintain military and commercial control over the immediately surrounding seas, particularly the English Channel; secondly, the political unification of the kingdom, constitutionally sealed with the 1707 Act of Union, but more definitively enforced with the suppression of the 1745 rebellion, in order properly to exploit this blessed national geography; and third, a natural disposition among the populace both to be mariners, but more importantly, to practice commerce. Bolingbroke's assertion, that 'like other amphibious animals we must come occasionally on shore: but the water is more properly our element', is indicative of the degree to which such a conception of the nation had become naturalized by the mid-century as part of a national self-image.²⁴

By trade the nation would be enriched, hence the building of a greater fleet to conduct yet more trade and protect the islands' shores and British commercial interests. General enrichment would extend the principle of property-ownership, and

²² Roland Barthes, 'Myth Today', in Barthes, translated by Annette Lavers, *Mythologies* (London, 1993), pp.109-59

²³ As Josiah Tucker put it, 'universal Commerce. good Government, and true Religion, are nearly, are inseparably connected' quoted in Nancy F. Koehn, *The Power of Commerce: Economy and Governance in the First British Empire* (Ithaca and London, 1994), p.74.

²⁴ Quoted in Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London, 1976), p.4.

lead to an increasing enfranchisement, particularly among the smaller merchant or middle classes, enlarging the influence of that ‘middling’ station which writers from Defoe onwards so eulogized as the most conducive to individual and national well-being.²⁵ This would, yet further, reinforce and safeguard the nation’s constitutional freedom, which uniquely allowed the representation of the ‘commons’ in Parliament, by creating a larger constituency of citizens who had a direct interest in sustaining it. Reciprocally, the apparent freedom of the individual to engage in trade or business (and thus, notionally, to raise themselves through their own industry) could only be enabled by such a liberal constitution being already in place. Finally in this ideology, constitutional freedom was seen to be largely inseparable from the religious freedom uniquely enshrined in the Church of England.²⁶ Of course, this is a grossly simplified account of a very complex ideological web, by no means universally accepted or subscribed to, and its inherent complexities and problems will be dealt with at length below.

That Britain was a commercial nation was, at least by the mid-century, simply the empirical basis for subsequent debate; and the bottom line was the belief that Britain’s natural and best interests were located with the sea. As John Entick’s analysis of British history asserted in 1757,

²⁵ On the middle class, see especially Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London, 1660-1730* (London, 1989), and Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The political representation of class in Britain, c.1780-1840* (Cambridge, 1995). This will be discussed in greater detail in chapters 3 and 4, below.

²⁶ The detailed articulation of this ideology, by numerous writers around the mid-century, and its being put into practical economic effect, is discussed in Koehn, *op. cit.*, pp.16-17, 61-104.

By Navigation the whole World is connected, and the most distant Parts of it correspond with each other. And it is this Correspondence which introduces new Commodities, and propagates the most advantageous Manufactures.

Britain's present state of prosperity, and the refinement of its arts and manufactures, are thus entirely owing to commerce and the exploitation of the sea:

It is Navigation that has realized and secured us to these Advantages, which Nature has invested us with by our Situation in the Midst of the Ocean. By this Art every little Port, Inlet and Creek opens a Passage for what we want to send abroad, and an Entrance for what we would bring home. To this we owe the happy Distribution of our Trade; so that every Branch of it is, or may be managed to the utmost Advantage; as it is scarce possible for any Wind to blow, that does not carry Vessels from one Port and bring them into another: So that Navigation may be considered, as the Channel through which all our Commerce circulates. And from hence we must perceive of how great Importance it is, that it should be free and undisturbed: That whatever clogs or obstructs it, must be an universal Detriment; and that whatever promotes Navigation must be allowed to promote the general Interest of the Nation: For thereon depends our Trade; and upon our Trade depends the Value of our Houses, Lands and Produce.²⁷

²⁷ John Entick, *A New Naval History: Or, Compleat View of the British Marine* (London, 1757), i.

As Linda Colley has remarked in connection with similar statements by other contemporary writers, it 'would be easy to find hundreds, even thousands of other comments to the same effect'.²⁸

The work of writers from Addison, Defoe, Young, Thomson, Pope, or Gay, to Hume, Johnson, Adam Smith, Richard Price, to Coleridge, Wordsworth, William Lisle Bowles, or Thomas Love Peacock gave this construction of the nation overwhelmingly common currency throughout the century. The ideological relationship between these writers' works and a cultural sense of national identity was obviously neither identical nor consistently maintained, but the sense that that identity was underpinned by Britain's natural affinity with the sea remains a common axis. The general ideological thrust of Thomson's *Liberty*, for example, in which Britain is visualized as the apex of commercial, civilized states, culminating a long trail from Greece, Rome, to Florence, Venice and the Dutch Republic, is precisely that of Bowles' *The Spirit of Discovery*, though Bowles places Britain's maritime pre-eminence at the end of a Biblical teleology, instead of Thomson's classical-humanist one.²⁹

There are two further main points. The identification of the nation with the sea facilitated the naturalization of national identity, presenting it, in the form of the sea, and mediated by the subject's response in the face of its expanse, as a palpable, empirical, experiential fact. Such a discourse became of great significance during the

²⁸ Colley, *Britons*, p.60. See also Koehn, *op. cit.*, pp.68-75.

²⁹ James Thomson, *Liberty* (London, 1738), in J. Logie Robertson (ed.), *The Complete Poetical Works of James Thomson* (Oxford, 1908), pp.312-482; William Lisle Bowles, *The Spirit of Discovery; Or, The Conquest of Ocean. A Poem in Five Books, with notes, historical and illustrative. To which are added, Smaller Sea-Pieces, and Epitaphs . . . and Rubens' Landscape: A Poem, Written in London, 1803* (Bath and London, 1804).

1790s, when questions of loyalty and patriotism were most contentious, and became interleaved with the discourses of sensibility and aesthetics. There are real implications here for the manner in which the sea was represented in visual art, particularly in relation to the increasing tendency towards sublimity and naturalism in painting at that time. Despite the wealth of literature on these subjects, more needs to be done on the ideological significance of naturalism and the sublime, particularly in travel imagery, in relation to the development of a sense of cohesive national identity.³⁰ It will be one of the propositions of this dissertation that the naturalistic representation of the sea both mediated problematic issues of subjectivity and identity, and deflected their radical potential, by enforcing the ideological identification of the nation with the maritime.

Secondly, one of the alleged primary benefits of commerce, most celebratedly argued by Hume, was that it encouraged excellence in the arts. Boydell in the 1790s attributed the growth of an English school of painting directly to the rise of commerce, and commerce's effects on British printmaking.³¹ From the 1754 foundation of the significantly titled Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, the mutually-supportive function of these three cultural activities for the greater benefit of the nation at large was generally accepted and promoted. Again, this

³⁰ A welcome recent investigation into the relation of landscape aesthetics, and the elaboration of the idea of painterly 'genius', around the turn of the century, to national identity is Kay Dian Kriz, *The Idea of the English Landscape Painter: Genius as Alibi in the Early Nineteenth Century* (New Haven and London, 1997).

³¹ David Hume, 'Of Refinement in the Arts', in Eugene F. Miller (ed.), *Essays Literary, Moral and Political* (Indianapolis, 1987); John Boydell, *An Account of several Pictures Presented to the Corporation of the City of London by John Boydell Alderman of the Ward of Cheap 1793*, London, Guildhall Library, MS 198. This will be discussed in detail in chapter 4, below.

suggests an enhanced potential for the significance of the iconography of navigation, which needs to be closely investigated.

To return, then, to *The Evening Coach*, we can begin to see how the painting, through its evocation of peaceful, sunlit view of an iconic national panorama, integrates and negotiates these various discourses and cultural characteristics. The three sets of individuals, otherwise conspicuously disconnected, are homogenized as representatives of some larger 'imagined community', by reference to the luminous centrally-placed dome of St. Paul's, icon of the nation and the Church. In turn, the wider, extra-pictorial dimension and character of this 'imagined community' is indicated in two principal directions. To the right, the conjunction of St. Paul's with Greenwich and the sailor in the foreground, which form a discrete grouping within the overall composition, infer its global imperial status, emphasized by the ship under full sail heading towards the Thames estuary. Against this, the internal, domestic and rural condition of the nation is taken up in the direction of the travelling coach, with its driver pointing somewhere beyond the left frame and out of the pictorial space, into the spectator's own environs: thus notionally including the viewer as another discrete social type within the picture's collective constituency.

If the coach driver's gesture invokes a sense of the rural landscape in contrast to the commercial, maritime character of the nation, it may be read as a nostalgic form of *concordia discors*, by which the maritime nation had long been articulated: the values of trade and commercial wealth held in harmony with the civic humanist virtues invested in the land and land-ownership. A harmony of land and sea which was epitomized by the oak, the characteristic product of native soil, but which provided the raw material for the fleet: Louthembourg's painting, in this sense, might be compared

with a poem such as Young's *Ocean: An Ode* (1728), which, though much earlier, comprises such an idea of British greatness. It is again an ambiguous and uncertain vision. On the one hand, the poet locates British prosperity and glory firmly with naval power, in a naturalized and naturalizing convention:

As long as stars Guide mariners
 As Carolina's virtues please,
 Or suns invite The ravish'd sight,
 The British flag shall sweep the seas.

 Peculiar both,- Our soil's strong growth,
 And our bold natives' hardy mind!
 Sure heaven bespoke Our hearts and oak,
 To give a master to mankind.

 That noblest birth Of teeming earth,
 Of forests fair that daughter proud,
 To foreign coasts Our grandeur boasts,
 And Britain's pleasure speaks aloud:

 Now, big with war, Sends fate from far,
 If rebel realms their fate demand;
 Now sumptuous spoils Of foreign soils
 Pours in the bosom of the land.

 Hence Britain lays In scales and weighs
 the fate of kingdoms and of kings;
 And as she frowns Or smiles, on crowns

A night or day of glory springs.
 Thus Ocean swells The streams and rills,
 And to their borders lifts them high;
 Or else withdraws The mighty cause,
 And leaves their famish'd channels dry.³²

On the other hand, he stresses that the ocean with its commerce is also the site of mortal danger and corruption, 'Where all are toss'd, And most are lost, By tides of passion': 'The world's the main: How vex'd! how vain! Ambition swells, and anger foams'. True happiness, for the individual citizen, despite his membership of a nation founded on commercial and maritime empire, is found in the pastoral countryside:

In landscapes green True bliss is seen;
 With Innocence, in shades she sports:
 In wealthy towns Proud Labour frowns,
 And painted Sorrow smiles in courts.

(stanzas 55-6, 59)

The poet's final wish is to 'steal Along the vale Of humble life', and 'The sylvan chase' (stanzas 61, 66).

We might therefore see a similar dualism at play in *The Evening Coach*, comparing the driver's gesture towards the countryside beneath the setting sun, with the validictory tone of the poet's 'concluding wish': to pass his final years in simple,

³² Edward Young, *Ocean: An Ode. Concluding with a Wish*. in Edward Young, edited by James Nichols, *The Complete Works: Poetry and Prose*, 2 vols. (Hildesheim, 1968), vol. 1, pp.420-7, stanzas 48-53.

rustic ease and virtue. Yet the discontinuities between the figures suggest the fragility at the heart of such a construction of the nation, particularly in the early 1800s when the contested values of loyalty and patriotism placed certain sections of society (especially the poor and dispossessed, such as the gypsies shown here; and, in the wake of the 1797 mutinies, the lower deck) under suspicion from others.

The painting points to a further problem involved in understanding the significance of the iconography of travel and the sea in the eighteenth century. For, like the oak, the signs of the sea and ships are also (as we are repeatedly reminded in the political language of the popular media) important components of a present-day national consciousness and sense of identity. The repeated rhetorical usage of nautical metaphors in political discourse (one thinks, for example, of the Eurosceptic appeal to 'clear blue water') indicates the semiotic richness of the sea as a sign to conjure the idea of 'island Britain'. Similarly, the insistent references in political cartoons, not just to the image of the sea, but to cultural and pictorial icons of maritime imagery, such as Turner's *The Fighting Temeraire* or Madox Brown's *The Last of England*, feed upon a collective identification, at some basic level, of British history, and cultural and national development, with the voyage, and with imperial, maritime expansion: an identification, moreover, that is mediated by visual representation.

Though the gulf between eighteenth-century and present-day appreciations of the sea and travel is huge, it is essential to remain aware that certain components of national maritime mythology are common to both periods and impinge upon both the historical development of national identity and the historical procedures and methods by which such a development is analysed. Yet, within the academic disciplines of British eighteenth-century history and art history the subject of the maritime has

assumed a specialized role, by which it is regarded as of significant but subsidiary concern to the dominant demands of social and economic history, the history of government and executive political ideology, constructions of race and gender, or the dialectics of class. Art-historically, issues surrounding economics, class and gender, stimulated by the prominent influence of Marxist theory, interleaved with feminist, psychoanalytic and semiotic methods, have come to dominate the field. Against these progressive trends, and despite, for example, the current efforts being made at the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich to redefine the parameters of the subjects and to stress their interdisciplinary character, nautical and marine art history have appeared increasingly tangential and specialized. Their study, stereotypically conducted by amateur boffins, retired from the sea service and living somewhere near Teignmouth, is seen to require specialized technical knowledge and vocabularies, which implicitly detach them from the dominant field of historical discourse.

Of course, some specialized knowledge *is* required, and since the early nineteenth century naval history has developed its own discrete literature, creating its own nodal points of historical emphasis, and aligning it with British military history, as distinct from British political, social or economic history, a separation not so apparent in eighteenth-century histories.³³ A parallel development may be traced within the

³³ Consider, for example, the emphasis placed on naval policy and expansion, particularly of the early part of the Seven Years War, by Smollett in his *History of England*: Tobias Smollett, *The History of England, From the Revolution to the Death of George II*, 5 vols. (Edinburgh, 1818). For recent considerations of the integral role of naval policy in eighteenth-century government and political ideology, see the essays by Daniel Baugh and Kathleen Wilson in Stone (ed.), *op. cit.*: Kathleen Wilson, 'Empire of Virtue'; Daniel A. Baugh, 'Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce: The uses

history of art. And the subcategorization of nautical from other branches of history clearly echoes the separation of marine art within the aesthetic hierarchy.

By the early nineteenth century it was clear that marine painting formed a distinct genre partly due to its demands for specialized knowledge and, more importantly for the artist, specialized experience:

Many are the obstacles to the attainment of a proficiency in drawing Marine subjects, particularly as it is not only requisite that a person desirous of excelling in this Art should possess a knowledge of the construction of a Ship, or what is denominated “Naval Architecture” together with the proportion of masts & yards, the width depth & cut of the sails, &c; but he should likewise be acquainted with Seamanship.³⁴

There is an obvious difficulty here: the necessary acquaintance with seamanship conflicts with the acquisition of a similar expertise in draughtsmanship and painting. To be both on board ship and apprenticed to an established artist, or perhaps enrolled at Shipley’s Drawing School, simply was not possible. Of course, prospective officers at the Naval Schools received training, particularly in the art of drawing coastal profiles, and there is some evidence that artists officially employed on voyages, such as William Hodges, gave drawing lessons on board ship.³⁵ But how marine artists gained their

of ‘a grand marine empire’, pp.185-223. See also Daniel A. Baugh, ‘Great Britain’s “Blue-Water” Policy, 1689-1815’, *International History Review* 10 (1988), pp.33-58.

³⁴ Dominic Serres and John Thomas Serres, *Liber Nauticus, And Instructor in the Art of Marine Drawing* (London, 1805), preface.

³⁵ Isabel C. Steube, *The Life and Works of William Hodges* (New York, 1979), p.63

dual training is not one of my principal concerns here.³⁶ Rather, as the authors of the above passage go on to suggest, their book marks an important cultural realization about this conflict: their intention is to

convey a general & accurate idea of a Ship and its component parts, even to such as are unacquainted with these floating monuments of British power.³⁷

Here, surely, is a recognition not just of a gap in the market for drawing manuals, but of an anomaly in the field of artistic practice: that, at the height of the Napoleonic Wars, there was a real need for non-specialist artists to gain some convincing knowledge of ships and seamanship, because of the increased importance of the maritime as an artistic concern, which had doubtless been highlighted by Copley's, West's, and Louthembourg's paintings, and by the naval monuments in St. Paul's and Westminster. And clearly, the spheres of the maritime and the landed establishment stood in a complex relation to each other. The *Liber Nauticus* is an attempt to accommodate actual, identifiable divisions and oppositions between marine and land-based values, with the overarching ideological significance of the sea and navigation as subjects of national concern. As I shall go on to argue, this was also an issue in the cultural reception and promotion of William Falconer's highly popular poem *The Shipwreck*, with important implications for the wider cultural appeal of the iconography of shipwreck.³⁸

³⁶ Some of the wider social and aesthetic implications of this dualism are considered in Chapters 4 and 5.

³⁷ Serres and Serres, *op. cit.*, preface.

³⁸ See below, Chapter 8.

A study such as I attempt presents obvious methodological difficulties. Despite the impact of Marxist, feminist, or colonial and post-colonial theory upon the larger discipline, maritime history remains substantially impervious to them. Only with Marcus Rediker's book, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, written from an avowedly Marxist perspective, alongside the forays into maritime-related subjects by historians such as E.P. Thompson, John Rule, Peter Linebaugh or Cal Winslow, has maritime history begun to be (re-)integrated within the *longue-durée* comprehension of eighteenth-century Britain, complementing the reassessment of its imperial history, as both an imperial and a maritime nation.³⁹ Notwithstanding the example of Rediker and others, there has been no similar initiative in the field of art history, even though literary studies has for a considerable time been concerned with travel as a staple

³⁹ Rediker, *op. cit.*; E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (revised edn., Harmondsworth, 1968), pp.62-3, 183-4; John Rule, 'Wrecking and Coastal Plunder', in D. Hay, P. Linebaugh and E.P. Thompson (eds.), *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1975), pp.167-88; Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth, 1991), pp.371-401; Cal Winslow, 'Sussex Smugglers', in Hay, Linebaugh and Thompson (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp.119-66. The barriers between disciplines are also being increasingly challenged in non-British, post-colonial assessments of Britain's imperial past, particularly in the field of Pacific studies; largely by the intervention of cultural or imperial history into the maritime sphere, or by the appropriation of maritime subjects to cultural history or anthropology. Two important results of such endeavour are: Greg Dening, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge, 1992) and Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific* (Princeton, 1992).

ingredient in all forms of eighteenth-century writing, providing a structural matrix for dealing with any sort of human activity or experience.⁴⁰

In an academic discipline which veers methodologically between extremes of modernism and connoisseurial conservatism, the study of marine art has remained overwhelmingly in the latter camp. For example, David Cordingly's book, *Marine Painting in England, 1700-1900*, follows the pattern for analysing marine painting established at the beginning of the century, in being constructed as a series of monographical vignettes of particular artists, illustrating their best or supposedly typical works, and attempting to place them within pre-classified 'schools' deduced from apparently stable values of quality and style.⁴¹ Such an approach typically lends itself to the form of the general survey, working from the premise that the ocean's

⁴⁰ The potential list of bibliographic references for this subject would be too vast to include here. For an exhaustive list of possible relevant primary sources, see *National Maritime Museum Catalogue of the Library*. vol.1: *Voyages and Travel* (London HMSO, 1968). Fine surveys of the main primary sources are provided by Marshall and Williams, *op. cit.*, Crone and Skelton, *op. cit.*, and Edwards, *op. cit.* (see note 8, above). For other helpful analyses of travel literature as a discrete literary form, see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York, 1992); Dennis Porter, *Haunted Journeys: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing* (Princeton, 1991); Neil Rennie, *Far-Fetched Facts: The Literature of Travel and the Idea of the South Seas* (Oxford, 1995). For the role of illustration in travel accounts, see Barbara Maria Stafford, *Voyage into Substance: Art, Science, Nature and the Illustrated Travel Account, 1760-1840* (Cambridge, Mass. And London, 1984).

⁴¹ David Cordingly, *op. cit.* For prototypes of this account, see A.L. Baldry, *British Marine Painting* (London, Paris and New York, 1919); B. Lubbock, *Adventures by Sea from Art of Old Time* (London, 1925); Oliver Warner *An Introduction to British Marine Painting* (London, 1948); F. Gordon Roe, *Sea Painters of Britain*, 2 vols. (Leigh-on-Sea, 1947).

constancy of character and incommensurability have elicited an essentially constant human and aesthetic response to it, transcending differences of period or purpose.⁴² By contrast, my aim here will be to analyse how the iconography of the sea functioned discursively in eighteenth-century Britain, where its changing pictorial appearance and emphases articulated and responded to a variety of cultural and ideological contexts, beyond an immediate concern for representational verisimilitude.

Given the scope of the subject, I have been selective in choosing material to consider. I have not supplied another analysis of that maverick and problematic painting, Barry's *Commerce; Or, the Triumph of the Thames*. Its obvious relevance to my discussion must remain just that: its inflated rhetorical idiosyncrasy contrasts with the much more prevalent, conventional, naturalistic imagery of the Thames and the sea with which I am concerned, whose meanings are apparently more transparent, addressing a wider and more varied audience, and pertaining to commercial and nationalistic values in more allusive, open, and culturally-embedded ways. Other pictures which, though clearly relevant, have been extensively discussed elsewhere, such as Copley's *Watson and the Shark*, will likewise receive less attention here.

⁴² For another recent example of this, see William Gaunt, *Marine Painting: An Historical Survey* (London, 1975). Important exceptions to this have occurred in relation to non-British marine art: Roger B. Stein, *Seascape and the American Imagination* (exhibition catalogue, New York, Whitney Museum of American Art, 1975); L.O. Goedde, *Tempest and Shipwreck in Dutch and Flemish Art: Convention, Rhetoric, and Interpretation* (University Park, Pennsylvania and London, 1989). Most recently, in the field of British marine art history, James Taylor, *Marine Painting: Images of Sail, Sea and Shore* (London, 1995), has conducted important research into the place of marine painting in the commercial market for art, particularly the exhibitions of the 1760s; but the overall approach is still that of the broad chronological survey conducted monographically.

To keep the dissertation the obligatory length, I have focussed my attention on the art scene in London, to the virtual exclusion of the provincial ports and their important local artists and patrons. Once again, this reflects the sheer abundance of available material: several extra volumes would be required to consider regional comparisons and inflections in the treatment of nautical iconography. Other relevant global aspects, the role of British artists in India and the artistic production resulting from Cook's voyages, are dealt with in relation to other larger contexts. I have applied an approximate terminal date for the dissertation of 1800. The massive effusion of visual material dealing with Trafalgar and the death of Nelson, and Turner's paintings of the sea, to cite the most obvious omissions which such a cut-off date entails, would either need to be considered separately, or have already received widespread scholarly attention.

This study ends at an historical point of unresolved national crisis, before the peace of Amiens, before Trafalgar, and before the glorification of Nelson, when it still appeared that Britain could easily emerge on the losing side of the war, and when the proper patriotic response to French aggression was a highly-contested debate. Similarly, in the field of art, the refined, sublime, and heroic treatment of travel and the sea in the work of Callcott or Martin, but above all of Turner, has to be eliminated as a context for what preceded it.

The choice of the other terminal date, circa 1740, is more obvious, marking as it does the inception of a widely-publicized, contentious colonial and trade war with Spain, and the foundation of the Foundling Hospital, as well as Hogarth's portrait of Thomas Coram (fig.8). As I shall argue, these events were not unconnected, and the subsequent donation of works of art to the Hospital by the major artists of the period,

which has generally been taken as the inauguration of a British school of painting, needs to be placed in the context of wider debates concerning the relation of art to commerce and to the 'dominion of the seas'. From around 1740, therefore, can be seen the interaction of artistic practice with commercial and imperial ideals, and the development of a self-consciously British (or English) visual culture, and thus makes an appropriate starting-point for this study.

Chapter Two: charting the limits of knowledge and commercial freedom: eighteenth-century cartography

Since travel generally can be isolated as one of the dominant themes and narrative structures of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British literature; and when, in particular, maritime travel has also such a deep-seated significance for a developing mythology of national identity in terms of its supposed maritime destiny; it is to be suspected that exploratory navigation and geographical discovery, and their most explicit graphic representations, hydrography and cartography, had a far richer ideological value than is generally assumed. When placed against such a mass of associative meaning, the idea that cartography is a neutral cipher, merely “the record of man’s attempt to understand the world he lives in”. . . a seemingly objective image of the land [which] lays stress on its basis as at once mathematical and scientific measure of the earth’s surface’ becomes difficult to substantiate.¹ The history of cartography in Britain for the period covered by this thesis remains, however, unwritten, while the development of methodologies for the interpretation of maps of all kinds and from all periods has only recently been undertaken. Consequently no investigation has been conducted into the relationship of cartography to the imagery of navigation in art, and to the role of the maritime image in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British culture and the mythic construction of the maritime state.²

¹ *The World Encompassed* (exhibition catalogue, Baltimore Museum of Art, 1952), p.xi, quoted in G.N.G. Clarke, ‘Taking possession: the cartouche as cultural text in eighteenth-century American maps’, *Word & Image*, 4/2 (Spring, 1988), p.455.

² J.B. Harley, before his death in 1991, was evidently working on eighteenth-century British cartography, in relation to the continuing compilation with David Woodward of *The History of*

In this chapter I shall consider cartography, particularly universal atlases, published in Britain between the second quarter of the eighteenth century and the first quarter of the nineteenth, to establish, firstly, the background of geographical knowledge and cartographic change against which the nationalistic, literary and pictorial appraisals of travel were articulated. Secondly, by regarding maps in a certain sense as images of the world, I shall resist the traditional view of them solely as literal transcriptions of the spatial composition of the earth's surface, and consequently expose some aspects of the ideology which made the maps in question take the form they did. Thirdly, a consideration of the historical links between cartography and post-Renaissance art, in their common usage of mathematical systems for measuring and representing space, will be contextualized with other eighteenth-century historical circumstances to argue that maps and charts, far from being neutral representations of the world's terrains, were an essential aspect of colonial discourse and the pursuit of global commerce. Fourthly, I shall suggest that the particular semiotic structure of the map or chart gives it at once a flexibility and authority as a sign which, because of its

Cartography (3 vols. published to date), but none of this work has been published to my knowledge.

For the discussion of methodology, see J.B. Harley, 'Maps, knowledge, and power', in Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (eds.), *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge, 1988), pp.277-312; idem, 'Deconstructing the map', in Trevor J. Barnes and J.S. Duncan (eds.), *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (London and New York, 1992), pp.231-47; J. Pickles, 'Texts, hermeneutics and propaganda maps', in *ibid.*, pp.193-230; *Word & Image*, 4/2 (Spring, 1988). For discussions of the relationship of cartography to art in the late-medieval to early-modern periods, see Ronald Rees, 'Historical links between cartography and art', *Geological Review*, 70 (1980), pp.60-78; David Woodward (ed.), *Art and Cartography: Six Historical Essays* (Chicago, 1987).

direct reference to an idea of the material world, allows it to be constituted as an empirical truth. This is especially so when the context for the production of the chart is a voyage of scientific exploration, such as Cook's voyages, in which the emphasis of the whole venture was on empirical investigation. Such a context would in turn reinforce the cartographic meaning as that of objective accuracy. Nonetheless, finally, I shall argue that the map's propensity for polysemy allows the form to be imbued with a wide variety of cultural values and discourses, in particular, territoriality, the characterisation of land in terms of its degree of 'possessedness', and in consequence, nationality, the division and demarcation of land along territorial borders. By comparing the maps in Kitchin's *General Atlas* (1773) with some uses of maps in near-contemporary satires, I shall suggest that global cartography, with its various subtexts of mercantilism and nationality, is closely analogous to the construction of the myth of the maritime nation, by which the definition of the national identity is established through the claims to global hegemony legitimated in Britain's providential alliance with the sea.

In its most neutral guise the map has been regarded as 'a scientific report, a historical document, a research tool, and an object of art' whose purpose is 'to express graphically the relations of points and features on the earth's surface to each other . . . determined by distance and direction.'³ When considered in such a light the difference between the world map of the first half of the eighteenth century and that of the early decades of the nineteenth is remarkable. The geographical omissions or errors so numerous in the earlier maps are rectified in the later ones, to the extent that, with the

³ G.R. Crone, *Maps and their Makers: An Introduction to the History of Cartography* (4th edn. revised, London, 1968), pp.11, 13.

exception of the polar continents, by the end of the eighteenth century, 'the general outline of the continents, . . . and their precise position had been fully determined'.⁴ The difference in cartographic data was almost entirely dependent on navigation and developments in navigational charting, which is, for obvious reasons, concerned with the accurate and comprehensive depiction of coast lines, both planimetric and in profile.

An early map, such as that which claims to be *A Correct Sea Chart of the Whole World* (fig.2), in the significantly-titled *Atlas Maritimus et Commercialis*, is notable for its gaps and inaccuracies. Most of Australia is missing or incorrectly charted; large parts of North America are uncharted, and California is shown as an island; understandably perhaps, given the navigational basis of the chart, most of territorial Asia is a blank, but large stretches of the east coast of China are also missing; the western profile of South America is largely guesswork, and exemplifies the major problem which beset charting until the the establishment of an accurate means of measuring longitude, in that it is set too far to the west. Similarly, the *Atlas Maritimus et Commercialis*, influenced by the errors of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Iberian and Dutch charts of the Americas, overestimates the longitude of the west coast, to displace Juan Fernandez to a longitude of 85°W. By contrast, Arrowsmith's 1817 *A New General Atlas* (fig.3) places the island at its correct longitude of 78°50 W. Equally, the similar ignorance which 'on late seventeenth-century maps had joined Australia to New Guinea, New Zealand, Tasmania and the

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.135.

‘Southern Continent’ had been dispelled by the end of the century - thanks largely to Cook.’⁵

It is important to note, although it may appear to be stating the obvious, that the 1728 chart adheres assiduously to the mercantile imperatives of the *Atlas* as a whole. Its title proclaims the latter as *A General View of the World, so far as it relates to Trade and Navigation: Describing all the Coasts, Ports, Harbours, and Noted Rivers, according to the Latest Discoveries and most Exact Observations. Together with a Large Account of the Commerce Carried on by Sea between the several Countries of the World . . .* and the volume consists principally of written accounts of the continents and countries of the known world, describing the topography of the coasts, the ports, and then the commercial goods or business in which the area specializes. Africa, for example, is characterized solely by its economic return. The inhabitants are dismissed as ‘Barbarians’ and ‘mere Savages and Negroes’ who are implicitly unable to participate equally in either social or monetary commerce, and are therefore useless as consumers of European products, but the land is a bounty of raw materials; in particular ‘Gold, Slaves, Elephants Teeth [and] Drugs.’

By these Articles (the Quantity and Value of which is infinitely great) considering they are procur’d by the Exchange of mere Toys and Trifles scarce worth naming, the Balance of the Commerce between *Europe* and *Africa* is greatly to the Advantage of the former . . . and the Return immensely rich . . .⁶

⁵ Roy Porter, ‘The terraqueous globe’, in G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (eds.), *The Ferment of Knowledge: Studies in the Historiography of Eighteenth-Century Science* (Cambridge, 1980), p.308.

⁶ *Atlas Maritimus et Commercialis* (London, 1728), p.99.

The chart follows the same imperatives. Despite its claim to show the ‘Whole World’, in two hemispheres using Mercator’s projection, its ideological basis is entrenched by its omissions or ‘silences’.⁷ The chart traces and highlights the world as it was known through colonialism and commerce, and as such is not so much a record of global geography as of the history of global trade. America north of a latitude of approximately 50° is a blank, except for Hudson’s Bay, reflecting the commercial prosperity of the company of the same name, set up in 1670.⁸ Although the coast of China is fragmentary, trading contact not meeting with any real success until Macartney’s 1793 expedition, a great deal of attention is paid in both text and the more detailed regional maps to the East Indies, which provided the bulk of the luxury goods for consumption in Europe, including silk, spices, tea, calicoes, porcelain, lacquer ware, and gemstones, and of course corresponds to the mercantile dominance of the Dutch and English East India Companies.⁹ While the western coast of North America remains obscure and erroneous, the British and French colonies to the east, the West Indies and Central and South America, all the subjects of European colonial conquest,

⁷ The term is J.B. Harley’s, by which it is asserted that ‘maps - just as much as examples of literature or the spoken word - exert a social influence through their omissions as much as by the features they depict and emphasise’: Harley, ‘Maps, knowledge and power’, p.290.

⁸ For the rise of mercantile companies within the context of the history of European colonial expansion and dominion, see J.H. Parry, *Trade and Dominion: The European Overseas Empires in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1971).

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.87-102; *Atlas Maritimus et Commercialis*, p.100; P.J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (London, 1982), pp.8, 74-87, 178-80. For the history of the East India Company, see Philip Lawson, *The East*

are shown with cartographic surety and detail. The text confirms the chart. America is both 'fitted by Nature for Commerce, it affords the best Product for Trade, and the best Harbours for Shipping, of any other Part of the World', but is also 'the Property of Europe': 'America is a chain'd Slave to Europe.'¹⁰

The chart therefore, and the volume in which it features, may legitimately be seen as a rationalized equivalent to the ideologies of global commerce and maritime supremacy being contemporaneously propounded by Pope, Thomson and others. As the product of the Royal Society, principally the work of Halley, and dedicated to the Board of Admiralty, who were all, by virtue of their position, Members of Parliament, and 'were thus responsible to Parliament as well as to the sovereign for all aspects of naval command and administration', the Atlas was an openly public and political document.¹¹ Its collective identity places it at the highest level as an official statement, not only of the extent of geographical knowledge, navigation and commerce, but also of a political will to pursue global trade and colonization. Of course, the chart is bound more or less to reflect the processes of colonialism and commercial navigation, since that is primarily how the world was becoming known. It is not, however, simply

India Company: A History (London, 1994); L.S. Sutherland, *The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics* (Oxford, 1952).

¹⁰ *Atlas Maritimus et Commercialis*, pp. 277, 299.

¹¹ For the poetic construction of the commercial state by Pope and Thomson, see chapters 3 and 4; Peter Kemp (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea* (4th edn, Oxford, 1992), p.499 (quote).

reflective, but expressive of a socio-political situation, presenting ideological content as cartographical fact.¹² While Thomson contemporarily urged the sons of Britannia to

ride sublimely round the World,
 Make every Vessel stoop, make every State
 At once their Welfare and their Duty know

the *Atlas Maritimus et Commercialis* provided a model for putting such sentiments into effect.¹³

Cartographic knowledge gained over the subsequent eighty or so years after the publication of the *Atlas* was not solely, or even principally derived from voyages of trade. The Royal Society was set up in 1660 with the supposedly disinterested purpose of extending knowledge and philosophical understanding of the world; and intending for this end

to study Nature rather than Books, and from the Observations, made of
 the Phænomena and Effects she presents, to compose such a History of
 Her, as may hereafter serve to build a Solid and Useful Philosophy upon
 . . .¹⁴

However, commercial considerations were latent in even the most elevated projects, and it should be remembered that every aspect of charting in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries had somewhere a military connection. The instructions issued by

¹² This aspect of cartography, its modes of signification, will be discussed more fully later in the chapter.

¹³ Thomson, *Britannia* (London, 1729), ll.188-90.

¹⁴ *Philosophical Transactions*, I (1665/6), p.140, quoted in Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific, 1768-1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas* (Oxford, 1960), p.8.

the Society to Cook listed a host of empirical natural data to be recorded, but in the last resort to note whatever might profit navigation and commerce.¹⁵

The increase of geographical knowledge and the corresponding development in cartography must be seen as part of the overall tendency in eighteenth-century European thought towards a rational empiricist understanding of the world.¹⁶ Improvements in mapping were an integral part of a broad-based cultural transition. They went hand-in-hand not only with Harrison's invention of the chronometer (providing a precise means of measuring longitude) and the production of the theodolite in the 1760s and 1770s, which both enabled accurate maritime surveying, but also with increasing refinements in the mechanical processes of printing and mass-publication, by which maps could contain a greater amount of material data and reach a wider audience, especially when published in popular journals and magazines.¹⁷ Correspondingly, the variety of media and the refinement of the techniques for graphic expression allowed the development of a specifically visual or pictorial language for

¹⁵ Cook's instructions are given in full in J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyages of Discovery*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1955-74). Vol. 1: *The Voyage of the Endeavour 1768-1771* (Cambridge, 1955), cclxxix-cclxxxiv; David Mackay, *In the Wake of Cook: Exploration, Science and Empire, 1780-1801* (London, 1985), p.6-9.

¹⁶ Smith, *op. cit.*, pp.1-7; idem., *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages* (New Haven and London, 1992), ch.1; Margarita Bowen, *Empiricism and Geographical Thought: from Francis Bacon to Alexander von Humboldt* (Cambridge, 1981), *passim*.

¹⁷ *Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea*, p.376; Crone, *op. cit.*, pp.134-5; William M. Ivins, *Prints and Visual Communication* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1996); D.C. Jolly, *Maps in Eighteenth-Century British Magazines*, 2 vols. (London, 1978); E.A. Reitan, 'Expanding Horizons: Maps in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1731-1754', *Imago Mundi* 37 (1985), pp.54-62; Porter, *op. cit.*, p.305.

science. Martin Rudwick contrasts late eighteenth-century geological treatises, notable for the 'scarcity and poor quality of their illustrations', with treatises of the 1830s, which show a remarkable change: 'the texts are now complemented by a wide range of maps, sections, landscapes and diagrams of other kinds. During the period in which 'geology' emerged as a self-conscious new discipline with clearly defined goals and well-established institutional forms, there was thus a comparable emergence of . . . a *visual language* for the science, which is reflected not only in a broadening range of kinds of illustration but also in a great increase in their sheer quantity.' A similar development occurred for cartography and other 'sciences', whereby each characteristically evolved 'in the course of time towards greater abstraction and formalization, and thereby became able to bear an increasing load of theoretical meaning.'¹⁸ In cartography and hydrography this is evident not only in the inclusion of detail of the character of the topography in terms of forming a system of hachuring to depict valleys and mountain ranges, and in the increasing mass of soundings on sea charts (figs.3, 4, 000), but importantly in the establishment of a consistent system of symbols to denote different features, which preceded comparable development in geology. Des Barres' *Atlantic Neptune*, compiled in the 1770s, attempted to deal with this problem of the increasing abstraction of cartographic signs and language 'by including a sheet showing the many conventional symbols used in the 158 charts

¹⁸ Martin J.S. Rudwick, 'The Emergence of a Visual Language for Geological Science 1760-1840', *History of Science*, 14 (1976), pp.150, 177-8. On the interaction between visual aesthetics and science, see Charlotte Klonk, *Science and the Perception of Nature* (New Haven and London, 1996).

forming the collection.’¹⁹ With this refinement of cartographic language, ornamental cartouches and decorative borders became increasingly effaced, especially figures symbolizing the continents, one of the most celebrated features of Dutch maps of the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries.²⁰

The charts of Cook’s voyages (figs.4, 11) almost without exception (although the exceptions are important, as I shall discuss later on) renounce decoration to the point of austerity, no doubt with the intent of avoiding any scope for confusion, and allowing the cartographic visual language to speak for itself. Abandoning rhetoric allows the chart to appear as a literal and faithful rendition of the location surveyed. The development of cartographic visual language may also be seen, then, as corresponding to an increasing emphasis in the visual arts on direct observation and plein-air painting, most evident in the work of the Sandbys, Thomas Jones and William Hodges (fig.5), whose pictures from Cook’s second voyage offered an analogue to the scientific visual language of the charts, coastal profiles and botanical drawings made by other members on board. Voyaging artists such as William Westall continued the empirical model set by John Webber or the Cleveleys into the nineteenth century, and

¹⁹ D. Howse and M. Sanderson, *The Sea Chart: An Historical Survey based on the Collections in the National Maritime Museum* (Newton Abbot, 1973), p.12. See also the sample of maps and charts offered in Peter Whitfield, *The Image of the World: 20 Centuries of World Maps* (London, 1994), pp.96-117.

²⁰ For a survey, see *Mirror of Empire, Dutch Marine Art of the Seventeenth Century* (exhibition catalogue, Minneapolis Institute of Arts; Cambridge, 1990).

the London-based group of painters around John and Cornelius Varley pursued the relation of science to art in the 'decade of English naturalism'.²¹

The growing institutionalization of the earth sciences which saw the establishment of the Hydrographic Office (1795), the Geological Society (1807), and the Royal Geographical Society, among others, was preceded by the Board of Longitude (1714), the Society of Arts' competitions for county maps (from 1756 on), and the Ordnance Survey (1795). But these, and their corresponding cartographic records, were underpinned by the same commercial imperative as the *Atlas Maritimus et Commercialis*, being linked to the increasing demand of mechanized industry for large-scale, efficient exploitation of natural resources. Equally, the refinement of precision in the drawing of sea charts, in terms particularly of soundings, currents and the marking of the degree of magnetic variation at different locations, was occasioned by commercial or military necessity.²²

²¹ Bernard Smith, 'William Hodges and English Plein-Air Painting', *Art History* 6 (1983), pp.143-52; Rüdiger Joppien and Bernard Smith, *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages. Vol.2: The Voyage of the Resolution and Adventure 1772-1775* (New Haven and London, 1985), pp.8-14; William Eisler and Bernard Smith, *Terra Australis: The Furthest Shore* (exhibition catalogue, Sydney, The Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1988). On this subject more generally, see Nicholas Alfrey and Stephen Daniels, *Mapping the Landscape, Essays on Art and Cartography* (exhibition catalogue, University Art Gallery, Castle Museum, Nottingham, 1990); Isabel C. Stuebe, *The Life and Work of William Hodges* (New York, 1979); John Gage, *A Decade of English Naturalism: 1810-1820* (exhibition catalogue, Norwich Castle Museum, 1969). It might also be noted in this context that the Varleys and many subsequent artists were fascinated by the 'scientific' aspects of painting and the use of optical instruments in their aesthetic encounter with the natural world.

²² Porter, *op. cit.*, p.297; Rudwick, *op. cit.*, pp.161, 167; Howse and Sanderson, *op. cit.*, pp.109-125.

The increasing ascendancy of scientific discourse in the eighteenth century was too complex to be accounted for by the idea of empiricism. While the discoveries brought about by global navigation prompted new disciplines and theories, the physical world that was encountered on such voyages was apprehended in terms of established European frames of reference. The colonizing culture within which empiricism was set entailed a 'political and cognitive imperialism', a correspondence 'between the physical conquest of the globe and its mental appropriation.'²³

When Locke stated therefore, apparently innocently, that the discovery of the Americas had 'enlarged the sphere of contemplation', he was in one sense providing a paradigm for eighteenth-century structures of knowledge, and methods of understanding the sensory experience of the physical world.²⁴ The metaphor combines an ideal of philosophical detachment and universalism with a European tradition: the image of the 'sphere of contemplation' evokes the recurrent iconography of western imagery, of the philosopher in his study (as well as the related types, the antiquarian and connoisseur, the alchemist, the melancholic) (figs.6, 7).²⁵ Locke's association of contemplation with the symbolic globe draws a direct analogy between contemplation and navigation. In implicitly identifying the symbolic sphere of the iconographic

²³ Porter, *op. cit.*, p.294.

²⁴ Quoted in Marshall and Williams, *op. cit.*, p.258. For a discussion of the way this Lockean sense of 'contemplation' and its focus upon America functions discursively on behalf of the practice of post-Columbian colonialism, see Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven and London, 1993), ch.3 and pp.113-18.

²⁵ Rudolf and Margaret Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn, The Character and Conduct of Artists: A Documented History from Antiquity to the French Revolution* (New York and London, 1969), pp.63-5, 102-8; Gwyn Walters, 'The Antiquary and the Map', *Word & Image*, 4/2 (1988), pp.529-44.

tradition with the actual sphere of the physical earth, contemplation and navigation become, at some level, synonymous. This is borne out in one instance by the claims of adding to the store of geographical, scientific and navigational knowledge which characterize not only the volumes describing Cook's voyages, but also the accounts of earlier voyages such as Anson's, Byron's and Carteret's.²⁶ Nevertheless, the pure and detached pursuit of scientific knowledge through navigation suggested by Locke's image was underwritten in practice by commercial interest, with all its attendant ideological imperatives of globalism, evangelism and social progress.²⁷ One way world cartography impinged upon, and in a sense circumscribed, these discourses can be illustrated through a consideration of the depiction of the globe, and globalist inferences, in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century imagery.

Hogarth's portrait of Thomas Coram (fig.8), as with Locke's citation of the 'sphere of contemplation', self-consciously draws upon the pictorial tradition (among others) of the connoisseur or virtuoso (fig.7), but ironically substitutes the learned

²⁶ Richard Walter, *A Voyage Round the World in the Years MDCCXL, I, II, III, IV. By George Anson, Esq; Commander in Chief of a Squadron of His Majesty's Ships, sent upon an Expedition to the South Seas* (London, 1911); R.E. Gallagher (ed.), *Byron's Journal of his Circumnavigation 1764-66* (Cambridge, Hakluyt Society, 1964); Helen Wallis (ed.), *Carteret's Voyage Round the World 1766-1769* 2 vols. (Cambridge, Hakluyt Society, 1965).

²⁷ The interrelationship between 'science' and commercial and military interests became closer throughout the century. The ways in which the knowledge gained on Cook's voyages was subsequently appropriated for non-scientific ends is examined by Mackay, *op. cit.* For a discussion of the ideological construction of commerce in the mid-eighteenth century, see chapters 4 and 6, below.

patrician with Coram the middle-class merchant.²⁸ The abstract philosophical overview enabled by disinterested civic and social status is therefore replaced by the knowledge acquired through commerce and trade. Consequently, the globe is not pictured where it can be visually contemplated by Coram: instead, in a visual pun, he has the world literally at his feet, suggesting a sense of globalism and active mobility complemented by the background vista of the open, navigated sea. The reflection of light from a window on the surface of the globe both emphasises the material three-dimensionality of the globe itself, and specifically illuminates the Atlantic and the east coast of America, where Coram had made his commercial career.²⁹ The important point is that Hogarth adapts the globe's associations of Baconian intellectual or empiricist investigation towards materialist and mercantile ends.

²⁸ The portrait of Coram most closely resembles Rigaud's *Samuel Bernard*, presumably known to Hogarth through Drevet's engraving, as Benedict Nicolson, following Frederick Antal, points out: Benedict Nicolson, *The Treasures of the Foundling Hospital* (Oxford, 1972), pp.8-9; Frederick Antal, 'Hogarth and his Borrowings', *Art Bulletin* (1947), pp.43-4, and idem, *Hogarth and his Place in European Art* (London, 1962), pp.16, 28-9, 45-6. As such Hogarth's portrait may be related directly to the 'civic humanist' debate concerning the civic function of art, identified most closely with Shaftesbury: see Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, edited by John M. Robertson, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (Indianapolis and New York, 1964). For civic humanism in general, see J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Tradition* (Princeton, 1975); and for its relationship to painting in particular, see John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: 'The Body of the Public'* (New Haven and London, 1986), pp.2-39; David H. Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London, 1993), pp.1-26.

²⁹ Nicolson, *op. cit.*, p.8. On Coram see Ruth K. McClure, *Coram's Children: The London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven and London, 1981), pp.16-18.

The globe remained symbolic of erudition and intellectual curiosity, and the reflected highlight perhaps also puns on the notional link between commercial and ‘scientific’ navigation, by implicating commerce with the ‘enlightenment’ of the world. Such commercial evangelism is certainly a recognisable feature of, for example, Thomson’s near-contemporary evocation of Liberty.³⁰ Alternatively, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Gillray’s *The Plumb-pudding in danger* (fig.9), of 1805, maintains this evaluation of the world as characteristically material, but forces the logic to its extreme by depicting the globe not just as thereby sensible and available to be possessed, but as literally consumable. Hogarth’s association of the globe with an ideology of benign, progressive and liberating trade has become monstrous. The ever-present military facet of global navigation, only inferred in Hogarth’s image, despite its completion at the outset of a major and highly publicized war with Spain, governs the whole argument of Gillray’s. Produced against a background of war on an unprecedented scale, which was global in the extent of its influence, Gillray’s image rejects the earlier optimistic view of the world as a limitless source of material resources to be opened up for use in the general progress of human society, and suggests that this must have limits, and that globalism may be enslaving rather than liberating. The cartographic image here is used to denote the defining limits of the world, and the ‘sphere of contemplation’ has become the sphere of consumption.

The print indicates that a popular visual currency developed of picturing, or imagining, the world not necessarily in terms of a religious or symbolic guise, but of its

³⁰ James Thomson, *Liberty* (1738), in J. Logie Robertson (ed.), *The Complete Poems of James Thomson* (Oxford, 1908).

cartographic appearance.³¹ This is to be expected given the rise in popularity of printed maps in popular media, and the sale of maps. Many of the most productive and influential printsellers, such as Thomas (and subsequently Carrington) Bowles, Thomas Kitchin, Edwards and Darly, had shops offering both prints and maps.³² In a practical sense, the conflation of cartography with popular imagery points to a developing popular understanding of cartographic visual language, and its integration with traditional pictorial modes (figs.12, 13, 18). Most important, it suggests that the relation of cartographic to other imagery, such as landscape painting and high art, was closer than a modern sensibility might allow, and that a classification of such imagery according to genre cannot be easily achieved.³³ One demonstration of the imagery of

³¹ There are many other prints throughout the period which depict the globe cartographically: for example, *The REVOLVING STATE Or the Reward for NEGLIGENCE* (1756; BMC3431); Gillray, *Gloria Mundi, Or - the Devil Addressing the Sun* (1782; BMC6012); *The Political Ballon; Or, the Fall of East India Stock* (1783; BMC6275); James Hook, *The Modern Atlas. Or Man of the World* (1787; BMC7210); William Dent, *A Tip-Top Living, Or the Writing Captin Supported by the World* (1787; BMC7213); *John Bull* (c.1781-2?; BMC8239); Richard Newton, *An Atlas! Or the Strong Man!!!* (1798; BMC9159); Gillray, *Fighting for the Dunghill: - Or - Jack Tar Settling Buonaparte* (1798; BMC9268). For details of these, see F.G. Stephens and M.D. George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum*, 11 vols. (London, British Museum, 1870-1954).

³² H.M. Atherton, *Political Prints in the Age of Hogarth: A Study of the Ideographic Representation of Politics* (Oxford, 1974), pp.5, 8, 18-21.

³³ I shall return to Gillray's use of maps later in the chapter. It is worth noting here that a similar artistic preoccupation with the combined representational modes of mapping and pictorial description is a feature of Dutch 17th-century art, from a society and period which displays many important historical similarities to eighteenth-century Britain, especially in its commercial and maritime

globalist discourse is its inference through exotic features, if in non-exotic pictures: the depiction of West Indians, South Sea islanders, and other non-Europeans (figs.5, 14, 16); topographical work executed in colonial territories or on exploratory voyages (figs.5, 14, 105); or the inclusion of exotic plants or wildlife, such as tropical parrots, in domestic scenes.³⁴

As cartography and academic art are also joined at a fundamental level by the structural similarity of their representational systems, which are also grounded in a globalizing principle, we must consider some of the theoretical aspects of cartography as a representational system. While the notional links between cartography and art have long been recognized, there have been few formal attempts to propose a theoretical or historical critique.³⁵ Rees, like Edgerton and Alpers, has attempted to trace a substantive structural connection between cartography and linear perspective, as parallel Renaissance developments for organizing and representing space. A connection is proposed between the simultaneous advances in navigation and geographical discovery and the adoption of a Ptolemaic mathematical system of

emphases. See Svetlana Alpers, 'The Mapping Impulse in Dutch Art', in Woodward (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp.51-96, and more generally, idem, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1983).

³⁴ One thinks, for example, of Wright of Derby's *Experiment on a Bird in the Air-Pump* (1768, London, National Gallery), Reynolds' *Lady Cockburn and her Three Eldest Sons* (1774, London, National Gallery) and Wheatley's *The Sailor's Return* (Bournemouth, City Art Gallery, fig.10)

³⁵ Rees, Woodward and Harley are notable exceptions: Rees, *op. cit.*; Woodward, *op. cit.*, passim, and especially the essays by Alpers, 'The Mapping Impulse in Dutch Art', and Samuel Y. Edgerton, Jr., 'From Mental Matrix to *Mappamundi* to Christian Empire: The Heritage of Ptolemaic Cartography in the Renaissance'. See n.3, above, for other references.

mapping the earth using a grid of parallels and meridians, a system very similar to that proposed by Alberti for calculating linear perspective. This connection is further enhanced by Ptolemy's *Geography*, by his method of calculating the position of points on the grid using a centrally-fixed viewpoint.³⁶

The implications of optical centrality in both systems were elaborated by Leonardo:

The eye carries man to different parts of the world. It is the prince of mathematics . . . It has created architecture, and perspective, and divine painting . . . It has discovered navigation.³⁷

Consequently, the extensive use of the bird's-eye view in topographical landscape from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries has been argued to represent a conflation of the perspectival and cartographic systems, showing features 'partly in elevation and partly in plan'.³⁸

In later charts and coastal views, such as Cook's, this aesthetic synthesis became more formally rationalized, placing the two views, planimetric and in profile, separately on the same sheet (fig.4). In early eighteenth-century Britain, of course, the bird's-eye view was widely used to depict private estates, a conjunction which

³⁶ 'the reader was asked to look at a central point . . . that was both the center of the viewer's visual field and the center of the ecumene . . . We are able therefore to know the exact position of any particular place; and the position of the various countries, how they are integrated in regard to one another, how situated in regards to the whole inhabited world': Ptolemy, *Geography*, Book 1, chapter 19, quoted in Rees, *op. cit.*, p.67.

³⁷ Cited in Edgerton, *op. cit.*, p.15.

³⁸ Rees, *op. cit.*, p.69.

illustrates the obvious and important point that both perspective and cartography are systems not only for depicting spatial relations between objects or places, but for measuring space and the earth's surface mathematically as accurately as possible by volume or area; that is, by quantity.³⁹ The continuing marginalization of rhetorical, symbolic and allegorical features in eighteenth-century maps, and the progressive abstraction of the informational content in the form of systematic notation and symbols, serves to give a comparable mathematical, and therefore quantitative, emphasis as linear perspective. Mapping is thus a representation of the world preconditioned by its subjection to territoriality and property-ownership: the rise of a 'scientific' and mathematically purer form of cartographic language coincided with the development of the earth sciences and their attendant materialism, with the unprecedented scale of European, especially British, occupation of non-European lands through colonization, and with the upsurge in domestic Britain of Acts of enclosure.⁴⁰

This resolves the paradox noted above with regard to the *Atlas Maritimus et Commercialis* between the ideal, empirical and disinterested idiom in which cartography is couched and the mercantilist uses to which its products were put:

³⁹ The quantitative principle of perspective as a system of measurement has been proposed for the Renaissance by Baxandall, who, interestingly for my argument here, relates it to a rapidly developing cultural awareness of the demands of international trade, and the consequent need for mathematically precise methods of measuring volumes of goods: Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (2nd edn., Oxford, 1988), pp.101-2.

⁴⁰ Parry, *op. cit.*, especially pp.296-315. On enclosure see J.M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosures and Social Change in England, 1700-1820* (Cambridge, 1993). And on the connections between enclosure and landscape art and aesthetics, see Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (Berkeley and London, 1986), pp.1-2, 9-11, 73-83.

underlining its claims to be an objective relation of the geographical configuration of the world, the representative language of cartography is above all a more precise expression of the world in its material substance:

Maps as an impersonal type of knowledge tend to 'desocialise' the territory they represent. They foster the notion of a socially empty space. The abstract quality of the map . . . lessens the burden of conscience about people in the landscape.⁴¹

In other words, cartography emphasizes the fixity of land as a value in itself. Therefore, while colonialism and navigation could not have taken place without cartography and its refinements, maps and charts were not simply passive tools to implement a preconceived ideology. They actively expressed and helped to create it. One way of demonstrating the ideological content of maps is by analysing their use of distortion.⁴²

As with perspective, cartography relies upon a basic distortion of its subject for the system to operate. Representation of the visual world by perspective generally disguises the conventional nature of the system, which is predicated on the viewer's prior acceptance or oversight of the distortion unavoidably effected by the figuring of three-dimensional space on a flat surface. A similar distortion operates for the same reason in any two-dimensional map, implying that cartography also is a system of

⁴¹ Harley, 'Maps, knowledge, and power', p.303.

⁴² There is an ever-growing amount of material on this aspect of maps: see Pickles, *op. cit.*, with references; Stephen Bann, 'The truth in mapping', *Word & Image*, 4/2 (Spring, 1988), pp.498-509. A summation of recent approaches to these problems is provided by Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Cambridge, Mass. and Oxford, 1994), pp.1-205.

convention. In the eighteenth century, as now, by far the most widely-used large-scale map projection was Mercator's, particularly because it had a great advantage for navigation. This, however, was inseparable from the distortion which the projection imposed upon the world.

The distortional basis of cartography is perhaps more complex than that of perspective. With perspective the distortion of the object represented by it is confined within the overall rhetoric of the pictorial structure; there is no perspectival distortion of the physical object viewed outside the system. Cartography blurs this distinction between object and representation because what is represented in this manner cannot be seen outside its representation. Because geographical knowledge is defined within the terms of the map, while, inversely, the means of acquiring such knowledge is through the map, there is a continual interchange between the object and the image (the land and the map), between the signified and the signifier, in which they are endlessly inter-referential.⁴³ Mercator's projection illustrates how, in this way, maps may be 'authoritarian images'.⁴⁴

Mercator's projection, by distorting the configuration of the earth's surface increasingly in proportion to the height of latitude, allows a rhumb line to be drawn on a two-dimensional chart as a straight line instead of an arc, and thus a course to be plotted between two locations using a single compass bearing.⁴⁵ While the most direct

⁴³ Harley, 'Deconstructing the map', p.247; William Boelhower, 'Inventing America: a model of cartographic semiosis', *Word & Image* 4/2 (1988), p.479.

⁴⁴ Harley, 'Deconstructing the map', p.247.

⁴⁵ *The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea*, pp.700-1, gives the following definition of a rhumb line:

route between any two such points will be the line of the great circle between them, the rhumb line, being the line of constant compass bearing, is navigationally the most convenient route to follow. Therefore, when sailing 'on a rhumb' what is being navigated, effectively, is not the sea but the chart. The most direct geographical route is rejected in favour of the most mathematically logical cartographic one, which is necessarily predicated upon a distortion of the geography to which it refers. Consequently, by an inversion of signifier and signified, the earth's surface may be seen

a line on the earth's surface which intersects all meridians at the same angle . . .

The radial lines on a compass card are also called rhumbs, and the term 'sailing on a rhumb' was often used in the 16th to 19th centuries to indicate a particular compass heading. The extension of the radial line through the fore-and-aft line of ship ahead clearly will cut all the meridians the ship crosses at a constant angle, this being equivalent to the course angle. It is easy to see, therefore, that a line of constant course is a rhumb line. On a plane surface, this would be the shortest distance between two points, and over relatively short distances where the curvature of the earth is negligible, it can be considered so, and a rhumb is thus used for plotting a ship's course. Over longer distances at sea, and especially ocean passages, great circle sailing provides a more direct course, but even so, the inconvenience of having to change course continually when following the path of a great circle between the points of departure and destination of a voyage makes rhumb-line sailing the popular method of navigation. In other words, navigators are content in general to sacrifice distance for convenience.

Because of the importance of rhumb-line sailing, the principal requirement of a navigator in relation to his chart is that it should be constructed on a projection on which rhumb lines are projected as straight lines. Such a chart is the Mercator chart . . .

to be deferential to, and even a distortion of the map, being reconceived to conform to its cartographic representation.

This may appear to contradict the earlier assertion that maps contain an essentially quantitative base as a means of measuring the earth's geography, and are thus relatable to prevailing attitudes of territoriality and land-ownership. The apparent advantage of Mercator's projection is that it transcends such materialism. Different types of map served different functions. The charts drawn up from Cook's voyages make use of several different projections according to the chart's particular purposes. Often different modes of representation are juxtaposed on the same page, or even elided into each other, such as the chart and views of Pickersgill Bay (fig.4), which combine the prosaic mode of the chart and coastal profile with more picturesque depictions of the sea and shore. Indeed, one of the few examples in Cook's charts of the use of allegorical figures as part of the expressive content of the chart provides a synthesis of the arguments I have presented so far, particularly as it is the joint product of the work of at least three people, from a voyage of discovery. Not only are two cartographic projections elided together, but these are linked through the allegorical figures to abstract social and civic ideals. Furthermore, through the inclusion of a quotation from Virgil's *Aeneid*, the goals identified with cartography are linked to a tradition of classical and literary erudition, while the whole composition once again gives primacy to the idea of globalism. The elaboration of a working chart of the southern hemisphere made during the second voyage, with the addition of Atlas-type

personifications by William Hodges adapts it more to the role of an emblematic headpiece (figs.11, 12).⁴⁶ Its creation is described by Forster:

to the Map representing the Southern Hemisphere & our Ships track on it, *Mr Hodges* added the figures of *Labour & Science* supporting the Globe, to which I added the motto . . .⁴⁷

Although the addition of the figures of Labour and Science, with their obvious iconographic reference to the classical myth of Atlas (and perhaps Hercules), introduce the idea of globalism, picked up by Forster, what the figures are shown as carrying is not the world symbolized, but the world as mapped, as navigated and charted in its material form, placing this image in the same line as those by Hogarth and Gillray, as evincing a similar pictorial interest in the meaning of the globe. Also worth comparison, particularly with the portrait of Thomas Coram, is Nathaniel Dance's portrait of Cook (fig.13), where the globe is substituted by the self-same chart of the southern hemisphere which constitutes the 'globe' for Hodges' figures of Labour and Science.

The chart, however, does not consist solely of the circular southern hemisphere. This, in zenithal equidistant projection, is linked to a band depicting the earth from the equator to 30° S in *Plate Carrée* projection. While it may be going too far to notice a subliminal compositional resemblance in this arrangement to the medieval T-O type map, which through its structure invested the pattern of the world

⁴⁶ Andrew David (ed.), *The Charts and Coastal Views of Captain Cook's Voyages*, vol. 2: *The Voyage of the Resolution and Adventure 1772-1775* (Hakluyt Society, Extra Series No. 44, in association with The Australian Academy of the Humanities, London, 1992), catalogue nos. 2.41, 2.42.

⁴⁷ Georg Forster, *Journal*, p.723, 8 February 1775, quoted in *ibid*, p.47.

with a divine centre and cosmic symmetry, it interacts with the two figures significantly. While the figure of Labour, an Atlas figure whose physiognomy resembles Hodges' portrait depictions of natives (fig.14), is bent by the weight of the globe, Science, a classically-proportioned figure, gracefully and athletically posed, carries it with ease, embracing it around the same equatorial band as is shown in the upper chart. The quotation supplied by Forster emphasizes the point. 'Ipsa subido humeris; nec me labor iste gravabit' ('I will carry you upon my shoulders; for me this task is no burden') describes the passage in the Aeneid where Aeneas carries his father Anchises out of Troy. The pursuit of science through the practice of navigation and cartography is imaginally framed within a rhetoric of heroic history and natural familial ties. Forster explained his use of the line in his *Journal*: 'For though Labour supports the Globe with the utmost Exertion of Power, Science seems to do it with great Ease.'⁴⁸ In other words, the progress of technology, industry and modernization, including cartography and print-making, goes hand in hand with the fulfillment of an implicitly commercial globalism, impossible through traditionally organized labour. There are close parallels with the vision of commercial globalism and liberty at the heart of the mythology of the maritime nation, suggesting how cartography in this period was hardly ideologically neutral, but served the requirements of the commercial maritime state.

It is very suggestive for understanding the colonial imperative of the landscape art of Hodges or the Daniells, in India, and their relationship with the contemporary military cartographic survey of the British territories there; or else the relationship of the landscapes of Hearne, Robertson or Brunias in the West Indies to the wholesale

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

rationalization of the land towards commercial ends through the plantation system.⁴⁹ While the complex of references and discourses discernible in such work may be placed within a matrix of cultural values underwritten by a globalist ideology implicit in cartography, they are distinctly rooted in British or Continental ideas. Equally, contemporary maps display the same representational pluralism, and also show the same centripetal focussing of global references upon the domestic centre of Britain. A brief examination of Kitchin's *General Atlas* of 1773 demonstrates this.

The single volume *A General Atlas, Describing the Whole Universe* claims to contain *The most approved Maps extant; Corrected with the utmost Care, and augmented from the latest Discoveries*.⁵⁰ The 'Universe' is addressed by Samuel Dunn's opening encyclopaedic map of the world in two hemispheres (fig.15).

⁴⁹ The aesthetic of the West Indian landscape will be considered briefly in chapter 8, below. Although the subject of British art and India has been covered extensively, much work still remains to be done concerning the role of visual culture, including maps, in the ideological creation of colonial India. But this is beyond the scope of the present dissertation. For British art and India, see Mildred Archer and Ronald Lightbown, *India Observed: India as Viewed by British Artists, 1760-1860* (London, 1982); Mildred Archer, *Early Views of India: The Picturesque Journeys of Thomas and William Daniell* (London, 1980); C.A. Bayly (ed.), *The Raj: India and the British, 1600-1947* (exhibition catalogue, London, National Portrait Gallery, 1990); T.R. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj* (London, 1989). For a suggestive discussion on the inter-related activities of landscape painting and surveying in early nineteenth-century India, see Mildred Archer, *Company Drawings in the India Office Library* (London, H.M.S.O., 1972), Introduction.

⁵⁰ Thomas Kitchin, Snr., *A General Atlas, Describing the Whole Universe. Being a Compleat and New Collection of The most approved Maps extant; Corrected with the utmost Care, and augmented from the latest Discoveries: The whole being an Improvement of the Maps of D'Anville and Robert. Engraved in the best Manner on Sixty-Two Copper Plates.* (London, 1773).

Imposingly titled *SCIENTIA TERRARUM ET COELORUM*, it is a complex symmetrical arrangement of circles and rectangles, recalling Renaissance cosmographies, containing not just the map of the world but, as the title suggests, a host of astronomical, navigational, oceanographic and cartographic information, including tables of the dimensions of the solar system and of the place of the sun in the ecliptic declination, a list of geographical definitions, and an explanation of the cause of the tides. It sets up the *Atlas* immediately as an objective, rationalist and comprehensive account of natural science, disguising the bias of the other maps in the volume. Twenty of the thirty-four remaining maps are devoted to Britain, Europe and Russia, the rest divided among Asia, the East Indies, Africa, West Indies, the St. Lawrence river, the Mississippi, and South America. Like the *Atlas Maritimus et Commercialis* it is a record of the contemporary state of commercial colonialism rather than an empirical relation of the world's geography.

Linking all the maps of the *General Atlas* (aside from their being in the same volume), is their uniform hand-tinting in various colours to show national and territorial boundaries. In Dunn's large-scale map the uniformity of line covers at least half a degree of latitude or longitude, while in Rocque's more detailed map of England and Wales, the borders denoted are those of the smaller county divisions. The result is that the globe is entirely defined in a web of lines denoting a general principle of nationhood and territoriality. This is of clear relevance to the idea of cartography as a discourse of globalism imbued with a principle of land-ownership. In the maps of Europe these borders appear naturalized, almost as intrinsic to the land itself. But their ideological basis becomes very apparent in a map of a territory which is only partly explored and recorded, such as Africa (fig.16). In the unknown interior the notional

borders are left incomplete. With border lines petering out towards the interior, the contrast of the hand-drawn colour layered over the black-and-white, seeming 'objectivity' of the mechanically-produced map becomes a paradigm of the superimposition of the colonial structures and ideologies of nationality and commerce on the continent of Africa.

One function of cartography is, in its territorial bias, to define and naturalize the sense of 'nation'. And it is surely notable that the rise of European cartography occurred in the sixteenth century at the same time as a concern with national boundaries and the extent and nature of the state, and in eighteenth-century Britain at the same time as an identifiable cultural concern with national identity.⁵¹ In the *General Atlas* this concern is manifested in the contrast between the tentatively defined 'nations' of Africa and the detailed territorial definition of Britain, or rather England and Wales, in John Rocque's map, showing all the cities, boroughs, and market towns and villages (fig.17). Its nationalistic significance is unmistakably displayed in the accompanying title cartouche, of Britannia seated beneath an oak holding the staff and cap of liberty and the olive branch of peace, surrounded by deities, and in the background a cannon, anchor, and ship unfurling its sails. Britain is presented in both its actual cartographic and its allegorical guise as a maritime state, emphasized by the amount of ships depicted in the seas around the coast. The map here then no longer makes a claim solely to be a record of the geographical configuration of the earth or

⁵¹ For Europe see John Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* (London, 1993), pp.15-39, 51-66. For the development of the sense of the nation in Britain, see particularly Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740-1830* (London, 1987); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992).

part of it, but is at once a rhetorical and naturalizing statement on the identity of the nation.

It is therefore significant here that Rocque's map or one very like it formed the model for Gillray's metamorphosis of the map of the nation into the patriotic personification of George III as John Bull (fig.18). The scatological emphasis of the image disguises the complex signification of the use of the map. It depicts the figure and figurehead of the nation as the nation's geographical form, conflating a sign standing for the nation, external to its referent, with the material land mass comprising its natural configuration. By exaggerating the disposition of the map for the definition of the idea of nationhood, Gillray turns it into a rhetorical public address on a patriotic level. The synthesis of both the figural symbol and head of state with the popular typification of the ordinary Englishman, and then of these two with the map of England and Wales addresses both the larger corporate public but also the individual within it, and thus invokes the viewer's patriotic affiliations as such a figure within the nation.

The ideological centre of the globalizing discourse of cartography could hardly be more forcefully expressed. It also acts as a fitting summation of the arguments presented in this chapter, not only in offering an excellent example of the fusion of pictorial and cartographic idioms and techniques, and the correspondence between what would now be regarded as separate areas of graphic specialization; but in the suggestion it offers, through its complicated semiological and rhetorical use of the map, for a methodological approach for the rest of this dissertation. For if the map, as Gillray demonstrates, 'is always and necessarily an expression of an idea', even in its most unrheterical guise, which can consequently be analysed on an ideological basis, a similar critical approach must be applicable to other superficially prosaic and literal

images such as marine paintings.⁵² Gillray's image also serves to bring the range and variety of cartographic discourse in the period back, as it were, to its point of departure, firmly within the domestic construct of commerce, navigation and the internal view of the maritime nation, which will be the subject of the next chapter .

⁵² Pickles, *op. cit.*, p.221.

Chapter Three: Picturing the centre of empire: the Thames, Greenwich and the Pool of London

Having examined the extent of global territorial knowledge represented in maps, I shall now contract the discussion to the obverse of such expansive navigation, by focussing on the small area of the Thames which acted both materially and symbolically as its epicentre. Because of the axiomatic link between trade and navigation, the harbours and inland waterways, themselves as much an essential part of the commercial process as the ships they served, progressively became the focus of wide-ranging investigation and celebration in poetry, prose and images.¹ By far the most important of these were London and the Thames, the crux of the commercial empire. In this chapter I shall deal with the evolution of the iconography of the Thames, considering the remarkable longevity of its iconographic conventions, as well as those variations which do develop: in particular, the picturing of the Pool of London and the Thames east of London Bridge. I shall examine this in relation to the continuing debate on commerce, especially as it might be seen in connection with an ideology of modernity with which the whole of London and the metropolitan river were presented from the mid-eighteenth century onwards.

The huge, rapid and highly complex increase in British imperial expansion by sea required entrepôts which could deal practically, administratively and culturally with the concomitant volume of shipping, cargoes, passengers and crew. Space needed to be organized efficiently, both on land and water. The customs and excise

¹ See especially Andrew Hemingway, *Landscape Imagery and Urban Culture in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1992), pp.216-91.

administration of varied goods from numerous companies and nations demanded a body of trained staff with adequate resources to regulate the river traffic and cargo. It required sets of legislation dealing specifically with the river and its commerce. In the wider sense, the increase in navigation and commerce supposes an equally remarkable and imaginative receptivity on the part of the subject culture for multifarious, often completely new, commodities from around the world, and a capacity to maintain or increase the trading cycle by incorporating their consumption as part of an extended national economy. It might be added that the cycle had to operate not only at an economic level but in all areas of cultural activity.² Commerce and its effects were central issues in eighteenth-century Britain. The arguments in its favour, the relief of poverty leading to general social improvement, were countered by claims that money was inherently corrupting, inspiring moral and civic debilitation through luxury, while good taste fell under the assault of fashion.³ The entrepôt around which such debates

² Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1982), Introduction and ch.1; Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford, 1989); Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1962); H.V. Bowen, *Elites, Enterprise and the Making of the British Overseas Empire 1688-1775* (London and New York, 1996), pp.39, 48-9, 71-8.

³ Nancy F. Koehn, *The Power of Commerce: Economy and Governance in the First British Empire* (Ithaca, 1994); Gordon Vichert, 'The Theory of Conspicuous Consumption in the 18th Century' in P. Hughes and D. Willams (eds.), *The Varied Pattern: Studies in the 18th Century* (Toronto, 1971), pp.253-67. For the ways in which painting and literature mediated and were implicated in these discourses, see Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680-1768* (New Haven and London, 1988), especially pp.27-50; James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* (Oxford, 1992).

were constructed and given material form, whether in the literature of Defoe or satirical prints such as Boitard's *The Imports of Great Britain from France* (fig.38), was London and the Thames.⁴

Andrew Hemingway has pointed out that a rich and established tradition of poetic imagery focussed upon the Thames and London, where, commonly, London was classicized as Augusta and the Thames personated as a mythological river deity.⁵ One of the most insistent classicizing manifestations of the river was the story, deriving from Camden's *Britannia* (1594), of its creation in the form of the union of the Tame and the Isis, the name of the river being a corrupted elision of these two;⁶ and, while this particular etymological myth receives less credence in the eighteenth century, the association of the river with a generic idea of union remained. The deification of the Thames was maintained consistently throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century with ideas of union or fecundity shaping the metaphor. The seventeenth-century poet Francis Quarles imagined the joining of 'two little bank-divided brooks' into the single course of the Thames as the union of the soul of man with Christ. More usual, however, are the visions, in Thomson's or Pope's work, of the river as the supernatural bringer of worldly wealth and colonial commerce. At the end of the period Thomas Love Peacock's 1810 poem, *The Genius of the Thames*, self-consciously draws upon this construction of the river in an overblown pseudo-

⁴ See particularly Daniel Defoe, edited by G.D.H. Cole, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, 2 vols. (1724-6; London, 1968), vol.1, pp.173-4, 338-51; also Max Byrd, *London Transformed: Images of the City in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven and London, 1978), pp.8-43.

⁵ Hemingway, *op. cit.*, pp.217-19.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.231.

Augustan paean in which the Thames serves as the eternal agent of commerce, liberty and national identity. As such it conflates simultaneously, as I shall propose, into the figure of the river, several elements of eighteenth-century socio-economic and nationalistic theory.⁷

It is necessary first to analyse further the mythology of the Thames. Its representation in a classicized form may be linked in one line of argument with the creation of the image of London as a city reconstructed on classical principles and worthy to assume the legacy of Rome. In this account the fabric of the metropolis was held as the complementary counterpart to the social structure it hosted:

This city . . . is now what ancient Rome once was; the seat of Liberty;
the encourager of arts, and the admiration of the whole world.⁸

This is only one side of the characterization of the capital. It was equally notorious for its dissolute low life. The homogeneity implied by the comparison with Rome was frequently exposed as chimerical, the historical separation of Westminster from the City making 'one end of London . . . like a different country from the other in look and

⁷ Francis Quarles, 'My beloved is mine and I am his; He feedeth among the lillies', from *Emblemes*, book V, no. III, in Alexander B. Gosart (ed.), *The Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Francis Quarles*, 3 vols. (New York, 1967), vol. 3, p.91; James Thomson, *The Seasons* (1726) and *Liberty* (1738), in J. Logie Robertson (ed.), *The Complete Poems of James Thomson* (Oxford, 1908); Alexander Pope, *Windsor-Forest* (published 1713), in Pat Rogers (ed.), *The Oxford Authors: Alexander Pope* (Oxford and New York, 1993), pp.49-62; Thomas Love Peacock, *The Genius of the Thames: A Lyrical Poem in Two Parts* (London, 1810).

⁸ The *London Guide*, cited in John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1997), p.52. See also Malcolm Warner, *The Image of London* (exhibition catalogue, London, The Barbican, 1987), p.125.

manners.⁹ And commentators such as Shaftesbury and John Ralph disputed the Roman associations of London, arguing instead that it had little architectural order at all, but was confused and chaotic.¹⁰ Specifically, its apparent state of flux identified it, positively and negatively, with commerce. As Brewer puts it:

There was remarkable agreement that the city signified variety, instability and change, that it embodied the protean character of the commercial world.¹¹

This special character of London, expressed in its form, as well as its civic life, investing its topography with ethical and moral principles, is found in accounts of the Thames, which emphasise a remarkably consistent set of values throughout the century. Pope's identification of 'Sacred Peace' with the 'long-expected Days' of 'Thames's Glory', at the heart of his idealizing analysis of the constitution under Queen Anne in *Windsor-Forest*, where the analogy is made between national stability and the Thames landscape, is also central to Wordsworth's 1802 sonnet *Composed upon Westminster Bridge*, which frames the temporary cessation of war created by the Treaty of Amiens in the view downstream from the bridge (a view, significantly, already culturally well-established from Canaletto's and others' mid-century images of the Thames):

Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!

The river glideth at his own sweet will:

⁹ Brewer, *op. cit.*, p.51.

¹⁰ Byrd, *op. cit.*, pp.24-5.

¹¹ Brewer, *op. cit.*, p.51.

Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
 And all that mighty heart is lying still! (ll. 11-14)¹²

Thomson's *Liberty* extrapolates the mythology of the Thames into a complex poetic thesis upon the social and moral merits of commerce. The eponymous goddess travels diachronically through the poem, from Athens and Rome, via Venice, to her ultimate destination, Britain, particularly the Thames,

On whose each tide, glad with returning sails,
 Flows in the mingled harvest of mankind

(*Liberty*, V, ll. 58-9)

From this great maritime state, it is inferred, Liberty can extend her bounty throughout the world. The Thames is both the centripetal consumer of the 'mingled harvest of mankind', and the centrifugal nexus of a universal - though British - commercial hegemony:

All ocean is her own, and every land
 To whom her ruling thunder ocean bears.

(*Liberty*, V, ll. 64-5)

The goddess permits the author a vision of what the natural advantages enjoyed by Britain and its people must surely bring, provided they are combined with 'public virtue': an age when

commerce round the world

Has winged unnumbered sails and from each land

¹² William Wordsworth, *Composed upon Westminster Bridge*, in Stephen Gill (ed.), *The Oxford*

Authors: William Wordsworth (Oxford and New York, 1984), p.285.

Materials heaped that, well employed, with Rome
Might vie our grandeur, and with Greece our art.'

(*Liberty*, V, ll. 569-73)

The ideal state of civic society, which awaits Britannia at some unspecified stage, will be the result of the application of values of universalism and infinitude (which by definition must therefore be unassailable), but achieved through national economic and political policy of a pragmatic and wholly material character. The utopia envisaged is one eternal, and eternally-fructifying trade, where the worldly pursuit of commerce is transfigured into paradisiacal proportions. 'Each land', 'round the world' is touched by 'unnumbered sails', but this is contingent upon the conditions of proper political conduct - 'independent life;/ Integrity in office; and . . . a passion for the commonweal' (*Liberty*, V, ll. 121-3).¹³ Both liberty and commerce are presented as values which insist upon their impartial and universal sway. The providential formation of Britain makes it the ideal home for liberty.

The marriage posited here of the particular with the universal, the national with the global, the material with the ideal, is epitomized in the construction of the Thames as a symbol of union. The location of its source in deepest Gloucestershire and the direction of its course through the heart of the country, to begin its emergence into the open sea at the Port of London, appears as a manifestly natural demonstration of the seamless link between Britain's territorial insularity and the globalism represented by its claims to the command of the sea. Though substantially later, Peacock's *The Genius*

¹³ For an analysis of these three values as they pertain to civic humanism and to the civic function of art, see John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: 'The Body of the Public'* (New Haven and London, 1986), pp.1-63.

of the Thames endows the river with the same characteristics as Pope's or Thomson's accounts. Peacock characterizes the course of the river as that of time itself and therefore also of British history, from the essential Druidic origins of the Ancient Britons, which, it is claimed, dictate the true character of the British nation, to the present day and beyond:

Flow proudly, Thames! the emblem bright
 And witness of succeeding years!
 Flow on, in freedom's sacred light

(p.76)¹⁴

The Thames *is* British identity, and British virtue will cease only with the river:

Still shall thy power its course pursue,
 Nor sink, but with the World's decay.
 Long as the cliff that girds thy isle
 The bursting surf of ocean stems,
 Shall commerce, wealth, and plenty smile
 Along the silver-eddying Thames

(p.111)

The seamless continuity between apparently antithetical ideas, central to Thomson's account, is metonymic with the insistent, unchecked flow of the verse as it describes the topographical features which appear to rush past as the reader is transported downstream and out to sea.¹⁵ The pastoral vision of essential attributes of Englishness

¹⁴ Peacock, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.29-30:

gives way to an openly stated ideology of commercial imperialism, going from the beauty of the domestic river, according to Combe's *History of the River Thames* (1794-6) 'formed only to please', to the sublimity of its global power over the 'subject

The field, where herds unnumbered rove,
 The laurelled path, the beechen grove,
 The oak, in lonely grandeur free,
 Lord of the forest and the sea;
 The spreading plain, the cultured hill,
 The tranquil cot, the restless mill,
 The lonely hamlet, calm and still;
 The village-spire, the busy town,
 The shelving bank, the rising down,
 The fisher's boat, the peasant's home,
 The woodland seat, the regal dome,
 In quick succession rise, to charm
 The mind with virtuous feelings warm,
 Till, where thy widening current glides
 To mingle with the turbid tides,
 Thy spacious breast displays unfurled
 The ensigns of the assembled world.
 Throned in Augusta's ample port,
 Imperial commerce holds her court,
 And Britain's power sublimes:
 To her the breath of every breeze
 Conveys the wealth of subject seas,
 And tributary climes.

seas'.¹⁶ The pictorial equivalent for such a passage is surely Loutherbourog's *The Evening Coach* (fig.1), where the panoramic prospect of the Thames and the City, with its implications of global empire, is notionally linked to the internal, domestic sense of the land, through the gesture of the figure in the coach. If Peacock's poem harks back to an Augustan vision of the river and the metropolis, Loutherbourog's painting recalls the mid-century *capricci* of Antonio Joli (fig.21), which presented London as the new Rome. The Thames is therefore simultaneously the material instrument of extending British commerce through the world, and the symbolic route to the complementary extension of liberty, which is, supposedly, the preserve of the British nation alone.¹⁷

This harmony of mutual dependence between commerce and property remained central to conceptualizing the Thames in Combe's *History*. For him it was impossible to contemplate the river below London Bridge

¹⁶ [W. Combe], *An History of the River Thames*, 2 vols. (London, 1794-6), vol. 1, x.

¹⁷ Even in the more mundane accounts of the river there is usually, by inference at least, a globalist counterpart to its domestic topography. And the union of antitheses, which the river symbolises, is maintained in its topographies. The patrician villas lining its banks upstream are the counterpart and proper end of the commercial activity of the city and port. Within the geographical and conceptual borders circumscribed by the Thames exists the harmonious balance of leisure and work, contemplation and activity, property and trade, of the patrician and the mechanic, which was, in the civic humanist ideal, at the heart of the free constitution of Britannia, whose

country teems with wealth;

And Property assures it to the swain,

Pleased and unwearied in his guarded toil.

(Thomson, *The Seasons, Summer*, ll. 1453-5)

with the bustle of commerce, the hurry of trade, and metropolitan grandeur, without indulging a curious comparison with the native beauties of the stream, and the tranquil scenery of its rural progress.¹⁸

This conceit was well-established in the early eighteenth century. David Solkin shows how, in Tillemans' view of Twickenham (fig.19), the juxtaposition of the landed estates with commercial craft invites an understanding of their mutual interconnection in a harmonious and prospering relation, whereby the beauty and virtue demonstrated by the ordered estates and surrounding landscape is founded upon the industry and commerce symbolised by the Thames.¹⁹ This iconography was maintained by Danckaerts, Robert Griffier, Canaletto, Joli, Zuccarelli, Richard Wilson, Farington (in his views, aquatinted by Stadler, for Combe's *History of the River Thames*), and Turner.²⁰ They usually concentrate on the river at Twickenham and Richmond, which as Solkin suggests, took on a particularly native classicization mid-century, in the form of a pastoral nostalgia around the figure of Pope, such that Wilson places the topography within a Claudean light and composition to envisage a particularly English

¹⁸ Combe, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp.227-8.

¹⁹ David H. Solkin, *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction* (exhibition catalogue, London, Tate Gallery, 1982), p.78.

²⁰ For example: Hendrick Danckaerts, *A View of the Queen's House, Greenwich, c.1670*, London, National Maritime Museum; Robert Griffier, *Panorama of the City and South London from Montagu House*, 1748, private collection; Canaletto, *London seen through an Arch of Westminster Bridge* (fig.22); Antonio Joli, *Capriccio with a view of the Thames and St. Paul's* (fig.21); Zuccarelli, *A View of the Thames at Richmond* (fig.20); Richard Wilson, *Westminster Bridge*, 1745, Philadelphia Museum of Art; Turner, *London* (fig.48).

Arcadia.²¹ The representation of the Thames at Richmond in a Claudean format, however, is most overt in Zuccarelli's *A View of the Thames at Richmond* (fig.20), complete with framing repoussoir trees and pastoral staffage of sheep and swains. More blatant are the capricci of c1746 by Antonio Joli, in which the topographical view down river to St. Paul's is again framed, but this time through an imaginary monumental, ruined classical arcade (fig.21), where

sculpted ancient Romans stand on symbolically broken columns to the left and right, making gestures that seem to express admiration on the one side and jealousy on the other at the greatness of what, in their day, was a remote outpost of empire.²²

If, from a distance or in *capriccio* form, London could be framed as Rome, close at hand its mercantile virtues were emphasized by referring it to Venice. Canaletto's views of the river, particularly the pair from Somerset House, are directly comparable to his depictions of the Canal Grande and Sta Maria della Salute, or the view along the Riva degli Schiavone from the Piazzetta. *London seen through an arch of Westminster Bridge* (fig.22), employs a classicizing rhetoric to connote the view of London as one of magnificence.²³ Westminster Bridge then being in the process of

²¹ Solkin, *op. cit.*, pp.78-82. Another especially favoured view for this treatment of the river as the central component of a classical landscape composition was that from Greenwich Hill, where a complex of patriotic signs and buildings make up a panorama across London. I shall return to this subject later in the chapter

²² Warner, *op. cit.*, p.13.

²³ It has been argued that the compositional device of using the arch of the bridge as a frame for the view through it derives directly from Piranesi's etching for an ideal *Ponte magnifico . . .* (1743), based

construction (as we see from the timber support and hanging bucket), and in its classical stone design itself a monument to Augustan metropolitan ideals, Canaletto's using its arch to frame London reinforces the sense of the city as a zone of regeneration and of restoration of classical civic virtue. What is being cast as 'magnificent' here is the civic progress of London as it is founded on the prosperity identifiable with the Thames, despite the fact that the bridge was a patrician-inspired project, whose values were shared neither by the City of London, nor by the watermen whose trade it threatened.²⁴

In this sense the image presents a dialectic view of London as a city of modernity. The discourse of the Thames may be seen as bi-lateral, its symbolic characterization counterbalanced by its material value as provider of commercial revenue. And the media used to present this latter image of the river were not so much the individual or copied canvas painting as reproducible engravings, often to accompany written descriptions.

London, thinly illustrated in the past, had suddenly become a 'best selling subject' for artists and writers. Samuel Scott and Canaletto were making pictures of its principal features. The brothers Buck drew their fifteen feet panorama of the Thames. Boydell, Chatelain, Maurer, Wale and many other artists and engravers were turning out prints of its

on Palladio's design for the Rialto Bridge in Venice: Mark Hallett, 'Framing the Modern City: Canaletto's Images of London', in M. Liversidge and J. Farrington (eds.), *Canaletto & England* (exhibition catalogue, Birmingham Gas Hall Exhibition Gallery, 1993-4), p.48.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.47.

streets for the eager buying-public. In 1746, John Rocque produced his magnificent map of London - the most accurate that had yet been made.

Then, as if this . . . pictorial record were . . . insufficient . . . , there came the monumental histories and surveys of Strype in 1755, Maitland in 1756, and Entick in 1766 . . .²⁵

It is not only in the fabric of the city and river that the idea of civic regeneration can be discerned, but in its very popularity as a subject for very diverse images and histories, records which contribute to the classical civic ideal, as celebrating public life. Engraved diagrams showing the construction or operating functions of Westminster and Blackfriars Bridges or the pumps of London Bridge Waterworks (fig.23), can be seen as a significant aspect of the sense of modernity of a city undergoing rapid urban growth and renewal, and these engravings both presume a market, and witness the technology of the media used to create them. The majority of topographical images of London and the Thames were, significantly, mass-printed and therefore relatively cheap (Boydell's prints were sold for a shilling each).²⁶ An interest in current events, especially politics and commerce, which was both promoted and catered for by the increasing numbers of newspapers, had a tendency, at least in concept, to render society and the nation more cohesive, by making it 'easier to imagine Great Britain as a whole', and being a constant reminder that 'private lives were bounded by a wider context, that whether they liked it or not they were caught up in decisions taken by men in London, or in battles fought out on the other side of the world.'²⁷

²⁵ Hugh Phillips, *The Thames about 1750* (London, 1951), p.5.

²⁶ Solkin, *op. cit.*, p.30.

²⁷ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992), p.41.

Similarly, the historicization and visualization of London in various and differing printed texts and images implements a discourse of cohesion and unification, albeit protean. Their effect as a collection of topographically detailed and often annotated representations is to suggest, firstly, that the rapidly developing character of the capital is a subject of general importance; secondly, that lucidity and objective accuracy, since they are apparently prioritized, are the pictorial and textual expressions most important in the discourse; finally, that the city is able to be comprehended as a homogeneous entity, with legible patterns of development and growth, and with definable parameters to its identity and constituency.²⁸ The river was at the centre of this idea of metropolitan unification. In opposition to the pervasive view of London as indefinable, protean and disordered, the Thames provided a ‘representation’ of an ‘imagined relationship’ of the city to its ‘real conditions of existence’.²⁹

The visualization of London as homogeneous is most apparent in the comprehensive treatment in Rocque’s map (1746) and the panorama of the Thames, printed in five plates, each 11 x 31.5in., by the Bucks in 1749. A similar comprehensiveness characterises the 1751 aerial view by Thomas Bowles (fig.24). Here the tonal gradation of the distance and the commanding and contrived ‘public prospect’ suggest a limitless grandeur to the city. Yet within this apparent civic infinity the metropolis is tightly defined. Its limits, in actuality a contested subject, are

²⁸ For extensive examples, see Phillips, *op. cit.*

²⁹ L. Althusser, ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses’, in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London, 1971), pp.123-73.

identified with the edges of the image.³⁰ At the horizontal and visual centre stands the dome of St. Paul's. Demarcating the left-hand edge are Lambeth and the towers of Westminster Abbey; and the right-hand framing edge corresponds with the profile of the Tower of London. The buildings, in particular the church spires, are drawn with detailed precision, regularity of line and consistency of light and shade. Just as the composition notionally links Westminster, St. Paul's and the Tower across the picture surface, so the river unites them in the perspectival recession of the pictorial space, linking these three monumental symbols of patriotic Englishness in a vista of organized and industrious commerce. London Bridge creates two zones, the domestic and global spheres. Upstream, beyond the bridge, is a traffic of barges and ferries, in the process, among other things, of transporting cargo into the city from the ships anchored in tidy clusters just below the bridge, which marked the limit of their access upstream. And it is this part of the river which is given the foreground emphasis, inferring the dependence of the city, 'the Metropolis and Glory of the Kingdom', on the global and colonial commerce which it brought.³¹ Unlike Canaletto's or Joli's images, there are no ceremonial processions or royal barges to supply a commemorative content. The regular rows of ships, echoing not only the church spires but also the ordered groups of figures on the quayside indicate the organisation and rationalization of the commercial river, being ranged, on the north bank, before the Custom House and the

³⁰ This contrasts, for example, with the difficulties which Defoe encountered in attempting to define the parameters of the unwieldy and ever-growing capital: Defoe, *Tour*, vol.1, pp.316-8. On this question of the definition of London's boundaries, see also Byrd, *op. cit.*, pp.13-15, 24-5.

³¹ John Strype, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster* (1755), quoted in Phillips, *op. cit.*, p.31.

numerous quays alongside; and on the south bank, before Chamberlain's Wharf, Cox's Wharf, Battle Bridge and Pickle Herring Stairs.

Bowles' view has sophisticated literary resonances.³² However, the precise diagrammatic exposition of the controlled progress of commercial practice on the

³² One obvious one is with Thomson's canonical description of that same stretch of river:

Then commerce brought into the public walk
 The busy merchant; the big warehouse built;
 Raised the strong crane; choked up the loaded street
 With foreign plenty; and thy stream, O Thames,
 Large, gentle, deep, majestic, king of floods!
 Chose for his grand resort. On either hand,
 Like a long wintry forest, groves of masts
 Shoot up their spires; the bellying sheet between
 Possessed the breezy void; the sooty hulk
 Steered sluggish on; the splendid barge along
 Rowed regular to harmony; around,
 The boat light-skimming stretched its oary wings;
 While deep the various voice of fervent toil
 From bank to bank increased; whence, ribbed with oak
 To bear the British thunder, black, and bold,
 The roaring vessel rushed into the main.
 Then too the pillared dome magnific heaved
 Its ample roof; and luxury within
 Poured out her glittering stores. The canvas smooth,
 With glowing life protuberant, to the view
 Embodied rose; the statue seemed to breathe
 And soften into flesh beneath the touch

river, and the clearly inferred benefit for the city and the nation, makes the scene more prosaic and prescriptive, an equivalent to one of the many treatises on the function and efficient regulation of the river. One such, written in 1758 by Robert Binnell, though published anonymously, entitled *A Description of the River Thames, &c. with the City of London's Jurisdiction and Conservacy thereof Proved . . .*, presented the case for parliamentary legislation to extend the powers of the City of London to regulate commerce on the river and protect its fishery. Despite the mercantile agenda, the author still frames his argument in the established literary form of a topographical description of the river (significantly, ignoring the noble estates lining its banks, in favour of the market towns which it supplies, and on the docks below London Bridge), and opens with a rhetorical flourish:

THEY that live on the Banks of this famous *River*, can never too much admire its *Beauty*, nor sufficiently extol its *Usefulness*. For whether we consider its *Navigation*, either as to the Number of *Ships* daily arriving from, or sailing to all the known Parts of the World, with the Riches and Necessaries of Life; or the Number of smaller *Craft* of different Sorts and Sizes, that serve not only for *Pleasure*, but the *Profit* or *Conveniency* of the *neighbouring Shores*; or whether we consider the

Of forming art, imagination-flushed.

All is the gift of industry, - whate'er

Exalts, embellishes, and renders life

Delightful.

(Thomson, *The Seasons*, Autumn, ll.118-43)

infinite Number of Men, whose entire *Livelihood* depends thereupon, as well as the great *Nursery* it is for the raising of *Sailors* for the *Publick Service*; I say, when we consider all these, and the many other *Benefits*, together with that invaluable *Blessing* we have in its FISHERY, we may justly say, it far exceeds all other *Rivers* of the known World.³³

There is little of the civic humanist property-based social hierarchy predicated here. The river is the agent of navigation and profit. Its miraculous sanctity is hinted at in the ‘blessing’ of its fishery, and Binnell presents a very matter-of-fact case for organizing the traffic and fishing on the river, with an illustrated taxonomy of the fish to be found in it; finishing with a detailed and entirely commercially-oriented list of the fares and boarding quays to travel or transport a variety of goods to any part of the country. The book’s pragmatic purpose derives from no Shaftesburian sense of public duty, but rather from a sense of a public formed from the combined commercial interests of private citizens, one within what David Solkin has termed ‘commercial humanism’.³⁴ This public interest is identified, analogously to Bowles’ print, with the Pool of London:

How agreeable must it be to every true Lover of his Country, to see below *London Bridge* . . . such Numbers of Ships, from the smallest to the greatest Burden, passing and repassing every Tide, to and from this great Metropolis, to some or other Parts of all the known World! How

³³ [R. Binnell], *A Description of the River Thames, &c. with the City of London's Jurisdiction and Conservacy thereof Proved, both in Point of Right and Usage* . . . (London, 1758), vi-vii.

³⁴ David H. Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London, 1993), p.19.

infinite in its Traffick! How abounding in its Merchandize! And how immensely rich in its Produce or Returns!

The sight 'not only of Ships of War, but Ships of Merchandize, and other large Vessels, Barges and Boats' inspires 'a pleasing Reflection, that every *True Briton* must have'.³⁵

It is important to make the obvious point that Bowles' image is patriotic in the same way, for the ideology of commerce (and luxury), from being one side of a partisan bilateral argument, as between Shaftesbury and Mandeville earlier in the century, developed, from the 1750s on, into a sophisticated social philosophy in the writings of Hume and Johnson, and later Josiah Tucker, Joseph Massie, James Stueart, Arthur Young, Malachy Postlethwayt, and Adam Smith, in which its pejorative associations were counteracted by the positive social benefits of commerce, especially its alliance with patriotism and charity, as symptomatic of the ties of social sympathy produced by commerce: until, by the time of the Seven Years' War, commerce had become a subject of scholarly study, and a discrete, highly valued, 'science'.³⁶

The mercantile ideology of the mid-century was heavily loaded with the language of patriotism and liberty, extending into the creation of numerous clubs and societies such as the Laudable Association of Anti-Gallicans, or the significantly-titled Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. Its political complexities substantially informed the development of Wilkite radicalism in the

³⁵ [Binnell], *op. cit.*, pp.12-13.

³⁶ Koehn, *op. cit.*, pp.65-76; Vichert, *op. cit.*; Colley, *Britons*, pp.59-60; Joseph Massie, *A Representation concerning the Knowledge of Commerce as a National Concern Pointing out the Proper Means of Promoting Such Knowledge in This Kingdom* (London, 1760), pp.4-9.

1760s-70s.³⁷ The same admixture of patriotic and commercial values with the emergence of a potent trading middle class also provides the spur for the formation at this time of the numerous clubs and societies, which in one sense were pragmatic unions of like individuals banding together to provide greater mutual financial security and independence from trading under a system of patronage; and in another, were corporate expressions of bourgeois political ideology and patriotism, as can be discerned, for example, in the titles of the Laudable Association of Anti-Gallicans, or, in this context the highly significant Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce.³⁸ Such combinations, not just of art, manufacture and commerce, but of commerce, patriotic nationalism and the Thames, from around 1740-1760, can, I think, provide an insight into why, at precisely this time, the Thames became the subject of unprecedented numbers of representations.

The commercial emphasis is most apparent in Boydell's prints of around 1749-51 of various Thames views, in a style appropriate to their rank in the hierarchy of art. They upset the usual priority of patrician values associated with the view of Twickenham and Richmond, rendering these subjects with a precise descriptive and

³⁷ As Linda Colley puts it: 'The Wilkite radicals of the 1760s and 1770s, like the Tory radicals of the mid-eighteenth century, relied heavily on merchants, traders and shopkeepers - essentially urban elements. Consequently the emphasis of their political argument was bound to shift: "Riches, trade and commerce", trumpeted the republican newspaper *The Whisperer* in 1770, "are nowhere to be found but in the regions of freedom": Linda Colley, 'Radical patriotism in eighteenth-century England', in Raphael Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism: the Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, 3 vols. (London and New York, 1989), vol. 1, p. 172.

³⁸ Colley, *Britons*, pp.88-98; John Brewer, 'The Commercialization of Politics', in *Birth of a Consumer Society*, pp.197-262; idem, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, pp.34-50.

mechanical accuracy, in prioritizing the commercial and industrious activity on the water (fig.25). Boydell, more unusually still, pays great attention to the river below London Bridge, with unpretentious topographical views of the docks and wharves at Woolwich, Deptford and Limehouse (figs.26, 27, 28). In all, unsurprisingly, the commercial and military aspects of the river are pre-eminent. Each is characterized by sharp, precise straight lines, the compositions built up through an ordered amalgamation of verticals, horizontals and diagonals, describing the busy river traffic. They contrast thereby with the softer, undulating rhythms of foliage by which Pitt's house at Twickenham is surrounded. This imagery is entirely consistent with Binnell's almost pedantic concern with the detailed organisational efficiency of the river. The compositional echo of Dutch art, and methodical diagrammatic accuracy reinforce the idea of the commercial river as unpoetic and modern.

While Boydell's training as a land-surveyor and engraver may have imbued him with little professional connection with 'the concerns of high culture', his approach must, as Solkin continues, also reflect a growing and largely new market for images:

Boydell appears to have found the market for his British views among men very much like himself, urban tradespeople of limited means. A strongly nationalistic group, these buyers wanted to get hold of the hard facts about modern Britain . . . [His engravings'] apparent realism should not be seen as neutral, but rather as expressive of the empirically-oriented, utilitarian outlook of his particular middle-class public.³⁹

³⁹ Solkin, *Richard Wilson*, pp.30-1.

These were also, of course, precisely the people who, as John Brewer amply demonstrates, were setting up and joining the tradesmen's clubs, societies and Masonic lodges.⁴⁰ And perhaps a similar sense of confraternity and individual identity with a larger, social and politicized corporation, which in a sense symbolizes ideologies of commerce, patriotism and liberty, informs one of the more surprising aspects of Boydell's prints of the Thames: the viewer's identification with the river itself. The viewing position is not localized to a particular point on the bank, which would infer an identifiable 'interest' for the image, but is seemingly placed above the middle of the water. The viewer is thereby disaffiliated from any private (or landed) interest, and invited to identify with the generalized values incorporated in the river as a sign.

A similar viewing position governs the pictorial structure of the 1746 engraving, by Thomas Bowles after Maurer, of a view of the Tower and London Bridge, looking upstream (fig.29). Once again the vessels, relatively few and at anchor, are commercial: wide-bottomed cargo boats and fishing smacks arranged in neat groups following the line of the river, and of the perspective of the picture. This discipline tallies with Binnell's concern with the efficient and regularized maintenance of the river: laws passed in 1741 compelled every fisherman on the Thames to display his name and address on his boat for more effective enforcement of fishing law. They also had to have obtained a licence from the water-bailiff, who was simultaneously empowered to conduct random searches of any boat.⁴¹ However, like Bowles, this view is striking for the direction and extent of the vista, with the becalmed, ordered vessels placed against a very significant backdrop. From Old London Bridge on the

⁴⁰ Brewer, 'The Commercialization of Politics', *passim*.

⁴¹ [Binnell], *op. cit.*, p.50.

extreme left (itself about to be the subject of a protracted debate about its rebuilding) the eye is led to the dome of St. Paul's, then along the row of wharves and the Custom House, to the bulk of the Tower at the right edge.⁴² Placing the culturally-charged river, with its controlled and industrious vessels, before two of the most triumphant symbols of the British state, which themselves flank the quays which constituted the most important operative commercial nexus in the country, is surely not coincidental. The engraving presents a compound sign of modernity, expressive of the reflective interdependence of the discourses of patriotism and commerce. While superficially stressing the prosaic and utilitarian view of the Thames, this is by no means inconsistent, of course, with the poetic identity of the river. It echoes Thomson's assertion, that the 'pillared dome' which 'magnific heaved/ Its ample roof' and the luxury which commerce provides, is all 'the gift of industry'.

Samuel Scott's painting of *The Tower of London* of 1749-50 (fig.30) adopted a comparable viewpoint, displaying compositional similarities, for example the heavy vertical accent of the mast in the left foreground. The greater grandeur of the vessels shown, and the insertion of an official barge being saluted by the ship in the background, is perhaps more suited to the higher aspirations of a larger oil painting. Yet the emphasis remains on the Pool of London as a serene and ordered commercial environment below the sunlit contours of St. Paul's and the Tower. The popularity of this invention is witnessed by the eight copies Scott made from 1746.⁴³

⁴² Phillips, *op. cit.*, p.57.

⁴³ Richard Kingzett, 'A Catalogue of the Works of Samuel Scott', *Walpole Society* 48 (1982), pp.1-

Scott, of course, is traditionally linked art-historically with Canaletto as a painter of the metropolis, and the obvious related image is Scott's *An Arch of Westminster Bridge* of c1750-55 (figs.31, 22).⁴⁴ But Scott's image, being an oblique view of the arch, prioritizes the three-dimensional mass of the bridge itself rather than the prospect through it. He also makes labour an open, rather than an inferred part of the scene, and emphasises the less elevated cultural identity of the river in the little fishing boat and the swimmers in the foreground (which also communicates that the Thames is a site of physical sustenance and well-being). This and other subjects on the Thames were a prolific and urgent source of interest to artists and engravers at this time. Scott's careful rendering of the material of the bridge, in a composition which is contrived to maximise the sense of its substance, and in which his style is evidently more Dutch than Italian, while clearly referring to Canaletto's picture with its connotations of magnificence, presents the bridge as a monument in its own right to London's urban renewal, rather than as a cipher for the city as a manifestation of a classically-derived civic ideal.

A similar concentration on the fabric of the bridge, demonstrating perhaps a tangible over a symbolic effect of the rejuvenation of the city through commerce and industry, informs another of Scott's images, *The Building of Westminster Bridge* of 1747 (fig.32). As with Maurer's image, it does more than simply record topography.

⁴⁴ The most conspicuous recent example of this apparently unproblematic linkage between Scott and Canaletto in terms of artistic influence is the exhibition *Canaletto & England* (Birmingham, Gas Hall Exhibition Gallery, 1993-4), the basis of which was the largely unquestioned acceptance of Canaletto's primary importance in determining the iconography and style not only of Scott, but of a generation of British topographical artists: Liversidge and Farrington (eds.), *op. cit.*

Its similar depiction of the river as a cultural icon, through the progressive building of the bridge and the equally incomplete monument of Englishness, Westminster Abbey, is suggested by its retrospective imagery, the bridge shown as it must have been in 1742, while the second west tower of the Abbey was not completed until 1744.⁴⁵ Although Scott presumably referred to an earlier drawing, the idea centrality of narrative content to the painting is broadcast, I think, by the way in which it can be 'read' almost in a manner analogous to the essays on commerce, taste and other social themes contemporaneously being published in journals. In 'The Benefits of Human Society' (1753), Johnson puts forward a vision of a society made harmonious by the provision of a sort of Mandevillean luxury in combination with a prototypical division of labour and what might be termed a 'division of consumption'. London exemplifies this society in action:

But so it is, that custom, curiosity, or wantonness, supplies every art with patrons, and finds purchasers for every manufacture; the world is so adjusted that not only bread but riches may be obtained without great abilities, or arduous performances: the most unskilful hand and unenlightened mind have sufficient incitement to industry; for he that is resolutely busy can scarcely be in want. There is, indeed, no employment, however despicable, from which a man may not promise himself more than competence, when he sees thousands and myriads raised to dignity, by no other merit than that of contributing to supply their neighbours with the means of sucking smoke through a tube of clay; and others raising contributions upon those whose elegance

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.119

disdains the grossness of smoky luxury by grinding the same materials into a powder that may at once gratify and impair the smell.

Not only by these popular and modish trifles, but by a thousand unheeded and evanescent kinds of business, are the multitudes of this city preserved from idleness, and consequently from want. In the endless variety of tastes and circumstances that diversify mankind, nothing is so superfluous but that someone desires it; or so common but that someone is compelled to buy it. As nothing is useless but because it is in improper hands, what is thrown away by one is gathered up by another; and the refuse of part of mankind furnishes a subordinate class with the materials necessary to their support.⁴⁶

Johnson implies, as Iain Pears has observed, that commerce offers a society which is (theoretically, at least) meritocratic, within which the contribution of each person's industry forms a whole greater than the sum of its parts.⁴⁷

To demonstrate the thesis, Johnson makes the conventional contrast between the lot of even the most prospering North American savage, in unsocial isolation, with 'the conveniences which are enjoyed by the vagrant beggar of a civilized country' (a telling reminder that it is not only commerce which underpins the discourse of the essay, but colonialism and, of course, navigation):

⁴⁶ Samuel Johnson, 'The Benefits of Human Society', *The Adventurer*, No. 67, Tuesday, June 26, 1753, in D. Greene (ed.), *The Oxford Authors: Samuel Johnson* (Oxford, 1984), pp.261-51 (quote, p.262).

⁴⁷ Pears, *op. cit.*, p.10-15

To receive and communicate assistance constitutes the happiness of human life: man may indeed preserve his existence in solitude, but can enjoy it only in society: the greatest understanding of an individual doomed to procure food and clothing for himself will barely supply him with expedients to keep off death from day to day; but as one of a large community performing only his share of the common business, he gains leisure for intellectual pleasures, and enjoys the happiness of reason and reflection.⁴⁸

Thus the performance of each individual's share of the 'common business' cumulatively creates a common good which is, ingeniously perhaps, not commercial at all, but comprises the leisure (not given the savage, who labours perpetually for his very survival) for reflection and reason; thus supposing one of the essential prerequisites for the civic humanist ideal of virtue, which, it will be recalled, was Thomson's *sine qua non* for the maintenance of Britannia as the icon of commercial liberty. An analysis of Scott's picture will show it to have an analogous formal structure devised to communicate similar ideological concerns.

The viewer enters the illusion by following the river upstream from the bottom right corner. At the right edge is a group of lightermen (one of them 'sucking smoke through a tube of clay') and a barge laden with cargo. The principal foreground focus, however, is at the centre left, where a supply of timber has arrived at one of the many timber yards on the south bank. The stark tonal contrast and repoussoir of the crane

⁴⁸ Johnson, *op.cit.*, p.264, 265. On the conventionality of comparing the state of the 'savage' with that of the 'civilized' pauper, see Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven and London, 1993), p.150.

and its hook act as a pictorial 'hook' to catch the eye, as well as providing, in the narrow horizontal composition, a balance to the dominating structure of the sunlit Abbey, which is itself thrown into an almost equal tonal contrast by a bank of stormy, almost sublime clouds behind it. The arches of Westminster Bridge under construction unite the two halves of the image, taking the viewer by progression from the timber yard across to the Houses of Parliament and Westminster, mimicking the traversing of the river, which is enabled by the new bridge in both cases - the eye's continuous linear movement along a chain of different represented elements on the picture surface and into the pictorial space, invites an analogous thematic or narrative reading. Thus the huge raw timbers turn into the masses of the timber crane. An association is then invited between this frame and the juxtaposed wooden scaffolding supports of the stone arches of the bridge. The linkage by material may be pursued from the stone bridge to the great stone structures of Westminster. Just as the bridge when complete (and its being shown half-built significantly implies the continuousness of the industrial and commercial processes) will unite the political and constitutional centre of the nation with the commercial wharves and yards of the south (as well as with the naval centres further east at Deptford and Greenwich), so it also unites the mechanical activity of the boatmen in the foreground with the virtuous ideal of the 'commonweal' connoted by the towering Abbey beyond. Like Johnson, Scott completes a seamless shift from the particular to the general, the material to the abstract, the mechanical to the philosophical and political, from private commercial interest to publicly virtuous impartiality. As if to emphasise the pivotal role of the commercial Thames, and Binnell's equation of this with the jurisdiction of the City of London, placed

prominently in red in the centre of the image is the Ironmongers' Company barge, the Company of the Lord Mayor elected in 1741.⁴⁹

The river workers, engrossed in the task at hand, do not see the result of their labour (which, as the right-hand group shows, is not excessively intensive, and allows scope for leisure). And the structure connecting, through a variety of seemingly incompatible elements, the low labour of the timber yard with the elevated political and patriotic significance of Westminster, is tellingly similar to that by which Johnson moves from a base culture of 'popular and modish trifles' and 'a thousand unheeded and evanescent kinds of business' to the 'happiness of reason and reflection'. Just as, also, the membership of a community is, in Johnson's thesis, potentially a form of political as well as commercial participation, so it is important that in Scott's painting the construction of the bridge, the material symbol of modern life realised by commerce, affiliates the private industry of the yard to the political public of Parliament. In this analysis, the bridge may be seen as a means or symbol of enfranchisement, similar to the natural meritocracy supplied by Johnson's vision of commercial society. In *Of Refinement in the Arts* (1752), David Hume makes this connection explicit:

where luxury nourishes commerce and industry, the peasants, by a proper cultivation of the land, become rich and independent; while the tradesmen and merchants acquire a share of the property, and draw authority and consideration to that middling rank of men, who are the best and firmest base of public liberty . . . They covet equal laws, which

⁴⁹ *Canaletto & England*, p.119.

may secure their property, and preserve them from monarchical, as well as aristocratical tyranny.

The lower house is the support of our popular government; and all the world acknowledges, that it owed its chief influence and consideration to the increase of commerce, which threw such a balance of property into the hands of the Commons. How inconsistent, then, is it to blame so violently a refinement in the arts, and to represent it as the bane of liberty and public spirit!⁵⁰

The appeal to an ideal of ‘popular government’ is matched by the structure of Scott’s painting, as being directly proportionate to the effects of commerce on the independence of the middle and lower orders of society, and perhaps gives a clue to the conspicuous contrast between the bank of lowering cloud and the radiant sunlight which appears to dispel it. It was painted in 1747, just two years after the decisive repulsion of a Jacobitism popularly identified with absolutism and arbitrary power. The emergence of a shining Westminster and calm river from a storm perhaps invites an analogy with the preservation from ‘monarchical, as well as aristocratical tyranny’ brought by commerce allowing the ‘Commons’ political representation through their acquisition of property and independence (no matter how mythical such an idea of the constitution may have been in actuality).

The didactic, exemplary quality of the image which I have stressed here is supported not only by the fact that it was again one of several versions, and was paired

⁵⁰ David Hume, ‘Of Refinement in the Arts’, in Eugene F. Miller (ed.), *Essays, Literary, Moral and Political* (Indianapolis, 1987), pp.; see also D. F. Norton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hume* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 230-8.

with its pendant, *A View of Old London Bridge* (thus following the established conceit of contrasting the old with the new, the Classical with the Gothic, and emphasising Westminster Bridge and the Thames as sites of modernity); but also by other paintings by Scott and others which share similar structural and discursive concerns.⁵¹

While Scott was prolific in painting the Thames, elsewhere, its depiction as the agent of modern urban development is evident in representations of the other large-scale urbanisation programmes taking place along its banks. A frequently adopted subject was the construction of the Adelphi, which in Marlow's and Thomas Malton's views (figs.33, 34) is, like Scott's image of Westminster Bridge, shown categorically

⁵¹ Examples are Marlow's *The North End of Old London Bridge from Fresh Wharf* (c.1752, fig.3.20), one of at least three versions, showing the recently modernised bridge; *St. Paul's and Blackfriars Bridge* (c.1770-5, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven); *Blackfriars Bridge and St. Paul's Cathedral* (c.1778, Guildhall Art Gallery, London); Robert Dodd's *Shipping in the Pool of London* (c.1785?, London, National Maritime Museum); Thomas Luny's *View of the Thames and Blackfriars Bridge* (1805, priv. coll.), one of at least five versions, the earliest dated 1793; and its pendant, *The Pool of London* (1805, priv. coll.), also one of several versions, the earliest dated 1798.

Others show the Thames in a manner associated with a more patrician emphasis derived from Canaletto. William James' *St. Paul's Cathedral and the River Thames from the Terrace of Old Somerset House* (c.1750-60, London, Victoria and Albert Museum) emulates Canaletto's style, figures and composition. While Paul Sandby's two views from the gardens of Somerset House, of c.1755 (*A view from the gardens of Somerset House, looking east to the City and St. Paul's Cathedral* and *A view from the gardens of Somerset House, London, looking west to Westminster Abbey and Bridge*, priv. coll.), replicate views commonly associated with Canaletto, but which he was only one among several artists to depict, it being a highly significant site, linking in the vista once again the two poles of the constitution and the English Church. Sandby, however, places an emphasis on the navy and middling society which does not defer to Canaletto at all.

under construction. There is no attempt in either image to disguise or subordinate the progress and methods of industry, or its effects; rather the reverse. No civic or royal barges are included to attribute to the river a grandeur to match that of the building. Instead the monumental (and ultra-modern) classical purity of the Adelphi facade is contrasted with, and inferred as reliant upon, the river's industrial barges and delivery boats, and the mechanical labour of the urban poor. In the Malton this is expressed by the association of the foreground labourers (a group depicted at ease, not unlike their agricultural counterparts in the work of Wilson, Wheatley or Hearne) directly with the rough (one is tempted to use the eighteenth-century term 'brutish') masses of unhewn (thus unrefined) stone lying ready for use in the 'polite and commercial' edifice beyond.

Alongside an imagery which identified the river as a site of realization of the metropolitan ideals of the capital and the social ideals of commerce, may be set the increasingly numerous views of downstream sites such as Limehouse. J-T. Serres' *The Thames at Limehouse* (c.1790, fig.35) has another easy foreground group set against the commercial plenty signified by the receding mass of masts and sails which restrict the view. Holman and the Cleveleys painted idiosyncratic images of ships on the stocks in the yards at Blackwell and Deptford which conform to this iconography (figs.36, 37). While a sub-genre of specialized marine imagery, these views also stress the progress of shipping on the Thames and therefore that of 'commerce round the world' through the provision of its 'unnumbered sails'. They celebrate the actualization of commercial ideology both by concentrating on the prospering yard at Blackwall, used principally by the East India Company, and by the simple fact of depicting shipbuilding,

an industry which was a considerable part of the nation's largest business, the Navy.⁵² In addition it appears that at least two paintings by John Cleveley the elder are not 'true' topographical records at all. One (fig.37) has been described as 'for all its apparent objectivity . . . 'inspired by' the Thames' since it shows an unidentifiable yard which, like Scott's *The Custom House Quay* (c.1756, London, Victoria and Albert Museum), appears to be an amalgam of several different river features.⁵³ It seems reasonable then to see it as a generalized commemoration of this facet of the Thames, that is, as being industrious and productive, over and above the picture's value as a "closed" topographical record.

⁵² According to one recent authority, the capital investment of the mid-century fleet was around £2.25 million, 'whose replacement cost was approximately 4 per cent of national income': John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (London, 1989), p.34. John Entick's contemporary, but somewhat higher, estimate of the cost of the Navy is based upon his calculations of the cost of individual types of vessel, from a 100-gun warship costing, in total, £35,553, to a 20-gun sloop, at £3,710. He thereby calculates the value of the Navy, comprising 336 ships, as £3,266,786: John Entick, *A New Naval History: Or, Compleat View of the British Marine* (London, 1757), lvi-lvii.

⁵³ H. Preston, *London and the Thames* (exhibition catalogue, London, National Maritime Museum,), cat. no.30. On Scott's *Custom House Key*, see K. Sharpe and R. Kingzett, *Samuel Scott Bicentenary: Paintings, Drawings and Engravings* (exhibition catalogue, London, Guildhall Art Gallery, 1972), pp.23-4, catalogue no.39. The growing respectability of this type of imagery is indicated by prestigious works such as Richard Paton's *View of the Royal Dockyard at Deptford*, engraving, published 14 February, 1775, British Museum, Crace Collection, which was dedicated to the king, engraved by William Woollett, and consists of a similar depiction of the dockyard to Cleveley's views, but is much more accomplished, and has the important addition of several foreground figure groups by the history painter, John Mortimer.

So far I have only considered one side of the argument, the positive image based around the commercial and civic benefits afforded by the Thames as the provider of global navigation and potentially unending wealth. But not all assessments of the Thames were positive ones. If literary descriptions of London could recast it in the form of the new Rome, the obverse of this was its reincarnation through Juvenalian satire as a sink of squalor and iniquity. And it is important to note that the evocations of a classically-harmonious and ordered London by Pope and Thomson are prospective ones. They do not refer to the present state of the capital.⁵⁴ Within this abundant satirical image of the city in eighteenth-century literature, dominated by Swift, Gay's *Trivia*, Pope's *Dunciad*, and the novelistic descriptions of Fielding, Smollett or Fanny Burney, the river was identified synecdochally not as the broad sweep of the commercial Pool of London coursing its way to the open sea, but as the noxious, polluting sewer of the Fleet Ditch.⁵⁵ Yet, despite the Juvenalian vision of the city which dominates the work of Hogarth in particular, it is remarkable how little, if at all, the literary image of the Fleet Ditch informs the picturing of the river in eighteenth-century art.⁵⁶

Likewise, the benefits of commerce were disputed. Johnson's vision, where 'no employment, however despicable' will not provide someone a living, and 'nothing is so

⁵⁴ Byrd, *op. cit.*, pp.46-7, 78-9.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.54-63.

⁵⁶ On the idea of Hogarth working within a modern tradition of Juvenalian satire, see David Bindman, *Hogarth and his Times: Serious Comedy* (exhibition catalogue, London, British Museum, 1997), pp.33-40.

superfluous but that someone desires it' could easily tip over into a Mandevillean city and public, where

every Part was full of Vice,

Yet the whole mass a Paradise.⁵⁷

In Mandeville's uncompromising satirical exposition of commerce no commercial transaction, however immoral and corrupt, can be valueless to the greater general good, a sentiment echoed again by Johnson's 'You cannot spend in luxury without doing good to the poor. Nay, you do more good to them by spending it in luxury, than by giving it: for by spending it in luxury, you make them exert industry, whereas by giving it, you keep them idle.'⁵⁸ Luxury here then is of positive social benefit. And this view contrasts with an earlier understanding that the progress of commerce needed to be kept in check through the exercise of moral and financial restraint, especially against luxury, 'the spreading Contagion of which is the greatest Corrupter of the Publick Manners, and the greatest Extinguisher of *Publick Spirit*.'⁵⁹ By the middle of the century the linkage of commercial ideology with a zealous patriotism became directed against the target of France and the importation of French luxuries, and, by association, the aristocracy, on the grounds of their forming taste according to French

⁵⁷ Bernard Mandeville, edited by Phillip Harth, *The Fable of the Bees* (1714-24; Harmondsworth, 1970), p.67.

⁵⁸ George Birkbeck Hill (ed.), revised and enlarged by L.F. Powell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1934), vol.3, p.291.

⁵⁹ John Dennis, *An Essay upon Publick Spirit: being a Satyr in Prose upon the Manners and Luxury of the Times, The Chief Sources of our present Parties and Divisions* (London, 1711), quoted in Vichert, *op. cit.*, p.256.

standards, and following French fashions. A liberty dependent on commerce had to be preserved by preventing corruption from foreign luxury and the spread of luxury from within. The Anti-Gallican Society was founded on the principle that allowing 'Frenchisms to infiltrate the English language, importing French manufactured goods, polishing themselves 'into a refined insincerity' merely because it was fashionable were nothing less than cultural treason, a vicious squandering of true identity.'⁶⁰

In the light of this certain images of the Thames take on greater significance. Boitard's satirical print of *The Imports of Great Britain from France* (fig.38) combines discourses of patriotism, navigation, and commerce, but directed against the possibility of *foreign* infection. There is no sense of the *river* as corrupt and unhealthy, nor any depiction of the Fleet Ditch. The scene takes place at a place of the utmost sensitivity, at the Custom House Quay and directly below the Tower, where the point of the image is centred on the figure of the youth in the mid-foreground. Though lower-class, he has acquired the civilization and good taste (implicit in his posture derived from models of classical *grazia*) to find the smell of French cheese repellent. Punningly, it is implied that he finds equally repugnant the importation in the background figures of French fashions and lifestyle, which is happening literally under his - and every other 'True Briton's' - nose.

The problem of luxury as it pertained generally to the ideology of commerce, and the difficulty of resolving their paradoxical relation, is put in a distinctly loaded fashion, by Henry Fielding in his 1751 treatise, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers*.⁶¹ While he treats trade in general as a favourable and progressive

⁶⁰ Colley, *Britons*, p.90.

⁶¹ Luxury will be discussed in more detail below, chapter 6.

facet of society, as 'that *alma mater*, at whose plentiful breast all mankind are nourished',⁶² luxury, its inevitable consequence, cannot be prevented, but can only be treated in its symptomatic effects in the body politic:

Vices and Diseases, with like Physical Necessity, arise from certain Habits in [the Political Body as in the Natural]; and to restrain and palliate the evil Consequences, is all that lies within the Reach of Art.⁶³

He identifies the problem as the sudden enrichment of the lower orders through trade, causing them to participate in 'too frequent and expensive Diversions', and 'aspiring still to a Degree beyond that which belongs to them, and not being able by the Fruits of honest Labour to support the State which they affect, they disdain the Wages to which their Industry would intitle them; and abandoning themselves to Idleness, the more simple and poor-spirited betake themselves to a State of Starving and Beggary, while those of more Art and Courage become Thieves, Sharpers and Robbers.'⁶⁴ Fielding's friend, Hogarth, who normally eschewed maritime subjects, set one scene from *Industry and Idleness* in a boat in the middle of the Thames at Wapping (fig.39), as the 'luxurious' idle apprentice is sent either to sea or to the gallows (while the industrious apprentice is placed in the setting of the newly modernized Fishmonger's Hall).

Similarly, images of the frozen Thames such as Marlow's (fig.40), with the river a still desert between the dome of St. Paul's and the modernized London Bridge,

⁶² Henry Fielding, edited by H. E. Pagliaro, *The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*, (New York, 1963), p.60.

⁶³ Idem, edited by M.R. Zirker, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers and Related Writings*, (Oxford, 1988), p.71.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.77.

perhaps suggest not only the susceptibility of the course of commerce to providence and nature, but invite contemplation on the revolutionary cycle of empire, a cycle further naturalized by the obviously seasonal content of the image. As such it anticipates Peacock's fatalistic conflation of the demise of English liberty with the demise of the Thames, and recalls Thomson's monumental eighteenth-century meditation on the cyclical nature of empire and life, in *The Seasons*, where Winter is cast as an enslaving tyrant, extending 'all-subduing frost' (*Winter*, 1.899) across the globe: even Ocean, elsewhere the bearer of commerce and Liberty,

no longer can resist

The binding fury; but, in all its rage

Of tempest taken by the boundless frost,

Is many a fathom to the bottom chained,

And bid to roar no more - a bleak expanse . . .

(*Winter*, ll.913-7)

It is germane here that, despite the positivist triumphalism of his poem, *The Genius of the Thames*, Thomas Love Peacock readily admitted in a private letter that the Thames could just as easily have been used as the symbolic subject of a satire on the corruption, exploitation and enslavement which had accompanied the establishment of a colonial commercial empire.⁶⁵

Marlow's *Capriccio of St. Paul's Cathedral on the Grand Canal* (fig.41), a capriccio apparently unique in his oeuvre, fits this conceit. It has been plausibly suggested that it commemorates the fall to France of Venice, 'the eldest child of

⁶⁵ Thomas Love Peacock, to Edward Hookham, 6 June 1809, cited in Marilyn Butler, *Peacock Displayed: A Satirist in his Context* (London, 1979), pp.28-9.

Liberty' as well as the renowned victim of luxury.⁶⁶ The ambiguous relationship between commercial luxury and the English constitution is evident: St. Paul's, though at present bathed in midday sunlight, may soon be at the centre of the same sort of decline and enslavement as that prognosticated by Middleton, among others, half a century earlier.⁶⁷ And the Thames is openly invited for comparison with the Grand Canal.

⁶⁶ William Wordsworth, *On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic* (1797), cited in Liversidge and Farrington (eds.), *op. cit.*, p.146.

⁶⁷ In a passage which deliberately recalls the identification of London as the new Rome, Fielding drives home the point of his *Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase in Robbers* by quoting Middleton's *Life of Cicero*, written ten years earlier in 1741:

"From the Railleries of the *Romans* (says he) on the *Barbarity and Misery of our Island*, one cannot help reflecting on the surprising Fate and Revolutions of Kingdoms: how *Rome*, once the Mistress of the World, the Seat of Arts, Empire and Glory, now lies sunk in Sloth, Ignorance and Poverty; enslaved to the most cruel, as well as the most contemptible of Tyrants, *Superstition and Religious Imposture*: while this remote Country, anciently the Jest and Contempt of the Polite Romans, is become the happy Seat of Liberty, Plenty, and Letters; flourishing in all the Arts and Refinements of Civil Life; yet running perhaps the same Course, which *Rome* itself had run before it: from virtuous Industry to Wealth; from Wealth to Luxury; from Luxury to an Impatience of Discipline and Corruption of Morals; till by a total Degeneracy and Loss of Virtue, being grown ripe for Destruction, it falls a Præy at last to some hardy Oppressor, and, with the Loss of Liberty, losing every thing else, that is valuable, sinks gradually again into its original Barbarism."

The visual representation of the Thames may therefore be closely related to contemporary concerns with commercial and civic modernity, and to a lesser extent with luxury. This can be more closely analysed, within the context of the development of national identity, by examining the depiction of Greenwich. I shall conclude by considering its representation within an ideological context that attempted to align the modern empowerment of 'the trading part of the nation' with traditional principles of political society based on an ideal of public virtue.

Greenwich was itself the site both of the centre of British maritime geography and of the Naval Hospital, 'the finest Structure of its Kind in *Europe*', and of a royal palace.⁶⁸ This duality is manifest too in the social status of its occupants (the aristocracy and royalty associated with the palace and the recent entry of the lower classes represented by the veteran seamen), and in terms of the longevity of the palace versus the newness of the Hospital (completed in 1752 to a design which deliberately echoes that of St. Paul's). It is shared by pictures of the Hospital and its surroundings. The view established by numerous paintings from the seventeenth century on, was the panorama from Greenwich Hill looking towards London. The prospect of the Hospital from the river came into vogue only in the 1750s with Canaletto and others, understandably enough celebrating its completion. The convention that the view from Greenwich Hill was pictorial is witnessed by the fact that Combe's description of 1794 matches virtually any painting of that landscape, from Danckaerts and Tillemans (fig.42) to Cozens, Feary and Turner (figs.43, 44, 48):

Fielding, *Enquiry*, pp.73-4.

⁶⁸ [Binnell], *op. cit.*, p.42.

The park . . . consists of several bold swelling projections, that fall down from Blackheath towards the Thames. They are finely wooded, and from the upper parts, and particularly from the situation of the observatory, the view possesses a rare combination of magnificent objects. The eye falls down the verdant slopes to the hospital, which sits in all its pride on the level beneath them; and passing over its domes and porticoes, embraces those bold reaches of the Thames, where the fishing-boat, the yacht, and the man of war, are borne on by the tide. Beyond the river is the green flat of the Isle of Dogs, bounded by those populous villages, which may now be considered as the eastern extremities of London. To the right, the prospect presents the woods of Epping Forest, with the high grounds of Woodford and Chigwell; and to the left, a long line of masts conducts the eye to the metropolis, with the hills beyond it.⁶⁹

When he describes the view from the river, it reverses the process, looking up to the hill instead of down from it, giving ‘a picture which we have beheld with that delight and astonishment, that no verbal magic can convey to others.’⁷⁰ This view could not be verbalized in similar terms, perhaps because of its relative pictorial novelty, and because of the lack of any poetic convention with which it could be readily associated.

Viewing Greenwich as panorama demands comment. Eighteenth-century literary panoramas were often metaphors for philosophical far-sightedness, civic elevation and the ideal of public virtue; and recent scholarship has analysed how the

⁶⁹ Combe, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p.246.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.247.

poetic metaphor interacted with and reinforced the meaning of landscape painting: 'correct taste . . . especially for landscape and landscape art was used . . . as a means of legitimating political authority.'⁷¹ This connection is nowhere more openly adduced than in the view over London from Greenwich Hill, which although ostensibly topographical and therefore unpoetical and a low form of landscape, is consistently depicted in the language of the elevated landscape tradition. Barrell emphasizes the value placed in the panoramic landscape tradition on land itself as fixed and true, the property central to the citizen's ability to conduct himself virtuously in public society.⁷² He is here linking such ideas specifically with the poetic landscape associated with Claude, that is, of an imaginative, generalized kind, rather than particular topographies. And while panoramic landscapes may be less precisely distinct from 'occluded' and 'topographical' landscape, the general thesis can explain the obvious importance which the painted prospect from Greenwich Hill had for eighteenth-century society.

While no one would suggest that this prospect was painted with such frequency because it represented an aristocratic, property-based ideology complementary to bourgeois commerce, this notion does have two arguments in its favour. First, since no other comparable prospect was pictured so frequently, it arguably had a specific significance in the visual culture of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

⁷¹ John Barrell, 'The Public Prospect and the Private View: The Politics of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain', in *The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge* (London, 1992) p.41. For the panoramic landscape as a poetic device, see idem, 'The Idea of Landscape in the Eighteenth Century', in *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840: An Approach to the poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge, 1972), pp.1-63; idem, *English Literature in History 1730-80: An Equal, Wide Survey* (London, 1983), pp.56-61; Solkin, *Richard Wilson*, pp.40-4, 56-76.

⁷² Barrell, 'Public Prospect', p.51.

Second, this significance gets focussed because, suddenly around 1750, there developed a vastly different pictorial representation of Greenwich, which may be seen as contrapuntal, and which became increasingly popular until by the second quarter of the nineteenth century it had displaced the earlier representative viewpoint.⁷³ Thus

⁷³ The collection of paintings of the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich serves as a representative sample to demonstrate this. Of the views of Greenwich made in the periods up to 1750 and 1750-c.1850, the division between panoramic views from the Park, and 'occluded' ones from the river is as follows:

To 1750

Panoramic views:

BHC1808: Johannes Vorsterman, *Greenwich from One Tree Hill*

BHC1812: English School, 17th-century, *Royal Observatory from Crooms Hill, c.1680*

BHC1817: Jan Griffier the elder, *View from One Tree Hill: The Queen's House and the Royal Observatory, Greenwich*

BHC1818: Hendrick Danckerts, *Greenwich from the Park showing the Queen's House, c.1670*

BHC1820: English School, 17th-century, *Greenwich from the park showing the Tudor Palace, c.1620*

BHC1833: style of Jan Griffier the elder, *London and the River Thames from One Tree Hill, Greenwich Park*

BHC1834: British School, 18th-century, *View of Greenwich and the River Thames from Greenwich Park*

BHC3817: British School, 18th-century, *View over Greenwich, c.1750*

River views:

BHC1807: Monogrammist HG, 18th-century, *View of Greenwich, dated 1720*

BHC1819: British School, 18th-century, *A royal yacht off Greenwich*

BHC1821: Jan Griffier the elder, *A royal yacht, the ship rigged yacht Peregrine and other vessels off Greenwich*

Dodd's, Boydell's and Canaletto's views (figs.45, 46, 47) picture Greenwich from river level, and prioritize not the deer park and the contextualizing vista, but the hospital, 'whose magnificence far transcends the palaces of our kings, [where] the maimed and veteran sailor, after having encountered the storms of every sea, and the perils of many a battle, to advance the glory of his country, finds an harbour which national gratitude has prepared for him.'⁷⁴ These views therefore celebrate, in the completion of the building, the life-long devotion and (by implication) deserving

1750-c.1850

River views:

BHC0620: William Anderson, *The return of George IV to Greenwich from Scotland, 10 August 1822*

BHC1805: William Anderson, *Troops embarking near Greenwich*, signed and dated 1792

BHC1809: British School, 19th-century, *Greenwich from Blackwall Reach*

BHC1813: Frederick Calvert, *View of Greenwich*

BHC1823: George Chambers, *View of Greenwich Hospital from the north bank of the Thames, 1835*

BHC1826: David Roberts, *Greenwich Hospital from the Thames*

BHC1827: Antonio Canaletto, *Greenwich Hospital from the north bank of the Thames*

BHC1828: style of Samuel Scott, *Greenwich Hospital*

BHC1829: British School, 19th-century, *Shipping on the Thames by Greenwich Hospital, c.1835*

BHC1830: James Holland, *Greenwich Hospital from the river*

BHC1831: Philip John Oules, *Greenwich Hospital from the north*

BHC3616: British School, 19th-century, *Visit of George IV to Greenwich, August 1822*

BHC3867: Robert Dodd, *Greenwich from the Isle of Dogs*

BHC3870: Henry Pether, *The Thames and Greenwich Hospital by moonlight*

BHC4165: E.W. Cooke, *A hay barge off Greenwich*, signed and dated 1835

There are no panoramic views of the later period in the collection of paintings at Greenwich.

⁷⁴ Combe, *op. cit.*, vol.2, p.245.

industry of the plain seaman. Boydell's print incorporates the image into the overall ideological scheme of the rest of the series of Thames views. Dodd's 1793 print, dedicated to the king, emphasizes the aesthetic respectability which this view gained during the second half of the century.⁷⁵ And Canaletto's view, seemingly done for no particular patron, is itself principally a commercial venture to enter the market for a newly-fashionable pictorial subject.

The representation of Greenwich also demonstrates the degree to which the river could not only provide a focus for such complex discourses, and was clearly recognized as being a site of ideological debate, to such an extent that the legitimacy of the river's mythic claims to liberty and union was itself called into question. Later images of the view from Greenwich Hill offer more subtle interpretations. Those by Cozens, Samuel and Feary, by moving the viewing position further down the hill allow the domes of the hospital to break the line of the horizon and give them greater prominence. Feary (fig.44) offers the view as a balance of pictorial modes which mirrors the balance of social values represented in it. The view, in the tradition of panoramic landscape, echoing and complementing the conventionally pastoral view of Richmond on the other side of the metropolis, to be seen, for example, in Zuccarelli's painting (fig.20), offers a demonstration of the natural order of the commercial maritime state, to balance the ideal of agrarian domestic life inscribed in the classicization of Richmond. The panoramic topographical landscape of Tillemans is turned to a Zoffany-like conversation piece, in which the gentry grouped under the oak

⁷⁵ Samuel Wale painted a roundel of Greenwich Hospital in 1746 for the Foundling Hospital, thus incorporating the naval hospital firmly within the wider ambit of metropolitan charity. For the importance of charity, and the significance of the Foundling Hospital, see chapter 4, below.

tree get associated with the values of aristocratic leisure by their patent pictorial equation with the deer in the foreground. But this land is not that fixed property essential to a politics of civic humanism. Rather it is, as is suggested by the pointing gesture of one of the two men at the left of the group, the place where grows the oak, a pictorial pun on the name One Tree Hill from where the view is taken. The oak itself is directly linked with the 'wooden walls' identifiable with Greenwich and the river beyond. The values of monarchy, aristocracy and land-ownership are united harmoniously with those of commerce and maritime expansion in the symbol of the English oak, and the view itself is presented as a nationalistic sign and a patent demonstration of the unique harmony of the British constitution and the social well-being it affords. The 'one tree' of One Tree Hill is the British oak, symbol of the maritime nation.

Yet, while for Combe the beauty and cultural meaning of both views, from the park and from the river, are beyond description, filling him with 'that delight and astonishment that no verbal magic can convey to others', for the radical Thelwall the aesthetic and cultural were discrete to the point of being contradictory. He cannot but admire the 'picturesque beauty' of the view from Blackheath.

Nor are the beauties of this extensive scenery a little heightened by the fine bird's eye prospect of London and its environs, whose spires and majestic buildings piercing the skies, and, above all, the magnificent dome of St. Paul's, rivet the eye in pensive admiration, and remind one of the power and opulence of the empire . . .

What is most important though is the river, 'burthened with masted vessels . . . which . . . plant the liquid element with aspiring forests'. His thoughts inevitably succeed to

‘national opulence’, but as a negative, the bringer of misery and oppression. He subverts the paradigm of the river as a site of union, between commerce and virtue, and between aesthetic and moral meaning:

How can the real friend of his species survey the wide-stretching Capital, the fatal monument of growing monopoly, or behold, without a sigh, those fleets which might have blessed the Country with an increasing distribution of plenty and felicity, but the channels of whose wealth being stopped before they could divide themselves into little streamlets, and communicate a proportion of their blessings to the lower orders of the state, have only increased the real wretchedness and poverty of mankind?⁷⁶

This paradox is more fully addressed in Turner’s Thames imagery during the first decades of the nineteenth century, or paintings such as Louthembourg’s *The Evening Coach*, discussed earlier (fig.1).⁷⁷ Turner himself was evidently aware of the ideological ambiguities implicit in the panorama from Greenwich Hill, for they are emphasized in his 1809 rendering of it (fig.48). The verse tag accompanying it at its exhibition in his own gallery makes this clear.

Where burthen’d Thames reflects the crowded sail,

⁷⁶ John Thelwall, edited by Donald H. Reiman, *The Peripatetic*, 3 vols. (1793; facsimile repr., 3 volumes in 2, New York and London, 1978), vol.1, pp.176-7.

⁷⁷ Turner’s Thames imagery, detailed discussion of which is beyond the scope of the present dissertation, is discussed in Hemingway, *op. cit.*, pp.224-45. For details of individual works, see Martin Butlin and Evelyn Joll, *The Paintings of J. M. W. Turner*, 2 vols. (revised edn., New Haven and London, 1984), especially cat. nos. 60, 62-3, 66-7, 70-6, 86-9, 90-1, 160-94.

Commercial care and busy toil prevail,
 Whose murky veil, aspiring to the skies,
 Obscures thy beauty, and thy form denies,
 Save where thy spires pierce the doubtful air,
 As gleams of hope amidst a world of care.⁷⁸

The clarity of Tilleman's image has disintegrated into a pall of smoke obscuring the spatial recession. St. Paul's is half obscured, while the exaggeratedly tall towers of Greenwich form the image's focal point. As such this vision of London stands in stark contrast with Turner's idealizing, patrician panoramas of the Thames Valley from Richmond Hill, *Thomson's Aeolian Harp* (exhibited 1809, Manchester City Art Galleries) or *England: Richmond Hill, on the Prince Regent's Birthday* (exhibited 1819, London, Tate Gallery), suggesting an ideological opposition between the opposing stretches of the London river. *London* itself infers this, by presenting the commercial Thames in a panoramic idiom associated with patrician values, whereby the subject and the pictorial convention sit in an uneasy ideological relation.

It may thus be seen as a deconstruction of the identity of the Thames which I presented at the beginning of this chapter, and as such is comparable with Thelwall's and Peacock's contemporary doubts about the mythology of the river. Most importantly, the significance of Turner's image resides in the wider cultural significance which the Thames had in eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Britain, where it provided a mythical and a pragmatic source of potential for the cohesion and practice of the ideologies of the maritime nation. In one sense it served as the quasi-divine

⁷⁸ Butlin and Joll, *op.cit.*, cat. no. 97, vol.1, p.69.

umbilical link between Britain's territorial insularity and its global self-image, and in another as a symbolic site of contemporary debates about social and political theory.

Chapter Four: Metropolitan contexts for maritime imagery: the Foundling Hospital, the Marine Society, and the City

The idea of the river as a site of union, growth and commercial abundance could only remain credible when there was clear evidence of London's growth and development. Such evidence appeared patently obvious, and by the 1820s had secured its reputation as the largest and most powerful city in the world.¹ The global, commercial identity of the river exalted in the writing of Pope, Thomson, Binnell, Cooke and Peacock underwent comparable physical development, notably in the massive expansion of the commercial docks from the 1790s on, to cater for the ever-greater number and tonnage of ships plying to and from the capital.² The serious interest in the docks at a general cultural level, and the concern to rationalize their function and organization, is witnessed by the amount of attentively detailed prints and paintings of them, often, as with those by William Daniell and Pocock and Farington (fig.49), employing a bird's-eye view. Such an organizational overview, whose

¹ Celina Fox (ed.), *London - World City 1800-1840* (exhibition catalogue, New Haven and London, 1992), p.226, *et passim*. See also John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1997), pp.28-55; Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London, 1994), chapter 7.

² For the physical and architectural expansion of London and the development of the docks, see John Summerson, *Georgian London* (revised edn., Harmondsworth, 1978), especially pp.258-62; Andrew Saint, 'The Building Art of the First Industrial Metropolis', in Fox, *op. cit.*, pp.51-76; J.G. Coad, *Historic Architecture of the Royal Navy: An Introduction* (London, 1983); Roger Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars* (Leicester, 1983).

perspective, as informative as possible, also offers a map of London's global commerce, demonstrates what made the city, for an outsider,

at the same time the metropolis of the empire, the centre of England's home trade and the centre of its foreign trade. The concurrence of these three factors is what makes it the richest, the largest and the most populous among all the cities of the old world.³

This geographical and economic expansion was interleaved with a complementary development of social relations and attitudes among its inhabitants. Urbanization, it might be said, was matched by urbanity.⁴ One of its most evident and frequently-cited manifestations of life in the eighteenth-century city was the growth of

³ Charles Dupin, *Voyages dans la Grande-Bretagne, Entrepris relatives aux Services Publics 1816-19*, vol. 6 (Paris, 1824), pp. 2-3, quoted in Saint, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁴ From the enormous literature on eighteenth-century urbanization in Britain I have found the following particularly helpful for the discussion in this chapter: Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989); Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1982), in particular Brewer's chapter 'Commercialization and Politics', pp.197-262; John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge, 1978); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992), pp.37-43, 62-71, 369-72; Peter Clark, *Sociability and Urbanity: Clubs and Societies in the Eighteenth-Century City* (8th H.T. Dyer Memorial Lecture, 23 April 1986, Victorian Studies Centre, University of Leicester); Nicholas Rogers, *Whigs and Cities: Popular Politics in the Age of Walpole and Pitt* (Oxford, 1989); Jurgen Habermas, translated by Thomas Burger, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989); Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.3-12, 27-83.

clubs and societies, to create institutions through which urban social relations could be organized, and the potentially overwhelming polyvalence and variety of corporate urban identity could be classified and comprehended. For, ironically, while the city and its citizenry were perceived as having a recognizably homogeneous identity (even though it was arguable what exactly that identity was), the population had such a variety of backgrounds and interests that potentially the only common factor between its members was residence in London.⁵ The culture of the club and the society offered

⁵ For clubs and societies, see Brewer, 'Commercialization and Politics'; Clark, *op. cit.*; R.J. Allen, *The Clubs of Augustan London* (London, 1933); H.T. Dickinson, *The Politics of the People in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1995), pp.6-7, 37-40. The idea of London or the city as a site of potential loss of individual identity was a recurrent literary theme throughout the period: e.g., the stories, both fictional and based on fact, of criminals (e.g., Jack Sheppard) becoming lost in the urban crowd; compare, for example, Matthew Bramble's celebrated complaint against the monstrous confusion of the London crowds in *Humphry Clinker* (1771): Tobias Smollett, edited by Angus Ross, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (Harmondsworth, 1985), pp.117-21; or the eponymous hero's attempt to evade his murderous master by doffing a disguise and losing himself in the metropolis, in Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794): William Godwin, edited by Maurice Hindle, *Things as They Are or The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (Harmondsworth, 1988), pp.262-8; or Wordsworth's struggle, in *The Prelude* (1805-6), to understand the capital, where 'all the ballast of familiar life, / The present, and the past; hope, fear; all stays, / All laws of acting, thinking, speaking man / Went from me, neither knowing me, nor known': William Wordsworth, edited by C.J. Maxwell, *The Prelude: A Parallel Text* (Harmondsworth, 1971), Book VII (1805-6 version), ll.603-6. It is also worth noting the nautical language - 'ballast', 'stays' - which Wordsworth uses to describe this crisis, a form of 'shipwreck of the soul', which is discussed in more detail below, chapters 9, 10. For a general critique of these aspects of the city, see Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London, 1973); and Max Byrd, *London Transformed: Images of the City in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven and London, 1978), pp.25-8, 109-10, 124-5.

a bridge between the conflicting public identity of the city and the private identities of the city-dwellers, by, in the first instance, displaying both public and private characteristics. While any such group would consist of a private voluntary organization composed of willing members in a common cause, such a cause would often be public in spirit, and aspire to produce some beneficial public effect.⁶ Such voluntary professional bodies were closely related to the structure of guilds and livery companies in the City of London, and many such clubs were set up alongside, or as a result of, guild membership. Most importantly, such organizations were not only symptomatic of a vigorously developing urban society, but also an integral part of the rise of the middle-class within it, which has already been noted in connection with the accommodation of commerce with social philosophy.⁷ They connect to the construction of an ideal civic and social status notionally attached to the entity of the prospering commercial state, and to the identity of the nation and its blessed constitution. That is, the mythical 'middle station of life' which, in Defoe's words,

⁶ Perhaps most obvious in this respect were the openly political clubs formed from the late seventeenth century on, such as the Green-Ribbon Club, the Patriots Club, or notoriously, the republican Calves-Head Club. See Allen, *op. cit.*, pp.56-69. Clubs also provided a means of professional and trading independence for merchants and craftsmen, who by forming into box-clubs and pooling their resources towards their common professional ends, in particular providing a fund to relieve sick or impoverished members, could alleviate many of the disadvantages of depending upon a system of patrician patronage for their livelihood. The most relevant example of this was the foundation and 1761 exhibition of the Society of Artists of Great Britain: John Pye, *Patronage of British Art: An Historical Sketch* (London, 1845; facsimile repr. London, 1970), pp.104-5; David H. Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London, 1993), p.176; Brewer, 'Commercialization and Politics', pp.227-8.

was calculated for all kinds of virtues and all kinds of enjoyments; [for] peace and plenty were the handmaids of a middle fortune; . . . temperance, moderation, quietness, health, society, all agreeable diversions, and all desirable pleasures, were the blessings attending the middle station of life.⁸

Clubs and societies included those formed explicitly for the advancement of human knowledge and debate. At the lower end of the scale the Robin-Hood Society's entrance requirement was sixpence at the door, and debate was democratically controlled, each proposer for any subject being allotted five minutes to make his case. At the top, the Royal Society boasted the most illustrious natural historians, antiquaries and virtuosi of the day. All these forms of club and society, whose sheer variety clearly reflected the heterogeneity to the populace comprising them,

shared certain basic functions as centres of public sociability and thereby contributed to the shaping of the distinctive public image of eighteenth-century urban society as harmonious, dynamic and committed to improvement.⁹

The 'commitment to improvement', noted already in relation to metropolitan life as a whole, was most clearly articulated by the Royal Society, with its system of Notes and Queries for accumulating and disseminating information. But it was at the heart of a range of mid-eighteenth-century organizations, from the Society for the

⁷ See chapter 3, above.

⁸ Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719; Wordsworth Classics, 1993), p.3

⁹ Clark, *op. cit.*, p.13.

Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (founded in 1754), to the Marine Society (1756).¹⁰ Many aimed at civic and national improvement combined with philanthropic activities or the issuing of premiums, aspiring to achieve a society which benefited from commerce, without being morally or socially tainted by its excesses, allowing commercial practice to be directed to the promotion of excellence in all things.

Philanthropy could mitigate against the negative aspects of commerce, while maintaining the commitment to a fully-fledged mercantilist ideology. As the enactment of Christian charity, philanthropy, itself a morally virtuous activity, would help prevent the enjoyment of commercial benefits from degenerating into corrupting luxury.¹¹ Moreover, the degree to which charity could be practised was naturally tied to the commercial success, both of society as a whole, and of the individual philanthropist. Indeed, virtually all eighteenth-century charitable institutions, particularly those founded mid-century, were instigated by merchants and the merchant, or 'middling', class, among them the most celebrated philanthropists of the century. The Foundling Hospital was founded by Thomas Coram, a shipwright and merchant; the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce by William Shipley, a drawing master; the Magdalen Hospital by Robert Dingley, a Russia Company merchant; and the Marine Society, Troop Society, and Misericordia Hospital by Jonas Hanway, again a Russia Company merchant, and significantly with a markedly naval

¹⁰ On this see Donna T. Andrew, *London Debating Societies 1776-1799* (London, 1994).

¹¹ The problem of luxury will be discussed below, chapter 6.

family background.¹² Indeed the connection established between the culture of societies for social improvement and the practice of commerce, by the conspicuous involvement in all these institutions of members of the Russia Company, is a highly significant one:

Of the Company's Court of Assistants, a third was on the first General Committee of the Marine Society . . . ; and half were governors of the Foundling Hospital in 1757; while five of the eight founders of the Magdalen Hospital in 1758 were on the Company's Court.¹³

Dingley and Hanway were also highly active members of the Society of Arts.¹⁴

This conjunction of trading practice with ideas of civic improvement, Christian sympathy and sociability exemplifies the commercial ideology of London's merchant community, and is characteristic of what Taylor calls 'Christian mercantilism', expressed in its essentials by Defoe in 1728:

Trade is the Wealth of the World; . . . Trade nourishes Industry, Industry begets Trade; Trade dispenses the natural Wealth of the

¹² For the Foundling Hospital, see Ruth K. McClure, *Coram's Children: The London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven and London, 1981). For the Marine Society and the Magdalen and Misericordia Hospitals, James S. Taylor, *Jonas Hanway, Founder of the Marine Society, Charity and Policy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London and Berkeley, 1985). For the ideology of charity in the eighteenth century, see Donna T. Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, 1989).

¹³ Taylor, *op. cit.*, p.59.

¹⁴ D.G.C. Allen, *The Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. Organization, Membership and Objectives in the First Three Decades (1755-84)* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1979), p.68.

World, and Trade raises new Species of Wealth, which nature knew nothing of; Trade has two Daughters, whose fruitful Progeny in Arts may be said to employ Mankind; namely

MANUFACTURE

and

NAVIGATION.¹⁵

An ideology of universal virtue engendered by, and implicit in, the pursuit of commerce, was categorically articulated by Jonas Hanway, arguing against the proposed Bill for Jewish naturalization in 1753:

Commerce is the link by which men are united in love. This is the mutual interest which ought to subsist between Christians, Jews, Mohammedans, and Pagans; so long as commerce is conducted with integrity, it must produce a connexion and harmony, such as constitutes an universal commonwealth, among the whole of mankind.¹⁶

Commerce is the agent of 'universal commonwealth', but not at the expense of the integrity of national and religious identities; the binding factor between otherwise naturally antagonistic communities. When 'conducted with integrity', between communities and states, it defines and enforces different communal identities, to their

¹⁵ Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp.50-60. Defoe, quoted in J.H. Plumb, *England in the Eighteenth Century (1714-1815)* (rev. edn., Harmondsworth, 1963), p.21.

¹⁶ Jonas Hanway, *A Review of the Proposed Naturalization of the Jews* (3rd edn., London, 1753), pp.97-8.

individual benefit, and re-emphasizes the problematic image of the nation as at once intrinsic and insular, but also global and universalist. The harmonious and universal commonwealth which it purports to bring about is one one which cannot but be founded on principles of differentiation and exclusivity.¹⁷ What is crucial about all this is that the whole commercial edifice was understood to depend upon navigation, to the extent that the two terms could become virtually synonymous.

While this does not necessarily bear upon maritime imagery directly, commerce and the arts were indissolubly linked. In the commercial state the arts were central in producing tradeable commodities of direct consequence to the national economy, and in exemplifying and promoting the levels of public and private virtue to which civic society should aspire and which it had thus far attained, through the supply of artefacts supposedly of the highest level of aesthetic taste. Cultural refinement was an index of national health and virtue, for taste was itself a mark of virtue, and demonstrated the degree to which it could expect to flourish within the commercial 'universal commonwealth'.

Terry Eagleton writes:

Like the work of art as defined by the discourse of aesthetics, the bourgeois subject is autonomous and self-determining, acknowledges no merely extrinsic law but instead, in some mysterious fashion, gives the law to itself. In doing so, the law becomes the form which shapes into harmonious unity the turbulent content of the subject's appetites

¹⁷ For a more rigorous and detailed contemporary theorization, see Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767; New Brunswick and London, 1980)

and inclinations. The compulsion of autocratic power is replaced by the more gratifying compulsion of the subject's self identity.¹⁸

The relation of this critique to the role and duty of the individual subject within a commercial hegemony, and to the practices of assertion of bourgeois self-identity in urban society through the individual's involvement in professional bodies, clubs and societies, is important, particularly for emphasizing the fundamental role of aesthetic sensibility as a measure of, or even as synonymous with, social harmony, as conceived by bourgeois ethics. But the 'aesthetic law' was not wholly self-determining. It corresponded to universal values of good and evil, beauty and ugliness, virtue and vice. Eagleton cites Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* to this effect.

Human society, when we contemplate it in a certain abstract and philosophical light, appears like a great immense machine, whose regular and harmonious movements produce a thousand agreeable effects. As in any other beautiful and noble machine that was the production of human art, whatever tended to render its movements more smooth and easy, would derive a beauty from this effect, and, on the contrary, whatever tended to obstruct them would displease on that account: so virtue, which is, as it were, the fine polish to the wheels of society, necessarily pleases; while vice, like the vile rust, which makes them jar and grate upon one another, is as necessarily offensive.¹⁹

¹⁸ Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford, 1990), p.23.

¹⁹ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), quoted in Eagleton, *op. cit.*, p.37.

In this sense, Fielding's denunciation of the criminal, and of luxury itself, as a disease in the body politic, is, in part, an aesthetic judgment.²⁰ And in its implication that there can be no such thing as a neutral social position, that the individual either contributes to the greater social good, or, in Smith's term, 'obstructs' it, this vision of society corresponds to the classical aesthetic doctrine that whatever does not add to the work of art, detracts from it.

Smith's choice of metaphor is of extraordinary interest. Human society is, in a Newtonian way, like 'an immense machine' of which the 'regular and harmonious movements' are beautiful and therefore virtuous. An image such as that of the water-wheels and pumps of London Bridge (fig.23) takes on an added significance in the light of Smith's choice of simile. Its circumstances and form invest it with a symbolic meaning above and beyond its function as a descriptive diagram. The smooth precision of the contours and hatching, depicting clean *rust-free* surfaces, the clarity of the notation, and the careful use of perspective to demonstrate the complex mechanism as lucidly as possible, all make the act of viewing the image as 'smooth' and 'easy' as the working of the cogs and pistons shown in it. Finally, it is an image designed for mass-production, produced on a machine as precise as the one shown, for reproduction in a journal or periodical, and so addresses directly the needs of bourgeois society, by illustrating an example of general civic import for an audience of private individuals,

²⁰ See chapter 3, above. It is interesting in this respect, that Fielding, who sees vices and crime, like bodily diseases, as inevitable facts of life, is of the opinion that 'to restrain and palliate the evil Consequences, is all that lies within the Reach of Art': Henry Fielding, edited by M.R. Zirker, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase in Robbers and Related Writings* (Oxford, 1988), p.71 (my italics).

tapping a level of meaning far deeper than its function as illustration. It is, we might say, a symbolic instance of the ideology of Smith's metaphor put into social effect.

It is, then, extremely interesting that the machine singled out by Lord Kames in this respect happens to be the ship.

When we take the end itself under consideration, there is discovered a distinct modification of Beauty and Ugliness, of a higher kind . . . A beneficial end proposed, strikes us with a very peculiar pleasure; and approbation belongs also to this feeling. Thus, the mechanism of a ship is beautiful, in the view of means well fitted to an end. But the end itself of carrying on commerce, and procuring so many conveniences to mankind, exalts the object, and heightens our approbation and pleasure.²¹

This is precisely the language of social aesthetics used by Smith, but the relation between the metaphorical machine and its social application is specified and the processes by which the material benefits of the machine become aesthetically transformed are explained: the machine is aestheticized through its association with virtuous or beneficial ends. Although the ship is a beautiful object in its own right, it becomes even more beautiful when its function as a machine in an improving process of commerce is known and understood. The beauty of the ship therefore lies in its participation in and facilitation of a chain of social ties by which commerce is conducted; and this is exactly analogous to Johnson's or Hume's ideas of the benefits of human society, whereby the greater civic good is served by the participation of each

²¹ Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion. In Two Parts* (Edinburgh, 1751), p.46. My thanks to Michael Rosenthal for this reference.

individual in his proper place in a system of social commerce: the resulting aesthetic value of this is that society becomes greater than the sum of each individual's contribution to it.

Alongside Smith's mechanistic visualization of society, Kames' statement suggests that the pictorial representation of the ship carried a weight of associations which gave the artefact a much more urgent and complex aesthetic value than is generally assumed. Ships are most frequently depicted in transit, carrying out their mechanical function in the process of commerce (figs.50, 51). And the often pedantic attention to details of wind direction, rigging, the reaction of the ship to different weather conditions, and so on, although perhaps included for patronal considerations or to maintain the image's temporal and narrative consistency, only serves to emphasize the ship as a travelling vessel, as an embodiment of a spatio-temporal movement which could itself be seen as an analogue for the structure of the commercial society. By contrast the cargo that a vessel is carrying is hardly ever indicated, and rarely is the crew shown as anything more than staffage. The pictorial emphasis remains firmly on the ship's passage, by which the its significance as an incorporation of a general notion of commerce hardly needed to be stated, although it frequently was.

In sum, the seemingly insignificant image of the water works at London Bridge, and the aesthetic idea of the ship, between them pertain to the various elements of middle-class commercial ideology which I have outlined. The ideal of civic improvement is related to navigational and commercial provision and success, and to a practice of social integration and education exemplified by mass-publication and the activities of clubs and societies. Furthermore, this is implicated in an aesthetic

discourse by which artistic form and theory are indissoluble from ideas of social harmony and civic progress.

In this light it is unsurprising that, firstly, commercial artistic practice in the mid-century was often regulated through societies, from the St. Martin's Lane Academy to the Society of Artists, and even, finally, the Royal Academy. Nor, secondly, that such societies and related groups openly expressed the inter-relationship of artistic and civic progress.

Shiple's Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce emphasized the importance of drawing to virtually every trade and profession, and offered premiums for a variety of native productions, in the way of, for example, the Association of Anti-Gallicans.²² Moreover, societies, charities, mercantile companies and their members were directly involved in naval and marine projects, and certain of these societies were founded specifically to further the end of maritime supremacy: the Marine Society and the Anti-Gallicans are obvious examples; even the Society of Arts was concerned with marine projects, as with the model ship trials of 1758-63.²³ However, notwithstanding the extraordinary complexity of the relationships between

²² The proclaimed patriotic function of the Association of Anti-Gallicans was 'to discourage by precept and example, the importation and consumption of French produce and manufactures, and to encourage, on the contrary, the produce and manufactures of Great Britain', and they also offered premiums, particularly for maritime achievements. See Isaac Hunt, 'Some Account of the Laudable Institution of the Society of Antigallicans', in *Sermons on Public Occasions* (London, 1781), v. For the Society of Arts, see D.G.C. Allen, *op. cit.*, and idem, *William Shipley, Founder of the Society of Arts* (London, 1968).

²³ Basil Harley, 'The Society of Arts' Model Ship Trials 1758-1763: a study in the pre-history of ship model hydrodynamics', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 5446, vol. 142 (1994), pp.50-2.

art, navigation and commerce, one must inquire whether ideological connections resulted in appropriate material pictorial forms: whether images' content or modes of production articulated given social and ideological structures, and whether new conditions and environments for patronage were created.

To examine art works commissioned by or donated to different urban institutions - charities, societies or mercantile companies - reveals patterns concerning the practice, social backgrounds, and patronage of marine artists, which suggest that the cultural meanings of navigation and maritime life were not uniformly fixed across either artistic society or society in general. Inconsistency of meaning within marine imagery reflected the social ambivalence of the marine community at large. While the ship as machine could be aestheticized (in a manner which implicitly obscured the presence of the crew), the aesthetic value of the images which pertained to it was not so clear cut. This was partly due to the marine artist having specialized knowledge and experience alongside practical and technical skills, thus separating marine painting from academic art. The technical familiarity with the subtleties of rigging, handling, weather conditions, types of sea, and a first-hand knowledge of how different vessels reacted to a variety of wind and weather were all essential prerequisites for the veracity of the image, and ideally required experience at sea. This would be incompatible with the sociability, manners and deference, demanded of, say, a portrait-painter, to gain the entry into, and acceptance by, a circle of patrons so necessary for economic survival.²⁴

²⁴ On this aspect of portraiture see Desmond Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians: Eighteenth-Century Portraiture & Society* (London, 1990), pp.14-17; Marcia Pointon, 'Portrait-Painting as a Business Enterprise in London in the 1780s', *Art History* 7/2 (1984), pp.187-205; Louise Lippincott, *Selling*

Clearly, first-hand knowledge of his subject (I know of no female marine painters of this period) would prevent the marine artist from being a fixed presence anywhere for very long. And doubtless the practices of painting and sailing as professions militated against each other in this respect.

However, to understand the variety of marine images is not straightforward. As we have seen, the pictorial expression of empirical 'scientific' and geographical observation became an increasingly important aspect of voyages of exploration, to make painting and travelling by sea complementary, even inseparable.²⁵ And then, not all pictures of ships and navigation were done by artists with first-hand experience of the sea and sailing: indeed, much of the most significant and conspicuous maritime imagery was undertaken by artists with little or no direct experience of navigation. Most of the artists discussed in Chapter Three, for example, were exclusively painters, printers or print-sellers by profession, part of Defoe's manufacturing community, rather than of the navigational one which formed the subject of their work. They frequented the corresponding social circles, and generally lived in the appropriate areas of town to further their professional interests.²⁶ This is, of course, not necessarily surprising; but the issue is complicated, as I have indicated, by the relationship of the artist's experience to the subject of his work. Those artists who had little or no first-hand sea-going experience and moved in a separate sphere from the people who operated the vessels they were painting suggest that the integrity of artisanal and

Art in Georgian London: The Rise of Arthur Pond (New Haven and London, 1983); Richard Wendorf, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Painter in Society* (London, 1996).

²⁵ See chapter 2, above.

²⁶ This will be considered in greater detail later in the chapter.

labouring communities was being maintained. Corporate patronage by societies and institutions reveals traits very suggestive with regard to marine imagery and its various meanings.

The relationship between philanthropies, hospitals, mercantile companies and clubs and the pictorial within their specific urban, 'bourgeois' contexts is a crucial one. But, although the importance of institutional patronage and exhibiting of eighteenth-century art has long been recognized, the extent to which that art deals with mercantile-maritime themes has not.²⁷

Yet a 1766 inventory of the paintings belonging to the Painter-Stainers' Company lists the works room by room. In the hall, among paintings by Kneller, Griffier and others, often depicting religious or historical subjects, were 'A Sea Storm by Peter Monamy', 'A large piece of Shipping by Peter Monamy' and 'A Sea Storm painted and given by Sailmaker'. The dining room also contained subjects which

²⁷ Most recently, Solkin, *op. cit.*, in which, despite his primary concern with the relation of art to commerce, the author does not explore the possible links between commercial ideology and navigation as an artistic theme. The analogous 'oversight' by social, political and economic histories has long been an issue for naval historians, and has only comparatively recently begun to be redressed: see Jeremy Black and Philip Woodfine (eds.), *The British Navy and the Use of Naval Power in the Eighteenth Century* (Leicester, 1988); Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London, 1976); Lawrence Stone (ed.), *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London and New York, 1994), in particular the essays by Kathleen Wilson, 'Empire of Virtue: The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture c.1720-1785', pp.128-64, and Daniel A. Baugh, 'Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce: The uses of 'a grand marine empire'', pp.185-223. See also Daniel A. Baugh, 'Great Britain's "Blue-Water" Policy, 1689-1815', *International History Review* 10 (1988), pp.33-58.

interleaved the maritime and mythological: a shipwreck, ‘Two Sea Monsters in Bass Relief’, ‘Two mermaids supporting a monster above the Water’, apparently next to ‘The history of Persius [*sic*] & Andromeda’, and the ‘emblems of Jupiter & Apollo in Bass Rel.’. Beside this, in a strange bathos, seems to have been ‘A Piece of 20 Sorts of Fish & a Sea View’. Among the rest of the dining room images were subjects of three Cupids, Dido, Apollo, the Temple of Wisdom, Juno, Venus and Cupid, the Court of Bacchus (these last two over the fireplace), and Arion on the dolphin’s back. A piece of shipping in a calm was used to fill the space ‘over the Closet Door’.²⁸ While the disposition and iconography of these works appears hardly to have been preconceived, and depictions of ships are relatively few in number, it is notable, first, that many of the mythologies were also maritime ones; and, second, that the large set-pieces of marine art by Monamy and Sailmaker were placed in the most officially public room, the hall, rather than the comparatively private dining room. The admixture of subjects indicates how important the sea and the Thames were for commerce, naval success and as a fishery. Phenomena like Pope’s Thames as river god in *Windsor-Forest* perhaps underpin the penchant for marine mythologies. Thomson employs comparable tropes, paralleled in the popularity of such subjects as the concord between Britannia and Neptune, or of Neptune laying his trident at Britannia’s feet, in popular prints. And their hanging in the dining room was suggestive, Venus and Cupid and the Court of Bacchus suiting the idea of bodily fulfillment and gastronomic pleasure. Furthermore, many of the maritime and mythological subjects are to do with the sea as a site of epic contest, victory over which turns it into a mythical provider of security, wealth and

²⁸ London, Guildhall Library, MS 11,505 (n.p.).

nourishment, such as the '20 Sorts of Fish' which would be consumed in that very room.²⁹

There was likewise a maritime imperative in the decorative programme of the Foundling Hospital, despite overtly maritime subjects once again forming only a small proportion of the collection. It is when the Hospital is considered as one of a number of institutions with a mercantile impetus which commissioned or was presented with works of art, and we remember the ideological motives behind its foundation, that that small component takes on a greater significance.

Its founder, Thomas Coram, a shipwright by profession, made his money by trading between Boston and London.³⁰ He had a long-standing involvement in promoting public projects of a mercantile, colonialist persuasion.³¹ It was a comparable public-spiritedness and sense of duty which motivated his foundation of the Foundling Hospital. Its object was one of pure 'Christian mercantilist' sensibility, a 'fusion of Christian benevolence with patriotic and mercantile zeal', by which destitute foundlings would be rescued from neglect and death on the streets.³² Among the several purposes, besides the purely humanitarian one, this would serve, children could be brought up to provide manpower for the military, particularly the Navy, or for related industries, at a

²⁹ James Thomson, *The Seasons* (1726-46) and *Liberty* (1738), in J. Logie Robertson (ed.), *The Complete Poetical Works of James Thomson* (Oxford, 1908): all subsequent references refer to this edition. The image of the sea in prints will be discussed below, chapter 5.

³⁰ Nicolson, *The Treasures of the Foundling Hospital* (Oxford, 1972), p.2.

³¹ The most celebrated of these was a scheme to give political stability to North American colonies by populating them with poor but loyal English Anglicans: McClure, *op. cit.*, pp.18, 23-6.

³² Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, p.58.

time when war with Spain had just broken out.³³ Coram's scheme was therefore decidedly patriotic, appropriate to the enormous rise in popular patriotism (particularly in London) at this time. This combined militant protectionism against Spanish encroachments of British trade in the West Indies with domestic opposition to Walpole's perceived appeasement and sacrifice of the merchant class's interests.³⁴ Thomson voiced a similar view in *Britannia*. Britannia, cast as the familiar allegorical personification, sits 'on the Sea-beat Shore' and calls upon 'the Sons of Freedom' to avenge themselves on 'the insulting Spaniard' who

dares

Infest the trading Flood, full of vain War
 Despise my Navies, and my Merchants sieze;
 As, trusting to false Peace, they fearless roam
 The World of Waters wild, made by the Toil
 And liberal Blood of glorious Ages, mine.³⁵

1740 of course saw the composition of *Rule, Britannia*; and patriotic anti-Spanish sentiment was given artistic expression in John Pine's splendid set of commemorative engravings after the Armada tapestries in the House of Lords (fig.52), which expressly foreground the maritime tradition: indeed, the ships have been updated from Elizabethan galleons to eighteenth-century frigates and men-of-war.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp.58-63. See also Solkin, *op. cit.*, p.158

³⁴ For the popular political impact of Vernon's engagements, see Kathleen Wilson, 'Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon', *Past and Present* 121 (1988), pp.74-109. See also Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, pp.142-52.

³⁵ Thomson, *Britannia* (1729), ll.23-8.

It is significant that, for the Marine Society, established at the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, 'Church, State and Navy were considered a complementary trinity',³⁶ for Hogarth's headpiece to a Power of Attorney for the collection of subscriptions to the Foundling Hospital (fig.53), gives this ideology graphic expression. The scene's narrative is structured from left to right. The desperate penitent mother and her child arrive at the hospital to encounter the beadle and the idealized prophet-like figure of Coram. On the right, the rescued children are turned out as neatly dressed, educated and industrious individuals, ready to make their contribution to the nation. In the decorative programme begun in 1746 for the General Court Room, the history paintings, themed around the finding of Moses, directly associate the purpose of the Hospital with scripturally-sanctioned mercy and deliverance.³⁷ Hogarth anticipates the Mosaic theme in the headpiece; in the inclusion of a baby amongst the rushes in the bottom left corner (who is then rescued further downstream), and Coram's costume, which evokes that of an Old Testament prophet, as the Hospital's Royal Charter under his arm does a tablet of stone. Making the story of Moses so prominent fits the same patriotic (and therefore, by extension, mercantile and maritime) context in which, I have suggested, the whole project of the Hospital may be seen.

³⁶ James S. Taylor, 'Jonas Hanway: Christian Mercantilist', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 5362, vol. 134 (1986), p.643.

³⁷ These were Hayman's *The Finding of Moses*, Hogarth's *Moses Brought before Pharaoh's Daughter*, Highmore's *The Angel appearing to Hagar and Ishmael*, and Wills' *Little Children brought unto Christ*.

Moses could be interpreted as a paradigm of ‘admirable patriotism’, since he ‘pleading in behalf of even a stubborn, ungrateful people, went so far as to make their exculpation or forgiveness, the condition of *his own* acceptance with God.’³⁸ Moses as the adoptive talisman for the Hospital implies a divine sanction for it, and emphasizes its function in a secular discourse of nationalism and civic virtue. Hogarth’s headpiece picks up the biblical overtones, in the poses of the mother and the beadle, which recall the penitent Magdalen and St. Christopher, and in the finials of the church in the background, answering the ships’ masts in the distant harbour, themselves extremely significant. The children prospect them, and while the girls are prepared for domestic industry, the boys, having turned their backs to land and us, are ready to go to sea. One salutes the ships with a distaff which has more than a passing resemblance to a Mercurial *caduceus*, intimating, again, the linkage between navigation and trade. The security of ‘future trade and navigation’ is certainly the purpose of the Hospital presented here, a pictorial prescription for a project in which ‘CHARITY , HUMANITY, PATRIOTISM, and OECONOMY [might] be made to go Hand-in-Hand’.³⁹

³⁸ Isaac Hunt, *A sermon preached before the laudable Association of Antigallicans at the Parish Church of St. George, Middlesex, on their General Annual Meeting, on Thursday, the 23rd. of April, 1778* (London, 1778), pp.8-9.

³⁹ Joseph Massie, *A Plan for the Establishment of Charity-Houses for Exposed or Deserted Women and Girls, and for Penitent Prostitutes . . .* (London, 1758), p.9, cited in Taylor, ‘Jonas Hanway: Christian Mercantilist’, p.645. Such a statement in connection with a later, separate charity once again suggests an ideological homogeneity and common purpose between the mid-century London charities and hospitals.

Wale's *The Admission of Children to the Hospital by Ballot* (fig.54) of 1749 additionally demonstrates the Hospital's public meaning. Each woman was balloted by being asked to pick a ball from a bag. Drawing a black ball meant admission was refused, as happens on the left. Admission was granted by a white ball, such as that prominently held up by woman in the right foreground: one of the hospital's (male) administrators ushers her into the building. Yet his gesture is ambivalent. It both directs the woman to the row of mothers and children already admitted, but indicates, for the viewer's benefit, a large painting half-seen depicting a flagship at anchor, on the wall above their heads. The motif indicates that the hospital's purpose is to furnish marines to maintain national strength and commercial prosperity. The marine painting represented by Wale is presumably Peter Monamy's contribution to the artistic support of the hospital.⁴⁰ If so, it is noticeable that, as at the Painter-Stainers Company, it was hung in a very prominent and influential place, where its meaning could have the greatest impact.

The iconography persists in Rysbrack's allegorical relief of *Charity*, the chimney-piece in the General Court Room (fig.55), where Charity herself divides an image of agriculture and husbandry, and a harbourside scene featuring a prominent ship's stern. The allegorical, arguably Georgic, key of the relief is emphasized by the fact that the labour associated with each balancing scene is done by naked cherubic

⁴⁰ Nicolson, *op. cit.*, pp.83-4. The painting is certainly not inconsistent with Monamy's style.

However, the painting half-shown in Wale's print cannot be *The English Fleet in the Downs* as Nicolson suggests, since it clearly shows a harbour scene, not ships on the high seas. A much more likely candidate for a painting at the Foundling Hospital known by such a title would be Brooking's 1754 donation of *A Flagship before the Wind under Easy Sail . . .* (fig.51).

infants, not Wale's destitutes. Reaping a fulsome crop and milking a fine healthy cow indicate a generic idea of domestic self-sufficiency and prosperity to match the global navigation and trade represented in the shipping scene: an ideological balance of internal agrarian industry and abundance against external commercial expansion which is by now familiar. Vertue's account of the relief recognizes this in an abbreviated way, 'the boys coyling a cord and ship and anchor & the Girls. husWifrey and rural employments milking the Cows &c.'⁴¹

The hospital's patriotic aspect is apparent too from the political affiliations of several of the artists associated with it from 1746. Admiral Vernon's capture of the Spanish colonial ports of Porto Bello and Chagres in Central America in November 1739 had inflamed popular patriotism and had been hailed as answering the call for 'Satisfaction to our NATIONAL HONOUR, and above all, ample Security to our FUTURE TRADE and NAVIGATION.'⁴² Samuel Scott completed paintings and engravings of *The Capture of Porto Bello* and *The Capture of Chagre*.⁴³ Monamy painted a 'portrait' of Vernon's ship for the sign of the Porto Bello inn in St. Martin's Lane.⁴⁴ Later, in *The Election II* Hogarth has two men outside another Porto Bello inn, recreating Vernon's victory on the table beside their pots of fine English ale. The Admiral's portrait was painted by Vanderbank, and also, in the 1750s, by Gainsborough.

⁴¹ Vertue Note Books, Vol. III, *Walpole Society* 22 (1934), p.132, quoted in Nicolson, *op. cit.*, p.88.

⁴² *London Evening Post*, 17-19 August 1738, cited in Wilson, 'Empire, trade and popular politics', p.79, n.15.

⁴³ Kenneth Sharpe and Richard Kingzett, *Samuel Scott Bicentenary: Paintings, Drawings and Prints* (exhibition catalogue, London, Guildhall Art Gallery, 1972), pp.4, 15.

⁴⁴ J.T. Smith, *Nollekens and His Times* (1828; London, 1986), pp.18-19.

Therefore, although marine imagery *per se* was not conspicuous in the hospital's painterly decoration, the maritime and its national significance exerted a powerful ideological and iconographic force within the institution, further augmented with Charles Brooking presenting *A Flagship before the Wind under Easy Sail . . .* (fig.51) in 1754, supposedly to match the *Monamy*.⁴⁵ As a taxonomy of British maritime power, showing warships, a cutter, a ketch, and various smaller vessels, it was a suitably patriotic icon for the aims of the Hospital, but also, in its detail and the range of vessel depicted, an educative one, predominantly for the boys: by, at latest, the beginning of the nineteenth century both it and the *Monamy* were in the Boys' Dining Room. In contrast, in 1757 the Girls' Dining Room was fitted out with full-length portraits.⁴⁶

The hospital's austere but classical architecture was appropriate to its philanthropic and socially responsive function, characteristics emphasized too in the decorative programme, such as to make it a counterpart to the Venetian *scuole*. And, in the way that its institutional structure matched that of City merchant companies, other analogies present themselves.⁴⁷ For example, as Brian Allen has noted, the patronage and the display of art work corresponds with the earlier reconstruction of

⁴⁵ The General Court Minutes of 8 May 1754 praise the painting as a 'very valuable Sea-Piece', and as with the other artist-Governors, its presentation gained Brooking his election to the Board:

Nicolson, *op. cit.*, p.61.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.33-4.

⁴⁷ The similarity of the hospital's organisational structure to that of City companies has been frequently noted: Solkin, *op. cit.*, p.158; Taylor, *Jonas Hanway, Founder of the Marine Society: Charity and Policy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London and Berkeley, 1985), pp.59-60, 186.

the East India Company offices in Leadenhall Street from 1726-1732.⁴⁸ I want to expand on this observation.

As Mildred Archer puts it, this was no mere response to expansion, but to create, as it 'became rich, expanding its great business and fanning out over the Orient, . . . almost ostensibly a 'public image' of itself.'⁴⁹ The Leadenhall Street building, completed by 1729, was designed by Theodore Jacobsen (by profession a merchant), who subsequently designed the Foundling Hospital.⁵⁰ As there, the principal room, the Directors' Court Room, received the most prestigious and immediate decoration, consisting of 'fine mahogany doors and . . . made bright with chandeliers, mirrors and gilding.'⁵¹ It too boasted a carved chimney-piece supporting Rysbrack's relief of *Britannia receiving the Riches of the East* (fig.56), which, like *Charity* at the hospital, emphasizes shipping in the background, focusing on an iconic female figure. In a passage which recalls tropes in the poems of Pope, Thomson, or even Peacock, Mildred Archer describes the relief thus:

Britannia, shown seated under a rock beside the sea, is looking towards the east. India approaches offering a casket of jewels. Behind stand Asia and Africa, one leading a camel, the other a lion. To the left, two

⁴⁸ Brian Allen, 'The East India Company's Settlement Pictures: George Lambert and Samuel Scott', in Pauline Rohatji and Pheroza Godrej (eds.), *Under the Indian Sun: British Landscape Artsits* (Bombay, 1995), pp.1-16.

⁴⁹ Mildred Archer, 'The East Company and British Art', *Apollo* (November 1965), p.401.

⁵⁰ It was completed with the assistance of John James, surveyor to the Clerk of Works at Greenwich, who also later submitted a design for the Hospital in 1742. Archer, *op. cit.*, p.402; Nicolson, *op. cit.*, p.11.

⁵¹ Archer, *op. cit.*, p.402.

boys pour out treasures from a cornucopia. On the right, the Thames, a reed-crowned river-god, leans on the rudder of a ship, and in the background mercantile labour and commerce are symbolized by a man carrying a bale and by a fleet of sailing ships.⁵²

Aesthetic conformity suggests ideological correspondence. Each refers to navigation through the motif of a ship's stern - and, in linking the principles of nation, trade and charity around this axis (and here the ship may signify the ship of state, such as frequently occurs in Augustan poetry), the reliefs exemplify the doctrine of a positivist mercantilism: that the national good should be advanced and the nation state magnified by the cumulative economic growth and wealth brought by virtuously-conducted private commercial enterprise, and provision for the poor on a private basis will ensure a labour supply with which trade and manufacture can be carried out.⁵³ Private virtue, in other words, brings public benefits. In this sense, the formal, aesthetic and ideological correspondences of the images makes *Britannia* the *alter ego* of *Charity*, a pictorial proposition which we shall come across again; and, combined, the reliefs constitute a refutation of Mandeville's contention that private *vices* achieved public benefits, and charity was a form of fatuous conscience-salving.⁵⁴ In addition, in their matching of, on the one hand, the image of the accretion of the wealth of the world by Britannia, with, on the other, the direction of that wealth towards an idea of national

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.403.

⁵³ Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, pp.20-33.

⁵⁴ 'An Essay on Charity and Charity-Schools' (1723), in Bernard Mandeville, edited by Phillip Harth, *The Fable of the Bees* (1714-24; Harmondsworth, 1970), pp.261-325.

regeneration through Christian philanthropic virtue, they again offer a diagnosis of the interdependence of the global with the national.

As at the hospital, the Rysbrack was but one component in an overall pictorial scheme. In 1731 George Lambert and Samuel Scott were commissioned to supply six paintings depicting the Company's factories at St. Helena, Cape Town, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Tellicherry (figs.57, 58).⁵⁵ There are two central points. First, they must have been done after drawings or engravings, since neither artist had been to the east. Second, despite this not uncommon division of labour, Scott painting the vessels onto Lambert's cityscapes, they aspire to a considerable degree of topographical verisimilitude, reminiscent of Dutch seventeenth-century paintings. Their technique resembles the coastal profiles officers on board ship made for purposes of military and commercial reconaissance. The emphasis of the paintings, from the implied viewpoint to the prominence of the Company ships in the foreground, is on navigation. Like Boydell's views of the Thames, the bias is with water not land. So, although the ranging images of cities and territories around the walls of a prestigious room recalls the practice of Renaissance and Baroque princes of commissioning map-cycles of their subject lands to adorn their palaces, these are entirely appropriate to the aspirations of the Company as a modern, viable and expanding trading concern.

This decorative scheme supplies a precedent for the General Court Room of the Foundling Hospital.⁵⁶ More specifically, as at East India House, there are topographical views of diverse but thematically-related places, the Foundling having roundels of the other London hospitals interleaved with its history paintings. Scott and

⁵⁵ On this series of paintings, see Allen, *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.10.

Lambert and Rysbrack were involved in different ways at each place. Their paintings and sculptures implied a comparable idea of the public, one which shared many common values and traits, a pivotal one being the idea of navigation.

The aesthetic and ideological presentation of navigation relates to the wider cultural value of the sea and its significance in terms of national identity, against which such institutions are implicated in the discourses of moral and civic regeneration via national maritime supremacy outlined at the beginning of the chapter. Although we are now familiar with it, one further aspect of the ideology requires investigation, the idea, suggested by Rysbrack's *Charity*, of the balance between internal agriculture and external commerce. It is iterated throughout the century in a variety of guises, although often in the context of charity. Thomson couches it in self-consciously Virgilian Georgic form:

Ye generous Britons, venerate the plough;
 And o'er your hills and long withdrawing vales
 Let Autumn spread his treasures to the sun,
 Luxuriant and unbounded. As the sea
 Far through his azure turbulent domain
 Your empire owns, and from a thousand shores
 Wafts all the pomp of life into your ports;
 So with superior boon may your rich soil,
 Exuberant, Nature's better blessings pour
 O'er every land, the naked nations clothe,
 And be the exhaustless granary of a world!

(The Seasons, Spring, ll.67-77)

Almost epiphanously, here Britain's agricultural wealth becomes of global benefit through the medium of the sea, the means by which commerce also binds together a great colonial empire. The synthesis remained potent. Several decades later, Jonas Hanway wrote this prosaic, but no less rhetorical and Georgic, proposal for County Naval Free Schools:

As islanders, we should aspire to the highest relish of the sea, whatever our occupations on shore may be! The scholars in question, being taught how to gain by labour on both elements, may be able to raise their aged parents heads, by plowing the waves, as well as the fields, and guard the watery frontiers of those very grounds which they may have rendered fruitful by their own hands.⁵⁷

Hanway was, importantly, a philanthropist. And this passage recalls both the earlier ideologies of virtuous mercantilism and patriotism associated with the Foundling Hospital, as well as their pictorial expressions. For many of his philanthropic publications Hanway directly enlisted the skills of artist-engravers to design illustrative plates. Many of these were associated with the Foundling Hospital and would be members of the Society of Artists after 1759. As Brian Allen puts it, 'charitable ideals were always close to the intentions of this group of artists.'⁵⁸ They were not only enlisted on a professional basis by the likes of Coram and Hanway, but clearly shared the same social ideals. Thus engravings done for Hanway's publications for charitable

⁵⁷ Quoted in N. Merrill Distad, 'Jonas Hanway and the Marine Society', *History Today* 23 (1973), p.437.

⁵⁸ Brian Allen, 'Engravings for Charity', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 5362, vol. CXXXIV (September, 1986), p.649.

causes, by Hayman, Wale, Major, Walker and Cipriani (fig.59), frequently display the signature(s) of the artist(s), with the phrase 'et donavit' prominently added, precisely as with works donated to the Foundling Hospital, stressing the work of art as a direct contribution to the charity, and consequently to an ideal of civic improvement.⁵⁹ The pictures done by the same group of artists for Hanway's non-charitable publications do not appear to have been donated and do not bear the soubriquet.

The status of the publication, however, does not seem to have radically altered the subjective content of what (both for works donated to the Marine Society and for works done for Hanway's personal publications) are generally didactic allegories expostulating on the maintenance of the mercantile state, often in a manner structurally similar to Rysbrack's reliefs for the East India Company and the Foundling Hospital. Wale's and Major's engraving for the *Motives for the Establishment of the Marine Society* (1757, fig.59) follows the pattern of Hogarth's headpiece and Rysbrack's *Charity*.⁶⁰ Charity presents suitably deferential poverty-stricken children to a seated

⁵⁹ The texts and illustrations in question are as follows: *Motives for the Establishment of the Marine Society. By a Merchant* (1757), frontispiece by Wale, engraved Major [repeated in *An Account of the Marine Society* (1759)]; *A Letter from a Member of the Marine Society* (1757), frontispiece, engraved Major [repeated in *Three Letters on the Subject of the Marine Society* (1758)]; *To the Marine Society in Praise of the great and good work they have done* (1757), frontispiece by Hayman, engraved Walker; *Three Letters on the Subject of the Marine Society* (1758), frontispiece by Cipriani, frontispiece by Hayman, engraved Walker, vignette by Wale, engraved Major, tailpiece by Major. See Hans Hammelmann (ed., completed by T.S.R. Boase), *Book Illustrators in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London, 1975).

⁶⁰ The aspirational and elevated character of the engraving is suggested by its composition being based on Solimena's history painting *Aeneas brought before Dido* (London, National Gallery).

Britannia, who is regaled with various maritime accoutrements. In the background, binding the rhetorical gestures of the allegorical figures, is the crux of the design (as in the Hogarth); a warship at anchor. Charity directs the children towards Britannia, Britannia, to the ship, a gestural politics couched in a discourse of improvement: the children exchange their rags for bright new naval uniforms, while the fine classical stone coursing of the 'Marine Society's Warehouse' behind Britannia opposes the dilapidated mediaeval-looking hovel from which Charity leads the children. The scene refers in addition to individual civic duty, as the boy independently draws away from the group (presumably his family) on the far right, to go to the higher summons of Britannia, while his younger sibling appears to be torn between his natural mother and the call of Britannia, here cast as the 'civic mother' of the 'sons of Britannia' (and also recalling devotional, intercessional images of the Virgin as the Mother of Heaven. The important point is that it is only by the act of Charity that such a choice for the urban poor is made possible (though this choice has a Hobson-like character: as Johnson put it, 'no man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail; for being in a ship is being in jail, with a chance of being drowned.')⁶¹ Britannia and Charity are again seen as at least sisters, the narrative explained by the triumphant motto, 'FOR THE SERVICE OF OUR COUNTRY'. The Marine Society was immediately successful (hardly surprisingly at the beginning of the Seven Years War),

⁶¹ George Birkbeck Hill (ed.), revised and enlarged by L.F. Powell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1934), vol.1, p.348: see also vol. 2, p.438. The theme of choice as the dominating rhetorical structure of a picture is, of course, effectively a *leitmotiv* in the work of Hogarth, e.g., *The Harlot's Progress, Industry and Idleness, The March to Finchley*, and his influence is clearly discernible here.

raising contributions from many diverse sources: the Russia and East India Companies, and the theatre.⁶²

Like Coram, Hanway's public and private personae corresponded. Blakey's engraving for his *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea* (1753, fig.60) presents the familiar allegorical figures and didactic composition. Hanway explained the plate ten years later in a context which points up the ideological parity of trade and Christianity.⁶³

This Print represents Truth with a Sun on her Breast, denoting of light & wisdom that shines from her. She leads Youth by the hand, & from an Eminence Shows Him the World. The Church upon a Hill is intended to express Religion, which has pre-eminence over all other Considerations. The Soldier with a wooden leg the Disasters of War & the misery it occasions. Commerce is denoted by Ships & Merchandize, & Agriculture we is the foundation of Commerce by a man sowing Grain; and the Traveller who gives money to the soldier public & private Gratitude & Generosity.⁶⁴

Hanway's explanation accords with the general tenets of Christian mercantilism, proposing the image as a didactic allegory of the commercial state, while its components are signifiers of complex social and economic abstractions, as with Rysbrack's reliefs. This is suggestive for a wider field: from cartouches for maps to

⁶² Garrick's donating a performance of *The Suspicious Husband* in July, 1757, raised £272 2s: Taylor, *Jonas Hanway*, p.70; Distad, *op. cit.*, p.435.

⁶³ It was used to illustrate Hanway's *Christian Knowledge Made Easy* (London, 1763).

⁶⁴ Cited in Taylor, *Jonas Hanway*, p.137.

higher art forms. The reading of ‘the Traveller who gives money to the soldier’ as ‘public & private Gratitude & Generosity’ suggests, for instance, a pictorial and interpretive typology which feeds through to works such as Penny’s *Marquis of Granby Relieving a Sick Soldier*, a painting which again demonstrates the charitable ideal, and was also exhibited in the context of a society committed to social improvement.⁶⁵

These may appear small-scale, insignificant works compared to the pictorial programme of the Foundling Hospital. But several of the same artists who were governors of the Hospital (and who formed the core of the Society of Artists at its foundation) contributed images to Hanway’s treatises. Furthermore, book illustration, an ‘inferior’ medium, was clearly more suited to the needs of the new society, in reaching as wide a readership as possible with minimum outlay. These, importantly, were the same individuals who were being solicited for patronage. Illustrations done in an allegorical, classicizing manner by artists already known for their connection with the Foundling Hospital would surely have added to the prestige and elevation of the cause they promoted.

Its eventual incorporation was commemorated in an incompetent allegory, attributed to Edward Edwards (fig.61). It clearly echoes Wale’s engraving for the *Motives*, as Charity presents a seated Britannia with a pair of ragged, deferential boys, one of whom, interestingly, is posed as a baptismal initiate. The way Britannia leads the other by the wrist perhaps recalls Blakey’s *Wisdom and Youth*. Neptune’s trident lies prominently in the foreground, Britannia’s spear is directed at a sculpture which epitomises, once again, the maternal-filial relationship around which the ideology of

⁶⁵ Solkin, *op. cit.*, pp.199-206.

charity is constructed. The scene is placed unconvincingly on the shore with fully-rigged ships under sail in the background. What is new is the insertion of Lord Romney (the Society's first President), John Thornton (Treasurer), and Hanway. It is to this group, specifically to the charter in Romney's hand, that Britannia points the boys, while Romney gestures back, both to Britannia and to the ship behind her shoulder. The actual personalities at the heart of the Society's organization appear in their idealized relation to the nation state, to public and private morality, and to overseas commerce. Unlike Hogarth's Mosaic portrayal of Coram, the three men remain merchants unambiguously, Britannia and Romney reciprocating gestures to emphasize likewise that philanthropy serves their mutual interest. The boys themselves remain the conspicuously passive subjects of this transaction. Against the mercantile subtext which informs the image, they are depicted simply as a form of commodity exchange.⁶⁶

Authorship and style are, perhaps, the most important aspects of the works associated with Hanway and the Marine Society. While it was clearly convenient to employ (at no, or reasonable, cost) well-known and respected artists such as Hayman or Wale, these were nevertheless those whom he would have approached automatically, and who would have been sympathetic to his aims. Hanway, an active and prominent member of the Society of Arts, and a governor of the Foundling Hospital from 1756, would have probably been personally acquainted with many, and certainly knew their work. Patron and artist were bound by their common participation in the same social circle, and association with the philanthropic ideal. Hence Hanway did not employ specialist marine artists, such as Brooking, Serres or Swaine.

⁶⁶ This aspect of the sailor's identity is discussed below, chapter 6.

The somewhat stilted pictorial language used by Wale and the others may be seen as an attempt to find an idiom with which to frame the increasingly elevated and complex significance of commerce itself, to find a visual form equivalent to Thomson's epic accounts of British commercial and navigational supremacy, or Bolingbroke's rhetorical advocacy of the national importance of commerce:

By trade and commerce we grow a rich and powerful nation . . . As trade and commerce enrich, so they fortify, our country. The sea is our barrier, ships are our fortresses, and the mariners, that trade and commerce alone can furnish, are the garrisons to defend them.⁶⁷

This conforms to Blakey's illustration to the *Historical Account* and Hanway's commentary on it. The literariness in such images' use of pictorial signs arises not just from the search for as correspondingly elevated a pictorial language as Bolingbroke's writing. While, by mid-century, commerce was becoming more respectable and compatible with the traditional moral strictures of civic humanism, its longstanding associations with corruption, luxury and civic debilitation had debased it in the aesthetic tradition of high art, and left no means by which its positive value could be expressed.⁶⁸

The Biblical treatment of commerce and money which provided subjects for painting, from the tribute money, to Christ ejecting the money-lenders from the temple, to the figure of Mary Magdalen, generally present it in a pejorative light. In contrast, the forms and idiom of history painting, the highest level in the painterly hierarchy of

⁶⁷ Henry St. John, Viscount Lord Bolingbroke, *The Idea of a Patriot King*, in *The Works of Lord Bolingbroke, in Four Volumes* (London, 1844, facsimile repr. 1967), vol. 2, p.414.

⁶⁸ For the changing perception of commerce, see chapters 1 and 3, above.

genres, were suited to the strict moral values of classical humanist civic virtue.⁶⁹ The models painters could turn to to celebrate commerce were Venetian or Dutch paintings. Unfortunately, the Venetian and Dutch schools were associated respectively with, on the one hand, a vacuous ostentation and luxury, and on the other, a narrow particularity of vision, and commercial ‘interestedness’, antithetical to the virtues of selflessness, philosophical oversight, and the ability to elicit nature’s universal principles from a detailed study of its particular circumstances, which were associated with the grand style of history painting, most conspicuously elucidated by Reynolds. Venetian art is ornamental and ostentatious. The Dutch school of landscape is inferior because it merely copies particular identifiable topographies. For Reynolds the practice of painting itself is a form of the choice of Hercules, by which the inexperienced student, to avoid ‘being infected by the contact of vicious models’, should spurn the temptress-like sensual charms of ‘inferior branches of the art’ such as the Venetians or

⁶⁹ For an extended discussion of this point, see John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: ‘The Body of the Public’* (New Haven and London, 1986), pp.3-68. For a discussion of how the painting of the 1760s-70s may be seen as implicating the ascendance of the respectability of commerce and commercial theory, see Solkin, *op. cit.*, pp.231-9; *idem*, ‘ReWrighting Shaftesbury: The *Air Pump* and the Limits of Commercial Humanism’, in John Barrell, (ed.), *Painting and the Politics of Culture* (Oxford, 1992), pp.73-99. For the proposition that a corresponding privatization occurred in landscape aesthetics, see John Barrell, ‘The Public Prospect and the Private View: The Politics of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, in *The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge* (London, 1992), pp.41-61.

Dutch. Reynolds' metaphor, particularly in this context of the relation of art to public virtue, bears a distinct affinity to Fielding's image of the diseased body politic.⁷⁰

If Venetian or Dutch art could be associated with such moral and civic debility, then a suitable visual idiom appropriate to communicate the positive aspects of commerce had to be invented. The image of commerce 'conducted with integrity' and efficiency could hardly be cast in a correspondingly heroic mould: East-Indiamen 'plowing the waves', or Customs and Excise officers going about their work could not but be too 'particular' and 'mechanical', as well as mundane, to be appropriate. Similarly, writers from Addison to Hume stressed the sense of mutuality and

⁷⁰ Sir Joshua Reynolds, edited by Robert R. Wark, *Discourses on Art*, (New Haven and London, 1975), Discourse IV, pp.64, 70, Discourse VI, p.107. Reynolds had rehearsed this argument about Dutch art in his essay to *The Idler* (79), 20 October, 1759, reproduced in Sir Joshua Reynolds, edited by Pat Rogers, *Discourses* (Harmondsworth, 1992), pp.351-3:

to mingle the Dutch with the Italian School, is to join contrarieties which cannot subsist together, and which destroy the efficacy of each other. The Italian attends only to the invariable, the great and general ideas which are fixed and inherent in universal Nature; the Dutch, on the contrary, to literal truth and a minute exactness in the detail, as I may say, of Nature modified by accident. The attention to these petty peculiarities is the very cause of this naturalness so much admired in the Dutch pictures, which, if we suppose it to be a beauty, is certainly of a lower order, that ought to give place to a beauty of a superior kind, since one cannot be obtained but by departing from the other. (p.352)

interconnection between individuals which was effected by trade and merchants, who 'knit Mankind together in a mutual Intercourse of good Offices'.⁷¹

A composition so clumsy as Edwards' (attributed) allegory of the Marine Society appears to constitute an attempt to find a form appropriate to the importance of its subject. He resorted to the adoption of an incongruous amalgam of actual portraits and classicized emblems in a highly theatrical narrative conversation piece. Ironically, such devices were more familiar from the lower pictorial form of the popular political print, or from the type of printed illustration which accompanied treatises such as Hanway's. A comparable pictorial rhetoric, however, was appropriated to the uses of high art, in at least two paintings of a very grand scale and medium, and for prominently public locations: Hayman's *The Triumph of Britannia*, one of four large canvases celebrating the victories of the Seven Years War, done for Vauxhall Gardens (fig.62); and Barry's *Commerce, or the Triumph of the Thames* (fig.63), at the Society of Arts, which latter composition is surely based on the Hayman, to support its unusual format with an illustrious recent precedent.

Hayman's subject was not unprecedented at Vauxhall, where Monamy had supplied four canvases of contemporary battles.⁷² But Hayman rejected Monamy's Dutch-derived style of painting as incapable of intimating the general significance of his

⁷¹ Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, 69 (Saturday 19 May, 1711), in G. Gregory Smith (ed.), *The Spectator: By Joseph Addison, Richard Steele & Others*, 4 vols. (London and Toronto, 1907), vol.1, p.262.

⁷² For discussion of these, see C. Harrison-Walker, *P. Monamy, 1681-1749, Marine Artist* (exhibition catalogue, Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, 1983), cat. no.38; David Coke, 'Vauxhall Gardens', in *Rococo: Art and Design in Hogarth's England* (exhibition catalogue, London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984), cat. no.F40; Solkin, *Painting for Money*, p.138.

subject. So while two canvases represented specific historical moments of the war, as ‘modern moral’ imagery, the protagonists in their ‘Accidental Costume’ and surrounded by ‘authentic’ detail (similar to the way that the Mosaic images at the Foundling Hospital were set in an ‘historically accurate’ Egypt), the other two, the *Triumph* and *Britannia Distributing Laurels*, employed a florid allegorizing idiom to demonstrate and celebrate the patriotic meaning of the victories.⁷³ Hayman was no marine specialist - despite the representation of the famous victory at Quiberon Bay in the background of the *Triumph*. But whereas, as Solkin has argued, the ‘histories’ of *The Surrender of Montreal to General Amherst* and *Lord Clive Receiving the Homage of the Nabob* developed the superficial military subject to embrace discourses of mercy, benevolence, generosity and wisdom as part of the heroic character of the event, and could reinforce that meaning through reference to established iconographies, traditional naval battle pieces could hardly connote the subject’s wider human and national significance.⁷⁴ The *Triumph* therefore draws upon a various pictorial modes to denote the magnificence and universal significance of the subject. Nereids carry roundel portraits of the naval commanders of the war like a series of ‘grangerized’ British worthies, alongside an emblematic Britannia who holds a roundel showing George III in profile, referring to the symbolic depiction of emperors on Roman coins. Britannia is seated majestically in a chariot drawn by rearing, strident sea-horses under the control of a suitably protective and devoted classical Neptune. Thus the image asserts its claim to an heroic status equivalent to that of the two ‘modern moral’ histories. The war itself was important commercially and militarily. As

⁷³ Solkin, *Painting for Money*, p.193.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.193-9.

Burke put it, commerce had been ‘united with, and made to flourish with war’.⁷⁵ *The Triumph of Britannia* contributed to the search for a suitable figurative idiom for the positive depiction of commerce. Ironically, its most direct precedent comes from Dutch marine painting, such as Bakhuizen’s *The Personification of Amsterdam Riding in Neptune’s Chariot* (fig.64), although, to complicate the issue, Bakhuizen’s print must refer to Italian Renaissance emblemata and Mantegnesque depictions of triumphs.

Hayman’s ‘mixture of different pictorial modes’ was familiar from popular prints.⁷⁶ A case in point is Wale’s *The Gift of Neptune, or Britain’s Bulwark* (engraved by Grignion, 1771, fig.65). This adapts Neptune and Britannia conventionally, as husband and wife seated under an oak tree, in the manner of a conversation-piece.⁷⁷ Neptune offers his trident to an individually-portrayed naval officer, who is surely, maintaining the familial basis of the metaphor, one of the ‘sons of Britannia’. Wale shows how the abstract ideals of national identity and maritime supremacy are conferred upon the identifiable individual officer who serves them in practice, just as Bolingbroke’s rhetorical thesis that ‘trade and commerce enrich, [and] fortify, our country’ shifts without interruption into the material arguments which both underpin and are derived from it, becoming increasingly detailed. The particular is shown to be dependent on the general, and the ideology endemic in the rhetorical structure is once

⁷⁵ Cited in Brian Allen, *Francis Hayman* (exhibition catalogue, New Haven and London, 1987), p.70.

⁷⁶ Solkin, *Painting for Money*, p.192

⁷⁷ Other examples of this marriage of Britannia and Neptune in popular prints are: [*Emblematical Print adapted to the Times*], engraved for the *London Magazine* 47 (August, 1778), p.339 (BMC5486); Gillray, *Rodney Invested - or - Admiral PIG on a Cruize* (1782; BMC5996). Of course, during the eighteenth century Britannia also became conventionally depicted holding the trident of Neptune.

more a circular one, in which each element, the whole and its particular parts, augment and reinforce each other. A similar rhetoric is at work in Wale's and Hayman's pictures. Their structural form demands a constant interplay between the abstract (the allegorical ideal) and the particular (the individual portrait, battle or action), which makes explicit to the viewer the analogous general significance of particular navigational and commercial episodes. In the case of Hayman's painting we might see the dual recourse to the medium of high art and to the vocabulary of popular prints as an analogous relation of the general to the particular.

Associating the *Triumph* with popular prints does not necessarily contradict my contention that it constituted an attempt to find an appropriate visual language for aggrandizing commerce. Its sheer scale and prominent position in a public location noted for its social heterogeneity, makes its eclecticism, through its aspiration to high-art status via reference to popular imagery, accessible to the multifarious and largely middle-class sensibilities of its intended audience: one inclusive of merchants, artisans, professional guildsmen, and other urban bourgeois who frequented Vauxhall along with the gentry, aristocracy and royalty of polite society.⁷⁸ By referring to popular prints it affiliates its patriotic message to the populism of the political print audience, while its scale and medium elevate populist sentiment to public policy. It is a history painting addressing a 'structurally transformed' modern public sphere, distinct from the

⁷⁸ For the artistic and social scene at Vauxhall Gardens, see T.J. Edelstein and B. Allen, *Vauxhall Gardens* (exhibition catalogue, New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, 1983); Coke, *op. cit.*, pp.75-98; Brian Allen, 'Francis Hayman and the Supper-Box Paintings for Vauxhall Gardens', in Charles Hind (ed.), *The Rococo in England: A Symposium* (London, 1986), pp.113-33; Solkin, *Painting for Money*, pp.106-56; Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, pp.64-8, 225-6.

Shaftesburian public, hence Barry's reference to Hayman at the Society of Arts. Barry's title, *Commerce, or the Triumph of the Thames*, focusses the arguments of the last two chapters on this single image, part of a scheme conspicuously attempting a heroic style appropriate to the modern era. The Thames is explicitly identified with commercial ideology, and the river and London are mythologized in an obvious attempt to forge a suitable aesthetic form for the expression of commerce. In addition, the picture exemplifies the incongruous eclecticism which such attempts frequently entailed. Its location along the Thames in the offices of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce at the Adelphi (figs.33, 34), puts it firmly in the ideological and social parameters of bourgeois, commercial urbanization and urbanity. Including Cook's portrait implicates the sense of geographical and scientific discovery and globalism. Jonas Hanway recognized all this, insisting as he left its opening exhibition on substituting a guinea for his shilling entrance fee, as a more suitable mark of his esteem.⁷⁹

The necessity to validate commerce pictorially recurred in John Boydell's proposals of 1793 to embellish the Egyptian Hall of Mansion House and the Common Council Chamber of Guildhall with works of art. Boydell's manuscript justification for his plan articulates familiar tropes of commercial ideology: the value of the arts as an index of both national economic well-being and national virtue, and the direction of commerce towards nationally virtuous benefits. Specifically, such decoration - and he proposed that the Council Chamber decoration should be through frescoed allegories derived from Cesare Ripa - would crown the achievements of the Corporation of London in its schemes of modernization of the city; street improvement, street lighting.

⁷⁹ E. Fryer (ed.), *The Works of James Barry* 2 vols. (London, 1809), vol. 1, p.270.

Here then, high art is matched to commercial practice in a particularly visible and symbolic way. Boydell's proposal sees history painting evolving from the humble, commercial and mechanical origins of the rise of English art in his own profession, engraving.

The first great improvements began with employing and encouraging our engravers on proper subjects . . . pursuing with Industry the way proposed, would bring that brand of the Arts to such a degree of perfection, that would be of national advantage by preventing large sums going out, and a great balance in our favour.

When Boydell then states 'that time is happily arrived', he implies that not only has engraving reached a pitch of perfection as a national trade, but the nation itself has achieved commercial pre-eminence, and is superior over other nations in all respects. But the perfection of engraving is only the first step on the road to higher aesthetic achievements:

Of late years, the same steps has [*sic*] been taken to encourage, and improve Historical Painting; . . . much more has been produced, in a short space of time, than could be expected; we have now several Historical Painters, and Statuary's, [*sic*] that do at present great Honour to our Country, . . . by persevering . . . we shall at least rival, if not excell the greatest Masters of Italy and all other Countries.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ John Boydell, *An Account of several Pictures Presented to the Corporation of the City of London* by John Boydell Alderman of the Ward of Cheap 1793 (London, Guildhall Library, MS 198), n.p. The

Boydell notably deals with art and aesthetics from the perspective of political economy. The rise of engraving in England has helped to create a positive trade balance. Success in history painting has nothing to do with academic aesthetic criteria, but with its productive capacity. Boydell is implicitly bringing the theoretical ideal of history painting within the ambit of commercial discourse and practice. Yet, he discerns a directly moral benefit in the proposed decoration, recognizable from philanthropic ideology: the decoration of the Egyptian Hall would ‘shew the utilities of the Arts to their greatest perfection’, and thus provide an example and an opportunity to the spendthrift to redirect his money from luxurious dissipation to public utility,

to make a real Paradise on earth, by illuminating a place, that would forever shine, and display their generosity, their Honour, their Taste, & their Benevolent disposition (I must call it so) to please his [sic] fellow Citizens and the Public.⁸¹

Although the basic principles here are recognizable from, say, Hume’s *Of Refinement in the Arts*, so forceful an association of the practical benefits of commerce with aesthetic theory and practice would have been hardly thinkable forty years earlier.

Yet the problem of artistic idiom remained. One version of Boydell’s plan for Guildhall revolved around allegories of Providence, Innocence, Wisdom and Happiness. In turn these involve sub-allegories of Industry and Idleness, Childhood and Youth, Commerce and Fame, Liberality and Honour. Each is given an iconographic

text is reproduced in full in Sven Bruntjen, *John Boydell, 1719-1804: A Study of Art Patronage and Publishing in Georgian London* (New York and London, 1985), pp.273-6.

⁸¹ Boydell, *op. cit.*

description.⁸² Commerce would again be depicted as a ship at sea. Its national significance, however, in terms of the character of the extended social structure which it begets (so lucidly and persuasively argued in the prose of Hume or Johnson), can only be pictorially adduced by the clumsy, inadequate symbols of millstones and a stork, both variously indicating ‘that mutual assistance . . . necessary for the support of trade’ (storks supplying physical assistance to each other when flying *en masse*).

William Hodges would supply similar, though more credible, depictions of commerce in his 1794 catalogue for the exhibition of his two large ‘historical landscapes’, *Peace, Exemplifying the Happy State of England in the Year 1795*, and *War, shewing the Misery of Internal Commotion*. So, the first scene

represents a sea-port thronged with shipping, expressive of Commerce; the great public buildings denote its Riches; a large bay opening to the ocean, merchant ships going out, others returning, shew the extension of its trade to the most distant parts of the globe.⁸³

The remainder of the landscape is itself correspondingly bountiful. Global commerce is again balanced with agrarian self-sufficiency; the happy constitution and executive

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Isabel C. Stuebe, *The Life and Works of William Hodges* (New York, 1979), pp.351-2. The political significance of these paintings is discussed in Stephen Deuchar, *Sporting Art in Eighteenth-Century England: A Social and Political History* (New Haven and London, 1988), pp.156-9. A similar investment of imperial values in the English landscape, and a correlation between the literature of exploration and that of domestic touring, has been argued in relation to the Picturesque: James Whale, ‘Romantics, explorers, and Picturesque travellers’, in Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (eds.), *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics since 1770* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.175-95.

government with the industry and 'happy state' of the peasantry. The description is especially significant not simply for making navigation central within the commercial landscape, but, specifically, for claiming to represent England in 1795. Now, it seems, the allegorical depiction of commercial ideology has been synthesized with the very geography of the nation, in the same way as Gillray's *The French Invasion;-Or-John Bull Bombarding the Bum-Boats* (fig.18) conflates national identity with cartographic representation.⁸⁴ Like views of Greenwich and the Pool of London, the 'historical' land- and sea-scape of England is inscribed here with highly-charged discourses of patriotism, commerce and virtue, recognizable from the programmes of urban modernization encapsulated by the Foundling Hospital, Marine Society, and Boydell's scheme for the Guildhall.

⁸⁴ It is perhaps significant that Gillray's own pair of prints, *The Horrors of War* and *The Blessings of Peace*, were probably direct satires of Hodges' pictures: Deuchar, *op. cit.*, p.158.

Chapter Five: Marine artists and print culture

Boydell insisted that urban commercialism provided the basis for the regeneration of the arts in Britain, by encouraging the growth of the print trade. And here, in the premises of the printseller's shop and publishing house (where the work of marine specialists is placed side by side with that of the established artistic community), some heterogeneity of artistic genres and practitioners is found. As we have seen printsellers like Thomas Kitchin and Carrington Bowles also supplied engraved maps and charts. The print-publisher was in this sense a distinctly bourgeois character, in that s/he supplied information in a mass medium which dealt frequently with subjects of global, colonial events and territories, of prime interest to a prospering trading community. I wish now to expand upon some of the issues raised in the last chapter, particularly regarding the linkage between maritime imagery and popular patriotism, as manifested in popular prints.

From the start we must endorse Herbert Atherton's significant observation, and note that what printsellers produced and stocked was openly motivated by their political opinions (often sympathetic to the opposition). Of course their stock included many political satires, which Atherton connects to the rise of nationalism.¹ Britannia and John Bull were the most obviously relevant and dominant iconographies of political prints. But there were others. A connection may be seen between popular patriotism and the image of navigation: certain printsellers, connected with overtly

¹ Herbert M. Atherton, *Political Prints in the Age of Hogarth: A Study of the Ideographic Representation of Politics* (Oxford, 1974), pp.84-5.

patriotic and oppositionist satires, seem also to have been more open to encouraging both satires on navigational themes and also maritime artists' prints.

The production of popular prints must be seen in the wider context of the widespread and various expression of popular patriotism. As Kathleen Wilson has shown, such extra-parliamentary political expression became properly manifest from the late 1730s, with the events leading up to the War of Jenkins' Ear, focussing particularly on the Anglo-Spanish colonial contest in the Caribbean.² Admiral Vernon's capture in November 1739 of the Spanish colonial ports of Porto Bello and Chagres intensified domestic patriotism, turning him into a popular hero, and subsequently a successful politician (as well as Grand-President of the Association of Anti-Gallicans) from his espousal of a mercantilist and colonialist policy.³ If trade, as we saw in the last chapter, inspired a sense of civic responsibility and social improvement through the exercise of philanthropy, the corollary of this was the need for aggressive military protection of navigation and colonial resources. *The Craftsman* put it succinctly in 1738:

The general cry is War, Revenge on the SPANIARDS, Restitution for our PAST LOSSES, Satisfaction to our NATIONAL HONOUR, and

² Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.142-52.

³ Kathleen Wilson, 'Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon', *Past and Present* 121 (1988), pp.74-109.

above all, ample Security to our FUTURE TRADE and NAVIGATION.⁴

Nationalism, trade, navigation and war: the same ideological circle is subsequently found with the establishment of the Marine Society at the outbreak of the Seven Years War, with philanthropy matched with belligerent colonialism. Similarly, this was patriotism of a popular character, expressed through charitable institutions and urban societies, and more demotically, through the theatre and print.⁵

Here again the Antigallicans make their presence felt. Boitard's *The Imports of Great Britain from France* (fig.38), was dedicated to the Association and 'to the generous promoters of British Arts & Manufactures', suggesting that for Boitard, like Theophilus Cibber, militant Francophobic patriotism and the ideals of, for example, the Society of Arts, were simply two sides of the same coin, aiming both to 'discourage by precept and example, the importation and consumption of French produce and

⁴ *London Evening Post*, 17-19 August 1738, quoted in Wilson, 'Empire, Trade and Popular politics', p.79, n.15.

⁵ For the theatre as a cipher for popular patriotism, see Theophilus Cibber, *Two Dissertations on the Theatres* (London, 1756), quoted in Kathleen Wilson, 'Empire of Virtue: The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture c.1720-1785', in Lawrence Stone (ed.), *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London and New York, 1994), p.138, which, besides being addressed to the 'Anti-Gallicans, and the Trading Part of the Nation', gives a stark diagnosis of the relation of the arts to commerce and the navy:

the Natives of this Sea-Girt Isle will not readily forget our Navy's our best Bulwark, that our Traffic is the best Support of that Navy: that not only Riches, but Power and Glory are added to this Nation, by its extended Commerce. With that, our Arts and Sciences increase.

manufactures, and to encourage, on the contrary, the produce and manufactures of great Britain'.⁶ The engraving was also published by Thomas Bowles, who had himself produced prints combining commercial, patriotic and maritime themes (fig.24).⁷

The Antigallicans' fixation with the maritime was clear not only from their issuing premiums for different types of maritime achievement (for example, whaling), but from their activities at the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. In 1756 its members, 'remarkable for their true Revolution Principles', formed a subscription to buy a privateer to aid the naval effort against the French. The ship, of twenty-eight guns, was put into commission in Deptford, renamed the *Antigallican*, and launched on September 17th, 'amidst the loudest Aclamations, [sic] the most jovial Cheers and Huzzas'. With advance money paid to the crew, and six months provisions, 'all the product of *Middlesex* and *Kent*, generally supplied from the Estates of the Proprietors: There was not the least Thing in, or about her, but what was entirely *English*'.⁸ Unfortunately for the Association the ship's success 'was not equal to the laudable design with which she was equipped.'⁹ Having captured a French prize, the *Penthièvre*, off La Coruña, and taken it into the neutral port of Cádiz, the *Antigallican* suffered the embarrassment of having the prize confiscated by the Spanish authorities and effectively handed back to the French. The episode provoked a good deal of protest, including

⁶ Isaac Hunt, 'Some Account of the Laudable Institution of the Society of Antigallicans', in *Sermons on Public occasions* (London, 1781), v.

⁷ For Cibber, see n.5 above. For discussion of Bowles' imagery of the Thames, see above, chapter 3.

⁸ *The Antigallican Privateer; Being a Genuine Narrative From Her Leaving Deptford, September 17, 1756, to the present Time . . . By a Gentlemen just arrived from Cadiz* (London, J. Reason, 1757), pp.4-6.

⁹ Isaac Hunt, *Some Account . . . of the Society of Antigallicans*, ix.

ineffective petitions to the government. Popular outrage was expressed both in a series of letters to the patriotic journal *The Craftsman*, and in several prints.

Two, from 1757, are vitriolically entitled 'The British Flag Insulted'. One was sold by T. Ewart 'at the Bee-hive near St. Martin's Lane' (fig.66), the other by Edwards and Darly 'at the Golden Acorn, Opposite Hungerford Market' (fig.67).¹⁰ The price of the latter was 6d., and significantly was signed 'C. Edwards Invt', giving clear notice that his shop was in the business of selling his own political opinions as well as other draughtsmen's prints.

The Ewart print contains a verse of belligerent patriotic sentiments, identified with the straightforward honest tar represented in the accompanying cartouche:

Are not I, Tom, and you, true *Englishmen* bred?
 And so is *Jack Larboard*, and *Starboard*, and *Ned*:
 I wish the King's Ministry fill'd with such Fellows,
 And those that were not so, we wou'd hang on the Gallows.
 Good God? were Things so, then Old *England* wou'd be,
 More respected at Home, and more dreaded at Sea:
 No Insults they'd offer, no Prizes detain;
 But admit us the Sov'reigns of all the Whole Main.

This patriotic identification of the ship and its crew with the good of the nation, opining that all would be well if the country was run like a well-organized ship by right-thinking, no-nonsense seamen, is frequently adduced in such satires on the government, as a 1756 print by Townshend, *The Pillars of the State* (fig.68). This

¹⁰ BMC 3560, 3561.

lampoons the ministry of Newcastle and Fox. The 'Pillars of the State' erected and personified by these two ministers are two gibbets, between which is hanging the overturned ship-of-state with a crowing French cockerel atop it. The two prints make the same point. To neglect Britain's naturally maritime character, its navy and merchant marine, is to misgovern. No longer is the ship-of-state pictured in a purely metaphorical way, as traditionally in Renaissance images of the *Navicella*, the ship of the church, or the Ship of Fools. The ship has become not just a symbol of the state; but, in one sense, the state itself. And in these images, and many others like them, the ship becomes the embodiment of the ideology of patriotism, patriotism, as it were, in material form. Townshend's satire therefore is deeply ironic. While it proposes that to have Newcastle and Fox 'at the helm' is to overturn the ship-of-state and leave it hanging upon the gallows of arbitrary power, their misgovernment consists precisely in the neglect of the Navy, by which Britain was suffering at the hands of the French.

Ostensibly these are very different conceptions of the ship from Lord Kames' of its ideal utilitarian beauty: particularly Ewart's print, with its populist references to the crew and Jack Tar, who here seems to become a marine version of John Bull, the epitome of military devotion. But Townshend's is analogous to Kames. While the latter argues that the ship has a heightened aesthetic value because of the chain of associations which link its material function and form to its abstract ideological end of commerce, for Townshend the chain of associations by which its material form is linked to its military end endows it with an extended political significance. In both cases the successful operation of the 'mechanism of the ship' is nationally beneficial, and invests the vessel with a meaning beyond its utilitarian value as machine. And in both cases the ship is an integral material component of the nation for which it stands

in an extended metaphorical relation. The image of the ship here is one which is self-referential, being both symbolic yet also the substantive reference of the symbol.

The image of the ship-of-state was common in prints, particularly during periods of national crisis. *The Infernal Sloop, Chasing the Good Ship Britannia* of 1770 (fig.69) combines the stances of Ewart's and Townshend's prints, to invest the ship-of-state with the imperfect qualities of the officers commanding it, and characterizes the crew with the redeeming features necessary for its survival, as they try to lead it to a safe haven.¹¹ In conformity with Atherton's analysis that in the developing iconography of popular nationalism the new figures of Britannia and John Bull were inserted among a panoply of traditional emblematic types, such as 'Justice, Liberty, Fortune, Time, the Devil, Furies, Fame . . . in presenting an allegory of patriotism', it also combines the traditional print figure of the Devil with the iconographic neologism of Britannia. The 'Good Ship Britannia' is being pursued and fired upon by Hell's own vessel, at the same time as trying to negotiate a dramatically ironic choppy sea. Its Union ensign has fallen, and it is sinking fast under the weight of its cargo, labelled 'Secret Service', 'National Debt', 'Places', 'Pensions', 'Reversions', and 'Stamp Act'. The figures on board represent different establishment types or institutions. One, a J.P., has scampered up the bowsprit to try to save himself, tellingly, perching on the figurehead, Britannia, to imply that he will see her go under before he does. As with Ewart's Antigallican print, the qualities of industry and sober common sense belong to the crew, who row laboriously to tow the ship to safety. One of them utters a nostalgic patriotic invocation, 'Ah, Jack, we made the Foe Fly when Pit had

¹¹ BMC 4842.

the helm'. Another advocates the Defoe-like middle-class virtues of moderation and perseverance: 'if we keep Sober & Resolv'd we may bring her into Harbour yet.'

The same combination of middle- and lower-class loyalty, and the perception of the patrician class as duplicitous, foppish and sympathetic to the enervating influence of French fashions and taste, governs Boitard's satire *The Imports of Great Britain from France* as well as numerous other mid-century prints.¹² As Gerald Newman has argued, this was characteristic of the patriotism of the 1750s and 60s:

What was really new about the patriotic politics of the fifties . . . was its remarkably strident insistence that the road to national greatness was the global expansion of British trade and the total destruction of that French economic and military power which, like French culture, was now flourishing everywhere; and, secondly, its deepening suggestion, . . . in contemporary prints, John Brown's *Estimate* and other sources, that England's vital affairs were in the hands of hardened Francophiles, addicted by both taste and fashion to the superiority of the national enemy.¹³

The image of honest Jack Tar correspondingly began to appear around the mid-century.¹⁴ His is a figure of course to which the Marine Society appeals, and is directly depicted in an engraving of 1781 for Hanway's *Rules of the Maritime School at*

¹² For a sample, see Michael Duffy, *The Englishman and the Foreigner*, in the series edited by Michael Duffy, *The English Satirical Print 1600-1832* (Cambridge, 1986).

¹³ Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740-1830* (London, 1987), p.169.

¹⁴ This aspect of the image of the seaman is dealt with in chapters 6 and 10, below.

Chelsea (fig.70), where Britannia leans familiarly on the shoulder of a young rating (now grown up from the ragged orphan of Wale's image of two decades before) and points to the white cliffs he is to defend for her. The relationship between Britannia and the marine has developed from the earlier mother-son axis, to one of vulnerable woman and her champion. In a verse charged with appropriately sexual undertones, she addresses him as her 'steady Champion' and 'filial friend':

Flee Vice, whatever mien the Siren wears;
 With cautious steps avoid her dang'rous snares.
 These Chalky Cliffs with noble warmth defend,
 My steady Champion and my filial friend!

There also appears to be a (presumably unintentional) sexual ambiguity about the 'Chalky Cliffs' that he is to defend. For while she points to the white cliffs in the background, the sailor's gaze seems fixed upon her cleavage.

Perhaps the most extraordinarily overt visualization of the ordinary seaman as a patriotic champion is *St. George for England* (fig.71), a print of 1781 derived from a painting exhibited originally at the 1762 Society of Sign-Painters exhibition as one of a series of seven titular saints of various European countries. It alone refrained from pejorative national stereotyping. One contemporary reviewer found the whole series

Capital . . . St. George is an English Sailor, mounted on a Lion, with a Spit [by Way of Lance] bearing a Sirloin of Beef in one Hand, and a full Pot of Porter, marked *Only Threepence a QUART*, in the other. By the Lion's Foot are two Scrolls, like Ballads, the one inscribed, O the Roast Beef of Old England; the other, Hearts of Oak are our Men.

By contrast

St. Dennis is a Frenchman, mounted on a Deer, a timorous swift-footed Animal, with a small Sword, in one Hand, on which a Frog appears to be spitted, and a Dish of Soup Maigre in the other.¹⁵

These pieces clearly draw on the Francophobic patriotic iconography of Hogarth's *Calais Gate*. The original exhibition, likewise, (ostensibly lampooning the exhibition of the Society of Artists) had been staunchly lower-middle-class, artisanal and patriotic, advertising its commitment to allow only English artists or sign-painters, with no foreigners, and had Hogarth's support.¹⁶ This group's automatic association of patriotism with the maritime is pointed up by the way that St. George is stripped of his history as chivalric, land-based knight and transformed into a Jack Tar. Yet when Pitt the Younger was popularly perceived as 'the embodiment of the English National Character' and stridently nationalistic in the 1790s, the ship-of-state is shown to be in safe hands, and under the command of a skilled navigator at the helm.¹⁷ Gillray's 1793 *Britannia between Scylla and Charybdis* (fig.72) has Pitt steering a humble ship-of-state carrying a vulnerable and helpless Britannia between the rock of democracy on the one hand, and the whirlpool of arbitrary power on the other. The safe island haven with its homely castle looms welcomingly on the horizon.

Of course, printsellers sold marine images of a more orthodox kind: ship portraits, depictions of naval engagements, and so on. Here it is significant that

¹⁵ *St. James's Chronicle*, Thurs., April 29 - Sat., May 1, 1762, p.3.

¹⁶ Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth*, 3 vols. (New Brunswick NJ, 1991-3), vol.3: *Art and Politics: 1750-1764*, pp.341-2, 351-61.

¹⁷ Newman, *op. cit.*, p.217.

Thomas' nephew Carrington Bowles, who took over the business on the death of his uncle, was obviously sympathetic to such marine subjects, and, as Atherton observes, the family stayed shy of political prints. Yet they did publish two other anti-French pieces by Boitard, *Britain's Rights maintained; or French Ambition dismantled* and *British Resentment, or the French fairly Coopt at Louisburg*, both of 1755, the latter of which has a distinctly marine and imperialist content.¹⁸ Although not overt as with political satires, a clear political value of popular patriotism was attached to the production of marine prints, enhanced by their place in the middle-class, trading environment of the printseller's shop. Consistent with such sentiments were prints commemorating naval battles of the Seven Years' War, done in a Dutch-derived style, such as the coloured etching *The Brave Capt. Tyrrell in the Buckingham of 66 Guns & 472 Men defeating the Florissant, Aigrette & Atlante, three French Ships of War, the 3rd of Novr 1758 . . .* (fig.73), by Francis Swaine, a marine specialist attached primarily to the marine community, and little known among mainstream artists. At last, therefore, at the printseller's shop, we find a middle class, polite, trading City environment where the image of navigation is tangibly connected with the society involved in navigational practice, since Swaine almost certainly also had a good deal of experience at sea.¹⁹ The statistical detail given in the title of such a print, together with the sheer number of similar images produced during this and subsequent wars, gave them *en masse* a documentary, news-bringing character. When placed alongside the other goods for sale at the same premises, from Boitard's Anti-Gallican satires, to Thomas Bowles' own views of the Thames discussed above (fig.24), to maps of many

¹⁸ Atherton, *op. cit.*, p.5. The prints' catalogue nos. are BMC 3331 and 3332.

¹⁹ David Cordingly, *Marine Painting in England 1700-1900* (London, 1974), pp.85-6.

kinds', the combined effect is to present a world view, offering various types of information and critique of particular interest to a bourgeois, mercantile audience, structured along similar lines to that of contemporary periodicals and journals such as *The Universal Magazine*.²⁰ These magazines often contained comparable prints. *The Infernal Sloop, Chasing the Good Ship Britannia* (fig.69) is subtitled 'Engraved for the Gentleman's Museum, & Grand Imperial Magazine', while Wale's and Grignion's *The Gift of Neptune* (fig.65) was printed in the Oxford Magazine.

The print-publisher's was a locus of cross-sectional artistic practice, between communities and individuals who, as we have seen, did not usually meet in a professional capacity. For example, the same pair of Boydell (publisher) and Ravenet (engraver) who transformed Hayman's *Triumph of Britannia* into a collector's print, was also engaged on producing Brooking's representations of naval engagements of the War of the Austrian Succession.²¹ Swaine and Monamy had their work engraved by Remigius Parr, who also worked on Wale's images for Hanway.²² Occasionally it is clear that different specialists collaborated on a subject before it went to the engraver. In *The desperate action between the Terrible and Vengeance Dec, 1757 . . .* (fig.74) the artists were Smirke and Cleveley, the engraver Slann and the publisher Bowyer.

²⁰ Atherton, *op. cit.*, p.5.

²¹ For example, National Maritime Museum cat. no. PAG 8812.

²² Many of these prints were reissued during later crises of war with France, particularly during the 1790s and 1800s, by Laurie and Whittle (plus, later, James and Roberts). There are also prints showing the combination of Francis Swaine (artist), Remigius Parr (engraver) and Sayer (publisher); Robert Cleveley and Robert Bowyer; Brooking and Peter Mazell. For example, National Maritime Museum cat. nos. PAF 4584, PAF 4585, PAG 8813, PAF 4578, PAF 4586. The first three of these seem to be in the same series as PAG 8812 (see n.21, above).

Cleveley did the battle, Smirke the flanking figures of armed tars. Smirke was also, presumably, responsible for a composition adapted from the form of an altarpiece, in which the tars are transformed into devotional figures at the altar of national naval glory.²³

The medium of the print, and the institution of the printseller's shop, in its propensity towards a heterogeneity of subjects, and its frequent outspokenness of political, particularly patriotic, opinions, offered a direct meeting-ground for marine art and artists with the established artistic community, and with the practice of bourgeois mercantile society. At this period the marine artist was not generally an integrated member of that community, with the few exceptions being those whose names recur repeatedly in the context of marine art of the 1760s-1780s, to the virtual exclusion of all others: Dominic Serres, Richard Wright and Richard Paton. Although marine painting was prominent in exhibitions, marine artists, apart from these three, were not on the governing committees, or generally even members (Francis Swaine is an interesting exception), of the societies putting them on.²⁴ Serres was the only marine artist among the founder members of the Royal Academy, and the work of these three artists monopolizes the content of contemporary reviews devoted to marine painting.²⁵ The separation of the marine from the mainstream artistic community is more pointedly

²³ In the 1750s there were also many collaborations between Boydell and Brooking, that is, at approximately the same time as Boydell was producing his series of views of England and the Thames, particularly the river's lower reaches (figs.26-8, 46).

²⁴ See John Pye, *Patronage of British Art: An Historical Sketch* (London, 1845; facsimile repr. London, 1970).

²⁵ This is deduced from consulting the collection of newspaper cuttings dealing with eighteenth-century art exhibitions at the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, London.

illustrated by a simple consideration of addresses. In Mortimer's *Universal Director of* 1763, among an extensive list of artists whose names are recognizable from their involvement in the Foundling Hospital, the Society of Artists, the Free Society, and as the founders-to-be of the Royal Academy, there are only four marine painters, Paton, Serres, Wright, and one Thomas Swain.²⁶ Thomas Hood *is* included, but as a 'Designer of Ships, &c. in Indian Ink.' Most importantly, with the single exception of Hood who resided in Limehouse, all of these lived within the City or Westminster, in the same neighbourhoods as the members of the mainstream artistic community.

The book's purpose was to facilitate contact between the artist or artisan and patron, by-passing unscrupulous middle-men and dealers.²⁷ It is interesting that he only names these four marine painters, who themselves lay claim to belong to an artistic rather than a marine neighbourhood.²⁸ Specialist marine artists tended to have naval or maritime backgrounds, often experience at sea, and addresses among the maritime

²⁶ Thomas Mortimer, *The Universal Director; Or, the Nobleman and Gentleman's True Guide to the Masters and Professors of the Liberal and Polite Arts and Sciences; And of the Mechanic Arts, Manufactures and Trades, Established in London and Westminster, and their Environs. In Three Parts* (London, 1763). See also James Taylor, *Marine Painting: Images of Sail, Sea and Shore* (London, 1995), p.60.

²⁷ Mortimer, *op. cit.*, preface.

²⁸ Paton, Serres, Wright and Swain are listed as living at Soho, Piccadilly, Grosvenor Square, and Westminster, respectively. Likewise, Boydell lived in Queen St., Cheapside, Cipriani in Golden Square, Grignon in Covent Garden, Hayman in St. Martin's Lane, Lambert in Covent Garden, Major in St. Martin's Lane, Ravenet in Soho, Rysbrack in Oxford Road, Wale in Castle St. near the Mews, and Walker in Fetter Lane. Significantly, Hanway's address was Durham Yard, just off The Strand, in other words, in the vicinity of the artists he patronized and whom he must have come across in his activities for the Foundling Hospital and the Society of Arts.

communities of the capital.²⁹ Not only were such artists removed socially from the fashionable artistic milieu of London in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, but they inhabited areas popularly associated with a distinctly impolite social class, a connotation discernible from the social satires published by Carrington Bowles on the bawdy or pugilistic character of seamen, and which, by being constantly reiterated in novels and plays reflected a social gulf between the naval community and polite society. Hence in *Humphrey Clinker*, Matthew Bramble is appalled to discover that at Bath families of mercantile and maritime backgrounds mix in the same social sphere as the nobility.³⁰ It may be therefore that the aesthetic discrepancy between marine and ‘establishment’ art reflects a more general separation of the marine community from society at large, which pertained to moral differentiations of propriety and respectability.³¹ Not only did marine artists live and participate in disreputable areas and communities such as Wapping, Deptford and Rotherhithe (it is no coincidence that

²⁹ Robert Dodd lived in Wapping; Francis Holman in Wapping also, then at St. George’s, Middlesex; Thomas Luny shared the same address for a time as Holman, then lived at Ratcliffe. Thomas Allen had addresses in Greenwich and Woolwich; the Cleveley family (John the elder, John the younger, Robert and James) in Deptford, where they were brought up in various shipyard professions; Brooking was ‘brought up in the dockyards at Deptford’: Cordingly, *op. cit.*, pp.72-92 (quote, p.80).

All of these artists, as far as is known, had direct experience at sea in a professional maritime capacity.

³⁰ Tobias Smollett, edited by Angus Ross, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771; Harmondsworth, 1985), pp.65-6, 78-9

³¹ See below, chapters 6 and 7.

Hogarth sticks the ever-degenerating Idle Apprentice in a garret in Wapping).³² But these were the very communities that the Foundling Hospital, Marine Society, the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and other philanthropies were set up to redeem for the national good. The contemporary ambivalence towards the idea of the 'marine' is noticeable in its ideographic expression. Navigation might form the axis of the 'Christian mercantilism' propounded by Hanway and the merchants of the City of London, yet the communities at the heart of navigational and mercantile practice were the targets of the same merchants' projects for moral and civic redemption. Hence the ambiguity we see in Hayman. While producing *The Triumph of Britannia* in adulation of the Navy, and prints for Hanway's Marine Society treatises, *The Wapping Landlady* (fig.75) reinforces popular clichés of the tar and his typical consort.³³ It is germane to this point that Samuel Scott, noted for his marine pieces, and puffed by Horace Walpole in the *Anecdotes of Painting* as, following the example of Hogarth, an artist who was fitted 'for an age of naval glory', lived in Twickenham, as far as he could get from the community which formed the subjects of much of his work.³⁴ And he appears never to have been to sea in his life.³⁵

³² Hogarth, *Industry and Idleness*, plate 7: *The Idle 'Prentice return' d from Sea, & in a Garret with a common Prostitute*, 1747, London, British Museum. The maritime community in London, therefore, inhabited the marginal, liminal spaces of the city: what Joseph Roach, following Barthes, has termed the city's 'ludic space': Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York, 1996), p.28.

³³ The term 'Wapping landlady' had distinctly derogatory connotations, the slang verb 'to wap' meaning 'to copulate, to beat': *The 1811 Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue; Buckish Slang, University Wit and Pickpocket Eloquence* (facsimile repr., Studio Editions, London, 1994).

³⁴ Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting*, 3 vols. (1762-71; London, 1888), vol. 1, preface, xiii.

The subject of navigation in prints, therefore, reveals a more complex dialectic surrounding maritime iconography. While implicated in popular politics, with associations of oppositional plebeian culture and class division, it also entrenches nationalistic stereotypes of the manly British tar, and virtues of plainness and sincerity. Likewise, print culture offers a forum whereby marine artists could cross the social and aesthetic boundaries occasioned by their profession, to be part of a more heterogeneous, less stratified art practice. They seem to be more easily accommodated within the more demotic, vernacular sphere, which provokes questions about the status of marine art and its practitioners, since they are clearly not uniform. The different identities within the overall community of marine artists, and the problematic status of maritime subjects, particularly when treated by non-maritime artists, which have been highlighted by an examination of prints, will be explored in greater detail in Part Two.

³⁵ Kenneth Sharpe and Richard Kingzett, *Samuel Scott Bicentenary: Paintings, Drawings and Prints* (exhibition catalogue, London, Guildhall Art Gallery, 1972).

Part One: Conclusion

As this section has suggested, navigation as an artistic theme presents a case for loosening the established boundaries between aesthetic genres and media (especially when considered within the context of bourgeois, mercantile patronage and ideology). It was a subject in large-scale oil painting, sculptural relief, and engravings for hand-bills and magazines; and in genres from history painting to political prints. The determining classification therefore cannot be whether a work should be classed as marine art or not, but the pertinence of its subject-matter to identifiable ideologies of patriotism, philanthropy and commerce. And it is here that there is a link between such apparently diverse material as the art produced for the East India Company, the Foundling Hospital, the Guildhall, the illustrations for Hanway's treatises, and cheap prints and social satires.

Yet, apparently paradoxically, marine art, when the work of artists from maritime backgrounds, was accorded a status such as largely marginalized it from critical aesthetic debate and the related social milieu, as being outside the bounds, both topographically and socially, of what polite art was supposed to comprise. Marine painting's predominantly static character as a genre meant that its ideologically problematic implications could be deflected by automatically referring it to its determining aesthetic criterion, seventeenth-century Dutch marine painting. For this remained the yardstick by which British marine art was to be measured until well into the nineteenth century. It is no coincidence that Turner's *Bridgewater Sea-piece* was composed as a mirror image of its Van de Velde pendant. Nor is it insignificant that Boydell and other printsellers, as discussed above, could re-issue prints of naval battles

of the Seven Years War as jingoistic, morale-boosting exemplars for the conduct of Britain's war with France in the 1790s: the aesthetic continuity between marine imagery of the 1750s and 1790s could reinforce the sense of British national stability in the face of the French Revolution, by reference to the naturalized mythology of the maritime state. In this sense, the very consistency of marine painting through the eighteenth century facilitated its limited canonic appropriation, and its capacity to signify in a positive patriotic or loyal way, rather than a threatening, alien one, for a landed establishment spectatorship. Nicholas Pocock made his substantial reputation by producing works conspicuously and reassuringly based on Dutch or earlier British models. His *Nelson's Flagships* (1805, fig.76) is in its essential aspects very similar to Brooking's donation to the Foundling Hospital (fig.51), or, better still, the 1760 print commemorating the accession of George III (fig.77). Both show a composite group of ships (Nelson's ships were never thus together) at anchor in a calm sea, set against an extensive, low horizon and clear sky, both celebrating the maritime axis of British power. Similarly, while Louthembourg in the 1790s was devising sublime and apocalyptic compositions to communicate the scale and import of battles such as those of the First of June or Camperdown (fig.132), Pocock visualized them in the detached traditional Dutch-derived manner of a bird's-eye view (fig.78). Against this conservative aesthetic confined to specialist marine painting, with its particular technical demands, the innovatory transformations in maritime iconography were wrought through its appropriation, by non-marine specialists, to an aesthetic concerned with the articulation of a suitable visual idiom for the modern British state, driven by commerce, and its institutions. While Pocock's, Lunny's or Dodd's pictures of East Indiamen (fig.50) may be associatively understood as representations of modern British

commercial prosperity, their overt reference to a seventeenth-century pictorial tradition (fig.79) denies this, suggesting rather that they signify, if anything, the longevity and stability of the British East India Company, a notion that the Company would presumably have been keen to promote in the difficult commercial climate of the 1780s.¹ The modern commercial aspect of the Company was instead pictured by establishment artists, from Scott and Lambert in the 1730s to Spiridione Roma's ceiling painting of 1778, which clearly pays tribute to Rysbrack's relief of *Britannia receiving Riches from the East* (fig.56).

The apparent paradoxes here are largely chimerical, derived from the arbitrariness of art-historical classifications, and their dislocation from cultural and ideological contexts. In *Marine Painting in England, 1700-1900* David Cordingly classifies different groups of artists exclusively according to style. He distinguishes an eighteenth-century British school of marine painting, often characterized by an almost naive directness, 'a delight in flat shapes', which dispensed with 'traditional rules of harmony' in favour of 'a more literal approach', from a subsequent Romantic style of marine painting.² This is one way, and in many respects a legitimate one, of fitting marine painting within the established aesthetic criteria of genres such as 'Romantic'. But it is also remarkable that virtually all the artists of the former group derive from maritime or dockyard backgrounds, and were often seamen by profession first and

¹ On the financial and political problems posed by the East India Company at this period, see H.V. Bowen, *Revenue and Reform: the Indian problem in British Politics 1757-1773* (Cambridge, 1993); and on the perception of East India merchants, see Philip Lawson and Jim Phillips, "'Our execrable banditti'": perceptions of nabobs in mid-eighteenth-century Britain', *Albion* 16 (1984), pp.225-41.

² David Cordingly, *Marine Painting in England 1700-1900* (London, 1974), p.73.

foremost besides being artists.³ Those listed under the rubric 'Romantic' - including De Louthembourg, Turner, William Daniell, Constable, Callcott, Cotman, Miles Edmund Cotman, Copley-Fielding - were exclusively artists by profession, with no direct experience working at sea, and divorced from any direct social or familial upbringing in shipboard or shipyard communities.

So, style-based categories are unsatisfactory for dealing with marine painting and its social and ideological configurations.⁴ Maritime themes only became seriously adopted within mainstream artistic discourse and as properly aesthetic subjects in the latter years of the eighteenth century, when appropriated within given aesthetic criteria by established professional artists. The distinction made between not only 'establishment' artists and marine artists, but between marine artists such as Paton, Serres and Wright who were included as part of the establishment and marine artists who were obviously affiliated to the maritime community, is evidence not necessarily only of contemporary aesthetic discrimination, but, more importantly, that the whole structure of aesthetics and aesthetic hierarchies was implicated within wider ideologies

³ The artists Cordingly includes in this group are Peter Monamy, Samuel Scott, John Cleveley the elder, John Cleveley the younger, Robert Cleveley, James Cleveley, Charles Brooking, Dominic Serres, John Thomas Serres, Francis Swaine, Francis Holman, Nicholas Pocock, William Anderson, Thomas Luny, Thomas Whitcombe, Robert Salmon, Samuel Atkins, and Thomas Buttersworth. Samuel Scott is the only artist among these who did not have some substantial link with the maritime world.

⁴ Recently, 'Romanticism' as a classificatory term for analysing art has come under attack, for displacing and inhibiting more materialist approaches, which seek to understand cultural production within an historically-bound context: Matthew Craske, *Art in Europe, 1700-1830* (Oxford, 1995), pp.7-21.

which subtended society as a whole. The complex, ambiguous and elusive aesthetic classification of marine art, in this sense, echoes a deep-seated social ambivalence in society towards Jack Tar and his lifestyle, which could range from his canonization as a patriotic saint to his ostracization and condemnation as a rioter, mutineer or smuggler. It is this ambivalence, and the ways in which it pertains to a more prevalent perception of the negative cultural value of the maritime, that I will explore in my next chapter.

Part Two

Part Two: Introduction

If the positive character of navigation, its facilitation of commerce as the bond by which ‘men are united in love’, was bound up with discourses of nationalism, urbanity, citizenship and civic progress, with discourses, in short, of modernity, this was countered by a much deeper-seated tradition in which the sea was a locus of terror, sublimity, and incommensurability, the most visible physical expression of divine power (and wrath), ultimately immeasurable, uncontrollable, and beyond systematic classification. Despite the numerous paeans to the sea as the route to British grandeur and imperial power, it constituted, unlike the rest of the earth’s surface, a defiance, by its very nature, of the overriding principle of British (and European) eighteenth-century hegemony: colonization and property-ownership. That the sea could not be claimed and fought over in the same way, and for the same reasons, as, for example, the Caribbean or America had been recognized by Locke in his second *Treatise of Government*.¹ Even at the unprecedented height of British imperial and maritime achievement in the late 1760s, Blackstone’s triumphant declaration that ‘the high seas are part of the realm of England’ required the qualification, ‘for thereon our courts of Admiralty have jurisdiction’.² And the courts of Admiralty, despite being undoubtedly ‘a foundation of eighteenth-century imperial rule’, were set up to confront problems which may be seen as epitomizing the basic refusal of the sea, and some of the

¹ For Locke the ocean is ‘that great and still remaining Common of Mankind’: John Locke, edited by Peter Laslett, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge, 1988), p.289.

² William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 4 vols. (Oxford 1765; facsimile repr. London, 1966), vol.1, p.107.

community which worked on it, to conform to the intellectual and political notion of property:

the adjudication of prizes taken by American and English privateers; the trial of pirates (so that the crown got its share of the booty); the prosecution of violations of the Acts of Trade; and the organization of the maritime labour market, which entailed the effort to resolve disputes between capital and labor.³

The high seas could be adduced as part of the realm of England only insofar as England had sufficient naval force to execute Admiralty jurisdiction, which related, in fact, not to the sea, but to the trade and traffic over it. As long as British maritime hegemony endured, Blackstone's claim could be upheld. But its triumphalism contains the constant possibility of its own demise. Given the alliance between navigation, commerce and ideologies of social progress and improvement, should the shipping interest decline or suffer challenge, to the same extent would 'the realm of England' be diminished.⁴ This becomes problematic in light of the truism that land-ownership was the measure of wealth and the foundation of political power.⁵

³ Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge, 1987), pp.313, 312.

⁴ See chapters 1-4, above.

⁵ This is a desperately complex subject in relation to the political structure of eighteenth-century Britain, which is beyond the scope of the present thesis. What might be termed the discourses of property and commerce in political thought are discussed extensively by J.G.A. Pocock in *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Republican Thought and the Atlantic Tradition* (Princeton, 1975), and *Virtue, Commerce and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1985), and by H.T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property: Political*

The precariousness of the material value of the sea, in the sense that it jarred with the socio-economic idea of property, elided with a perceived threat, posed by excessive indulgence in commerce and luxury, to the traditional political structure based on property-ownership, and to social stability. Commerce itself, of course, was inseparable from maritime exploitation. The ideology surrounding the sea is circular and oppositional: social progress depends on navigation and trade, but commerce is itself potentially damaging to the point of destroying the society it advances. This problem was discussed by several social theorists from the mid-century on, notably Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767).

Ferguson's book is an analysis of how states (implicitly, of course, Britain) should avoid the tendency, observable from history, to atrophy, whereby 'nations advancing from small beginnings, and arrived at the possession of arts which lead to dominion' inexplicably display 'a kind of spontaneous return to obscurity and weakness'.⁶ Commerce and the arts are central to his argument. Progress in each

Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain (London, 1977). For the ways in which such ideologies impinge upon artistic and aesthetic theory, see particularly John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: 'The Body of the Public'* (New Haven and London, 1986).

⁶ Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (New Brunswick and London, 1980), pp.207-8. This was a commonplace characterization, of course: cf. Thomson, *The Seasons*, 'Autumn', ll. See also John Millar, *Observations concerning the Distinction of Ranks in Society* (London, 1771), who echoes Fielding's *Enquiry into the Causes for the Late Increase in Robbers* in analysing the material effects of luxury upon individuals, particularly the lower orders:

From the ideas of luxury introduced by commerce, and manufactures, the ancient simplicity of manners is in a great measure destroyed; and those who are born to great affluence, and have been bred to no business, are excited with mutual

registers distance from tyrannous barbarity, and may be a bulwark against despotism. Yet it remains ‘difficult to tell how long the decay of states might be suspended by the cultivation of arts on which their real felicity and strength depend’, because the ‘ardour and vigour with which they are at any one time pursued, is the measure of a national spirit. When these objects cease to animate, nations may be said to languish; when they are during any time neglected, states must decline, and their people degenerate.’⁷ In contrast with Boydell’s position, he argues that the commercial arts themselves instil a neglectful tendency, by prioritizing motives of profit and self-interest.⁸

In polished nations this is directly proportionable to a ‘growing attention to interest, or . . . effeminacy . . . Every successive art, by which the individual is taught to improve on his fortune, is, in reality, an addition to his private engagements, and a new avocation of his mind from the public.’ Ferguson is too sophisticated to equate luxury with corruption, but he concedes that

nations under a high state of the commercial arts, are exposed to corruption, by their admitting wealth, unsupported by personal elevation and virtue, as the great foundation of distinction, and by having their attention turned on the side of interest, as the road to consideration and honour.⁹

emulation, to surpass one another in the elegance and refinement of their living.

According as they have the means of indulging in pleasure, they become more addicted to the pursuit of it . . . [leading to indebtedness and eventual ruin] (p.186)

⁷ Ferguson, *op. cit.*, pp.227, 211.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.217-8.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.255, 254.

When a 'change in national manners for the worse' does arise, and transforms commerce from a liberalizing and civilizing influence to a corrupting one, the results are dreadful:

When mere riches, or court-favour, are supposed to constitute rank; the mind is misled from the consideration of qualities on which it ought to rely. Magnanimity, courage, and the love of mankind, are sacrificed to avarice and vanity, or suppressed under a sense of dependence. The individual considers his community so far only as it can be rendered subservient to his personal advancement or profit: he states himself in competition with his fellow-creatures; and, urged by the passions of emulation, of fear and jealousy, of envy and malice, he follows the maxims of an animal destined to preserve his separate existence, and to indulge his caprice or his appetite, at the expence of his species.

On this corrupt foundation, men become either rapacious, deceitful, and violent, . . . or servile, mercenary, and base . . .

Commercial corruption creates the precise antithesis of the moderate, peaceful, social and rational being which Defoe, Johnson, Hanway, among others, congratulated themselves was the product of a commercial society. The citizen, corrupted, is reduced to an isolated anti-social savage, motivated only by caprice and appetite, and excessively prone to delusions and passions, to the point of madness. Ferguson imagines such a figure in a sublime rhetoric: he becomes 'plunged' 'deeper' in

'misery', his 'agony' 'sharpened', his 'passions' 'cruel', and 'wreaking' torments', that prefigures Burke's characterization of the effects of the French Revolution.¹⁰

This argument was hardly atypical.¹¹ I have dwelt on Ferguson's analysis of commercial society not just because his book, in part an optimistic defence of the virtues and benefits of commercial progress, exposes the ideology surrounding commerce and navigation in advanced political economic theory, but because his singling out of the arts, commerce, wealth and political circumstance as the ingredients for corruption, identifies points of the utmost concern to the meaning and status of maritime iconography, points which become most acute, as we shall see, during the political and national crises of the 1790s. For, of course, he acknowledges the symbiosis between commerce and navigation:

The most respectable nations have always been found where at least one part of the frontier has been washed by the sea. This barrier, perhaps the strongest of all in the times of barbarity, does not, however, even then supersede the cares of a national defence; and in the advanced state of arts, gives the greatest scope and facility to commerce.¹²

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.255, 238-9. For discussion of the sublime rhetoric used to characterize the French Revolution, see Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s* (London and New York, 1993).

¹¹ Political economists such as Lord Kames, John Millar, Adam Smith, and historians such as Gibbon or William Robertson had constructed similar analyses, although it should be stressed that there was not necessarily therefore any precise consensus among them.

¹² Ferguson, *op. cit.*, p.120. This was a commonplace historical understanding of how European states had reached the age of commerce: see Nancy F. Koehn, *The Power of Commerce: Economy and Governance in the First British Empire* (Ithaca and London, 1994), pp.65-7.

Britain was, at one and the same time, thus blessed, yet susceptible to corruption: a worry at the time of writing, at the height of British colonial achievement in the wake of the Seven Years' War. For the greatest threat to individual liberty, in Ferguson's view, was imperial conquest: 'the admiration of boundless dominion is a ruinous error; and in no instance, perhaps, is the real interest of mankind more entirely mistaken.'

Ferguson places imperialism top of the list of the causes of despotism because the military forces necessary to subdue distant provinces might then be used domestically. If Rome could establish an extensive dominion with relatively inferior technology and communications,

What may not the fleets and armies of Europe, with the access they have by commerce to every part of the world, and the facility of their conveyance, effect, if that ruinous maxim should prevail, That the grandeur of a nation is to be estimated from the extent of its territory; or, That the interest of any particular people consists in reducing their neighbours to servitude?¹³

¹³ Ferguson, *op. cit.*, p.154. Ferguson's anxieties about the over-reaching of empire were surely not confined to the realm of abstract speculation, but were directed specifically at the recent massive assumption of power and wealth by the East India Company, seen in many quarters to be excessive and corrupting. This would also have associated, at a more general level, the extension of British imperial power with the longstanding idea of the East as a source of enervating and effeminizing luxury. See H.V. Bowen, *Elites, Enterprise and Making of the Overseas British Empire* (London, 1996), pp.183-5; idem, *Revenue and Reform: the Indian Problem in British Politics 1757-1773* (Cambridge, 1991); Philip Lawson and Jim Phillips, "'Our execrable banditti': perceptions of nabobs in mid-eighteenth-century Britain", *Albion* 16 (1984), pp.225-41; P.J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment*

For Britain then, the potential dangers in a maritime trading empire were not confined to the domestic, but penetrated to the heart of colonial policy also. This was particularly emphasized during the war with America, above all by Richard Price, who saw the war precisely in Ferguson's terms, as an over-extension of imperial ambition turning the motherland tyrannical.¹⁴

This view saw the sea as dangerous in terms of political economy. This horizontal conception was matched by a dual vertical one, deriving authority from the Bible and classical antiquity. The first strand in this account was the inherited discourse of luxury, and its eighteenth-century adaptations, of which Ferguson's *Essay* may be seen as one. Imperial expansion, with its concomitant ready luxury commodities, could be conflated with the classical construction of luxury, as a contagion in the body politic. During the expansionist hubris of the interval between the Seven Years' War and the American War commercial development had been seen as hardly malign or unpleasant, and was thought anyway to be unstoppable. Yet the observation had been repeatedly made along the lines that 'The spirit of commerce . . . begets a kind of regulated Selfishness, which leads at once to the Increase and Preservation of Property'.¹⁵

(London, 1982), pp.128-54. On the identification of the East with decadence, irrationality and luxury, see especially Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York and London, 1978); Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of Orient* (London, 1986).

¹⁴ *Two Tracts on Civil Liberty, the War with America, and the Debts and Finances of the Kingdom* (1778), in Richard Price, edited by D.O. Thomas, *Political Writings* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.14-100.

¹⁵ John Brown, *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times*. 2 Vols. (London, 1757), vol.1, p.22; John Sekora, *Luxury: The concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett* (Baltimore and London, 1977), p.93.

Hume, Johnson, Ferguson and Adam Smith, had defended luxury as beneficial because commerce realized an ideal of material civilized life; whereby the rise of a 'middle class' of merchants and traders would encourage industry and manufacture, in turn inspiring refinement in the arts, taste and, ultimately, virtue.¹⁶ Defoe's middling rank of moderate and industrious traders had, by 1766, become

that order of men which subsists between the very rich and the very rabble; those men who are possess of too large fortunes to submit to the neighbouring man in power, and yet are too poor to set up for tyranny themselves. In the middle order of mankind are generally to be found all the arts, wisdom, and virtues of society. This order is known to be the true preserver of freedom, and may be called the People.¹⁷

The danger inherent in commerce's positive meritocracy, where, as Johnson put it, 'every individual [is offered] a chance of mending his condition by his diligence', was spelled out by Nathaniel Forster:

In England the several ranks of men slide into each other almost imperceptibly, and a spirit of equality runs through every part of their constitution. Hence arises a strong emulation in all the several stations and conditions to vie with each other; and the perpetual restless ambition in each of the inferior ranks to raise themselves to the level of those immediately above them. In such a state as this fashion must have

¹⁶ See above, chapters 3 and 4.

¹⁷ Oliver Goldsmith, edited by Arthur Friedman, *The Vicar of Wakefield: A Tale, Supposed to be written by himself* (1766; Oxford, 1974), pp.97-8. See also James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* (Oxford, 1992), pp.55-9.

uncontrollable sway. And a fashionable luxury must spread through it like a contagion.¹⁸

In economic terms alone such a development, ironically the consequence of commercial enrichment, portended commercial havoc by disabling trade's supposedly natural relation with industry, since, as Arthur Young put it, 'every one but an idiot knows, that the lower classes must be kept poor or they will never be industrious'.¹⁹ The supposed wealth and ensuing refinements of taste and social meritocracy that were commerce's civilizing effects could not be extended downwards without putting the whole project of social progress in jeopardy. One point at which this paradox revealed itself was in the construction of that archetypal labour source, the sailor, being seen on the one hand as irremediably brutish, the archetype of Young's aphorism, and on the other as profligate and luxurious. The sailor epitomized the internal contradictions of commercial ideology, but could conveniently be externalized through his removal to the sea.²⁰ The other way to work out the paradoxes of commercial ideology was within the established rhetorical frame of the concept of luxury.

¹⁸ Johnson is cited in Sekora, *op. cit.*, p.105. Nathaniel Forster, *An Enquiry into the Present High Price of Provisions* (1767), cited in Neil McKendrick, 'Commercialization and the Economy, (I) The Consumer Revolution in Eighteenth-Century England', in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb (eds.), *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1982), p.11. Forster was espousing a commonly-held opinion: for a range of similar arguments, see Sekora, *op. cit.*, pp.91-109.

¹⁹ Arthur Young, *Eastern Tour* (1771), cited in Sekora, *op. cit.*, p.101.

²⁰ The problem of the sailor is discussed in detail below. Here it is worth noting that Michel Foucault's definition of the Other, as 'that which, for a given culture, is at once interior and foreign, therefore to be excluded (so as to exorcize the interior danger) but by being shut away (in order to

Luxury was a contagion which had a physiological effect upon the individual as well as a social effect upon the body politic. In the individual, luxury or ‘the Spirit of Trade in its Excess, by introducing Avarice, destroys the Desire of *Rational Esteem*’, and thus directly affected intellectual capacity and sensibility. Luxury attacked the individual through the body as well as the mind, and was directly relatable to diet and lifestyle. And the cumulative effect of mass individual consumption of sugar, tea, coffee, and a host of other luxury items, would be a nation, and particularly a capital city, corrupted by luxury, a maritime empire undone by its own navigational greatness:

Since our Wealth has increas’d, and our Navigation has been extended, we have ransack’d all the Parts of the *Globe* to bring together its whole Stock of Materials for *Riot, Luxury*, and to provoke *Excess*. The Tables of the Rich and Great (and indeed all Ranks who can afford it) are furnish’d with Provisions of Delicacy, Number and Plenty, sufficient to provoke, and even gorge the most large and voluptuous Appetite.²¹

The self-contradictions in commercial ideology, and their explicit reference to the status of the navy for a nation identified by its maritime destiny, had been outlined almost a century before by Charles Davenant, in his *Essay upon the Probable Methods of Making People Gainers in the Balance of Trade* of 1699.

reduce its otherness)’, is eminently apt to describe this aspect of the sailor’s cultural status: Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London, 1970), xxiv.

²¹ George Cheyne, *The English Malady; or, A Treatise of Nervous Diseases of all Kinds, as Spleen, Vapours, Lowness of Spirits, Hypochondriacal and Hysterical Distempers, Etc.* (1733; facsimile reprint, New York, 1976), p.35; G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago and London, 1992), pp.6-15.

Trade, without doubt, is in its nature a pernicious thing; it brings in that wealth which introduces luxury; it gives rise to fraud and avarice, and extinguishes virtue and simplicity of manners; it depraves a people, and makes way for that corruption which never fails to end in slavery, foreign or domestic. . . . But, . . . it is become with us a necessary evil. We shall be continually exposed to insults and invasions, without such a naval force as is not to be had naturally but where there is an extended traffic. However, if trade cannot be made subservient to the nation's safety, it ought to be no more encouraged here than it was in Sparta.²²

Davenant's analysis outlined what rapidly became an orthodoxy: that luxury should be restrained, individually and communally, for continued social and political health.²³ But this left commercial ideology in a very problematic position. Depending

²² Vol.2, p.275. Sekora, *op. cit.*, pp.79-80.

²³ It was, of course, also recognized by Mandeville in his analysis of the inevitable necessity of 'private vices' to produce 'publick benefits': Bernard Mandeville, edited by Phillip Harth, *The Fable of the Bees* (1714-24; Harmondsworth, 1970). His notorious unconventionality lay in his wholesale endorsement of luxury as an inevitable and necessary condition of social progress:

It is a receiv'd Notion, that Luxury is as destructive to the Wealth of the whole Body Politic, as it is that of every individual Person who is guilty of it, and that a National Frugality enriches a Country in the same manner as that which is less general increases the Estates of Private Families. (p.138)

What is laid to the Charge of Luxury besides, is, that it increases Avarice and Rapine: And where they are reigning Vices, Offices of the greatest Trust are bought and sold; the Ministers that should serve the Public, both great and small,

on the perceived progress or decline of contemporary society, commerce could range from being construed as God's beneficence in action, to being the devil's own work. Even in the same writer the variety of response could be extreme. So, much later Burke could come up with the Hanway-esque statement that 'The laws of commerce are the laws of nature, and therefore the laws of God'; but when the nation was under threat of invasion from France, commerce was the antithesis of the natural: 'commerce, and trade, and manufacture, the gods of our oeconomical politicians, are themselves perhaps but creatures; are themselves but effects, which, as first causes, we choose to worship.'²⁴

What is extraordinary about Davenant's diagnosis in particular is the burden simultaneously of responsibility and guilt it places upon the maritime. In the last resort, if the navy cannot defend the nation from the ills of luxury to which navigation exposes it, the model of Sparta should be adopted, and trade abandoned. It is a variation, in magnified form, on the resolution by displacement of the contradictions in the

corrupted, and the Countries every Moment in danger of being betray'd to the highest Bidders: And lastly, that it effeminates and enervates the People, by which the Nations become an easy Prey to the first Invaders. (p.141)

See also Sekora, *op. cit.*, pp.66-7; Gordon Vichert, 'The Theory of Conspicuous Consumption in the 18th Century', in P. Hughes and D. Williams (eds.), *The Varied Pattern: Studies in the Eighteenth Century* (Toronto, 1971), pp.253-67.

²⁴ The first quote is cited in Sekora, *op. cit.*, p.107. The second is from Edmund Burke, edited by L.G. Mitchell, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790; Oxford, 1993), p.79. Sekora also notes the similar contrast of response by Horace Walpole, before and after the victories of the Seven Years' War (p.106): Walpole's metaphor for the imminent disaster, as he saw it, is telling in the present context: 'It is time for England to slip her own cables, and float away into some unknown ocean.'

seaman's identity. And it highlights the problems of validating commerce, and by extension, how the trope of maritime disaster, with its own associations of retribution and Deluge as punishment for indulgence in, and corruption by, luxury, could be loaded with meaning.

This leads on to the second strand of the Biblically-derived negative view of the ocean. In this account the ocean's connotations of social advancement towards a future state of universal commercial emancipation and 'Christian mercantilist' benevolence were countered by an antipathetic theological and philosophical legacy which saw the sea as irreconcilably 'other', a naturally alien element to the human constitution, the home of antediluvian monsters, the sublime locus of 'God's wonders in the deep', and of course the harbinger of ultimate destruction and, for some, redemption, in its eternal reminder of the Deluge.

Thomas Burnet's *Theory of the Earth*, for example, a book 'to which constant reference was made throughout the eighteenth century', proposed the irregularity of the sea as the natural sign of the Fall. Before the Deluge the earth was 'smooth, regular and uniform, without mountains, and without a Sea . . . it had the beauty of Youth and blooming Nature'. God's release of the hitherto restrained abyss of waters left the seas and shores as they presently are, 'the most frightful sight that Nature can offer'.²⁵

The ocean as subject evokes highly complex ideas, at once retrospective and progressive, matched with the similar dualities expressed by Ferguson and others concerning the simultaneously progressive and degenerative activity of commerce conducted through navigation.

²⁵ Cited in Alain Corbin, trans. Jocelyn Phelps, *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World 1750-1840* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.2-4.

As Alain Corbin has shown how this theologically-inspired revulsion for the sea was displaced by a secular enthusiasm for its benefits in terms of health and leisure, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, one must be careful not to make too much of its associations with the Deluge. Nonetheless the multiple polarization in the eighteenth-century presentation of the sea is implicit in pictures of it, so that the 'iconology' of ocean encapsulates various tangential or conflicting discourses.²⁶ I shall go on to examine this, in particular as they apply to representations of shipwreck and maritime disaster.

I aim first to analyse this imagery within the context of the various formulations, positive and negative, of commerce. Second, I shall suggest that the paintings and prints of shipwrecks could accommodate the contradictory conceptions of the sea, along with other related critical concerns in eighteenth-century British society. Crises of commercialism, sensibility, morality and nationhood could all converge and find oblique expression in the image of the wreck. Third, because of its obliquity, the imagery of maritime disaster, particularly in its generic relationship, clearly apparent by the late 1790s, to the 'apocalyptic sublime', and to the long-standing, elevated poetic treatment of shipwreck, could evade direct treatment of the problematic issues to which it alluded. The absence of representation, therefore, will form a corollary to the rhetorical aesthetic of disaster, to the extent that complex and socially uncomfortable subjects such as the slave trade or mutiny are rarely depicted

²⁶ I mean the term 'iconology' in the sense developed by W.J.T. Mitchell, elaborating Panofsky. See W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago and London, 1986), p.2: 'to show how the notion of imagery serves as a kind of relay connecting theories of art, language, and the mind with conceptions of social, cultural, and political value.'

directly, but tend to be displaced onto the wider, generalized convention of disaster imagery: the established convention of shipwreck. This idea will be a recurrent theme in the following discussion.

It was not confined to slavery, or mutiny, which, unsurprisingly, were not represented; a comparable distancing characterized the relation between the maritime community and polite society. While the latter depended on the labour and loyalty of the former, it nevertheless considered it to be made up of criminally-inclined social misfits, hence the separation of marine from establishment artists. It is therefore necessary to notice how the shipboard hierarchy was pictorially replicated, particularly in portraiture. The numerous maritime portraits by Reynolds, Hoppner, Beechey and others are, needless to say, all of officers. Moreover, as all know, Reynolds' 1753 portrait of Commodore Keppel (fig.80) set a new standard in the treatment of the portrait, by recreating the subject in an heroic guise in the execution of his professional public duty, thus both attempting to elevate the status of portrait painting, and presenting the subject in an idiom suitable to his station and nobility. It is commonplace to associate Keppel's heroic attitude with the 1749 shipwreck of the *Maidstone*, which he commanded.²⁷ Yet Reynolds minimizes the shipwreck to focus on Keppel's sublime aspect, his dominating posture and his miraculously untainted and resplendent apparel, to which the rugged harshness of the environment is a subsidiary analogue. Shipwreck thereby functions rhetorically, emblematically, more in the tradition of Verrio than Van

²⁷ For example, C.R. Leslie, completed by T. Taylor, *Life and Times of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, 2 vols. (London, 1865), vol. 1, p.105. Ellis Waterhouse writes of the portrait, 'Nothing at once so easy and so heroic had been produced in England since the days of Van Dyke': E.K. Waterhouse, *Reynolds* (London, 1941), p.9.

de Velde, to distance Reynolds' portrait from the material, commercial associations of the sea and its iconography, as contemporarily rendered by Scott, Boydell or Brooking; and sets Keppel within a tradition of high art, in which the sea emblematically connotes timeless, transcendent values. The portrait appears a sophisticated response to the contemporary debates over the relation of art to commerce, and, by extension, to British maritime power; at the same time distancing Reynolds' commercially-based art from the mechanics of its production, and the intellectual taint of commerce.

But Reynolds, while seeking to establish aesthetic boundaries, sets a precedent for their breakdown. The picture's combination of heroic posture and shipwreck at some level necessitates the elevation both of portraiture itself, and the status of the sailor (though there are none of the problems noticeable by 1800, in depicting the proletarian sailor as hero, for Keppel, the son of an earl.)²⁸ Keppel might be seen as the portrait equivalent to Walpole's praising of Samuel Scott's marine painting, as 'born for an age of naval glory'.²⁹ And it exposes problems in validating the maritime aesthetically, in squaring its academic artistic insignificance with its increasing national importance.

The common tar, unsurprisingly, remained as invisible in painting as in voyage narratives. As Philip Edwards points out, there are very few journals, voyage narratives, or other published testimonies by ordinary seamen in the eighteenth century, and those that there are veer towards the fictitious, picaresque account of life at sea, written as it were from the land rather than the ship, and aligned more with the

²⁸ This later transition in the depiction of the sailor is discussed at length below, chapter 10.

²⁹ Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting* 3 vols. (London, 1888), vol. 1, preface, xiii.

neologistic structure of the novel than the nautical journal or log.³⁰ Or, as both Edwards and Marcus Rediker emphasize, seamen's voices are heard in the context of litigation, as apologies or self-justifications for behaviour at sea which might constitute challenges to official narratives taken from the perspective of the quarterdeck. The ordinary seaman, like the land-based labouring classes, who populate numerous contemporary landscapes and conversation pieces, does not represent himself, but is represented.

However, while field-workers and agricultural labourers are usually shown in the fields, in their proper place, the sailor was, before 1800, seldom pictured labouring at sea. 'Plowing the waves' and returning 'the mingled harvest of mankind' remain poetic metaphors for the general processes of maritime commerce, instead of descriptions of the physical activities and labour involved in them. The seamen rather is typically shown on land and at leisure, in pursuit of (physical) pleasure, though, implicitly, without the independent means or refinement of mind to put such leisure to public benefit, for instance by cultivating taste through a knowledge of the arts (figs. 66, 75, 000).³¹ Moreover, ordinary seamen were being represented by and for a society which regarded them with suspicion and antagonism, manifested by his being portrayed in negative ways. Doubtless this was partly due to polite society, including artists, only coming across the sailor ashore, where he was by necessity out of his element: 'The

³⁰ Philip Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage: Sea-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.187-203.

³¹ On the relation of leisure, independent life, taste and art to public virtue in the discourse of civic humanism, see especially Barrell, *op. cit.*, pp.3-33; Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680-1768* (New Haven and London, 1988; Stephen Copley, *Literature and Society in Eighteenth-Century England*, (London, 1984).

sailor on a run ashore, probably drunk and riotous, was a popular image, but the sailor afloat and at work was quite unfamiliar', and what made it worse was the fact that 'a kind of unemployment is built into the [seaman's] profession; a seaman ashore is generally unemployed'.³²

³² N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: an anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London, 1986), p.15; Jesse Lemisch, 'Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America', *William and Mary Quarterly* 25 (1968), p.376 n.23. See also E.P. Hohman, *Seamen Ashore* (New Haven, 1952). In part pictorial representations of the sailor suffered in the same way as literary ones: 'the sailor's life-story as such is an undeveloped genre, and those that exist, early or late, are usually clumsy compilations. So far as publication goes, it is an interesting question whether there was a lack of supply, or a lack of demand. Probably both; certainly publishers were not fighting for copy': Edwards, *op. cit.*, pp.187-8.

But by being depicted, in contrast to other labourers,³³ not only out of work, but often engaged in contrary pursuits, the sailor was set beyond the norms of social behaviour, on the cusp between a socially recognizable persona, identifiable by his profession, and someone or something alien and anti-social, and in some way beyond recognition. The sailor was, in a sense, beyond representation, for his social status could only be fully effected when he was out of society, his visualization was outside the aesthetic. The next chapter will therefore investigate the problems surrounding characteristic representations of the ordinary seaman.

³³ Consider, for example, Stubbs' paintings of *Reapers* and *Haymakers*, exhibited at the Society of Artists in 1786; Wheatley's *The Cries of London*, engraved and published between 1793-7; or the ploughmen labouring in the background of Gainsborough's *Woodcutter and Milkmaid* (1755, Woburn Abbey). Often, of course, the workers are shown resting, as in Malton's *Adelphi* (fig.34), but they are implicitly associated with, and their presence explained by, the context and materials of labour.

Chapter Six: The problem of representing Jack Tar

Marcus Rediker identifies ‘two related confrontations’ at the heart of eighteenth-century maritime culture, ‘between man and nature’ and ‘between man and man, the class confrontation over the issues of power, authority, work and discipline’ which ‘produced . . . a subculture or “oppositional culture” shared by common seamen’.¹ This fracture manifested itself within the ship, through rigid distinctions of rank, and the enforcement of subordination and deference; distinctions mapped by the exclusivity of the quarterdeck, which in turn reinforced the ‘command isolation’ of the captain and officers. Such isolation cut both ways, being ‘often not only a technique of rule but also part of an active exclusion - an ostracism - practiced against the captain by his crew.’² This division mirrored the rift between the maritime world and polite society, which, as we have seen, gave the maritime artist a complex and difficult role in attempting to bridge the divide.

The mutual exclusiveness between higher and lower echelons of maritime culture was replicated in visual imagery. Reynolds’ *Commodore Keppel* (fig.80), is a singular masculine and heroic figure, not the leader of a community of seamen, each labouring to bring the ship safe to port. There is no indication of the fate of the crew, and all the visual rhetoric evokes Rediker’s first confrontation, between man and sea.

¹ Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge, 1987), pp.154-5.

² *Ibid.*, p.155. For the ‘theatre’ of spatial division and the language of power on board ship, see also Greg Dening, *Mr Bligh’s Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge, 1992).

Maritime culture and polite culture operated according to parallel hierarchies, expressed aesthetically as well as socially, and that the degrees of isolation and exclusion were more subtle than being simply class- or community-based, and since one community was, generally speaking, represented by the other, the antagonisms and correlations become proportionally more complex. The social distance between the quarterdeck and the forecastle, between officers and crew, may equally be seen as part of a wider polarization between 'patrician society' and 'plebeian culture', brought about by the increasing adoption of capitalist, or proto-capitalist, organization of labour.³ So, 'maritime culture, or at least its class subculture, represented a proletarian particle within the larger plebeian culture.'

Similarly, the formal ties which bound land-based labourers to the major institutions of authority - the church, the home, the magistracy, the landlord - were either displaced or undermined at sea.⁴ Seamen were notoriously irreligious, anti-authoritarian, filthy-tongued, drunken, riotous and propertyless.⁵ The demands simply of survival at sea rendered observation of the Christian calendar unfeasible, making sailors 'one of the most notoriously irreligious groups of the early modern period.'⁶

³ Rediker, *op. cit.*, pp.116-52; E.P. Thompson, 'Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture', *Journal of Social History* 7 (1974), pp.382-405.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.202-3. N.A.M. Rodger has also established that sailors were sometimes recruited from specific, identifiable communities, sometimes attached to the estates of particular officers, thus further distinguishing them from other types of labourer: N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London, 1986), pp.155-8.

⁵ Rediker, *op. cit.*, pp.162-86, 244-53, 297-8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.169.

Authority itself was of an appropriate kind, encapsulated in the advice of a late eighteenth-century mariner to a new recruit: 'There is no justice or injustice on board ship, my lad. There are only two things: duty and mutiny - mind that. All that you are ordered to do is duty. All that you refuse to do is mutiny.'⁷ This highlights the peculiar and problematic situation of the seaman, caught between two social extremes, as either the dutiful and heroic servant of the nation, or the brutish and barely controllable labour unit in the great machine of commerce.

The seaman's character was, additionally, developed by his centrality to economic (and military) processes. War, increasingly fought at sea and over maritime and commercial interests, saw the number of British maritime workers, by mid-century, rise to over 60,000 (as compared with 3-5,000 in the mid-sixteenth century), to serve the 'transition from luxury to bulk trade in transoceanic shipping'.⁸ This process parallels the conception of the commercial maritime nation and its universal scope as expressed increasingly in all forms of eighteenth-century culture, from mapping to poetry, from zoology to art. The ideology of *Windsor-Forest* or *The Seasons* was underpinned by a material economic reality dependent on the sailor. The increasingly international and rationalized character of shipping had two major consequences for the seaman. First, it made the ship an early microcosm of capitalist labour relations, with workers 'concentrated on the ship in much the same way that other laborers were assembled in ever larger numbers in manufactories or on plantations'; which reinforced seamen's collectivist working identity, transcending differences of nationality and

⁷ Cited in K. Weibust, *Deep Sea Sailors: A Study in Maritime Ethnology* (Stockholm, 1969), p.372.

Rediker, *op. cit.*, pp.211, 244-5.

⁸ Rediker, *op. cit.*, p.290.

language, and accentuating the polarization between a maritime proletariat and a patrician authority.⁹

Additionally, as maritime work was increasingly divorced from traditions of apprenticeship, workshop practices and professional protection through the guilds, labour became, like the body performing it, a commodity to be bought and sold in the same manner as the cargo it heaved and shipped. Almost proverbially, the seaman's tools were 'but a pair of good Hands, and a Stout Heart'.¹⁰ These were transferable between ships and a variety of manual tasks, and when rewarded with a monetary wage, easily became a unit in the universalizing system of political economy.¹¹

From the perspective of political economy and the positive ideology of commerce, the seaman was merely a 'pair of good Hands', and his becoming a unit in the currency of labour obliterated his humanity, a phenomenon accentuated by seamen's work only being imaginary for landed society. When the sailor asserted a human presence, it implicitly contradicted this imaginary effacement, affirmed even at a metaphorical level, in the popular conception of the jolly Jack Tar. The common idea, first given literary currency by Garrick during the Seven Years' War, of the sailor as a 'heart of oak', notionally transforms his very body, and moreover, the supposed seat of the soul, into the material of the ship; suggesting him as a kind of maritime Ariel, confined so precisely to his sphere of utility, that he becomes it. Of course the

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.293.

¹⁰ Barnaby Slush, *The Navy Royal: Or, A Sea-Cook Turn'd Projector* (London, 1709), p.16.

¹¹ For example, see William Petty, 'Political Arithmetic', in C.H. Hull, (ed.), *The Economic Writings of William Petty* (Cambridge, 1899), pp.259-60: 'The Labour of Seamen, and the Freight of Ships, is always of the nature of an Exported Commodity, the overplus whereof, above what is Imported, brings home money.'

metaphor operates on a complex level, the oak being a symbol of the nation as well as the fabric of ship-building.¹²

The 'heart of oak' metaphor therefore bridges the functional role of the seaman and his symbolic persona as an icon of the blessed maritime nation, which, as we have seen with *St. George for England* (fig.71), could, at a popular level, develop into secular canonization. The problem of representing the tar is compounded by his multivalent role as the guardian of the nation, and the 'steady champion' of Britannia's honour (fig.70). In this sense, the 'heart of oak' metaphor compensates for the commodification of the seaman within political economy, with that populist patriotic vision of the tough, rollicking, no-nonsense, hard-drinking, womanizing, but unfailingly honest Jack Tar, which became so prevalent in literature, drama, songs, and the visual arts during the second half of the eighteenth century. Here the sailor typically becomes the 'heart of oak', the 'plain dealer', or the 'noble pirate', with as their foil the contemptuous and brutish captain.¹³

¹² For the oak as symbol, see Stephen Daniels, 'The political iconography of woodland in later Georgian England', in Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (eds.), *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge, 1988), pp.43-82; Michael Rosenthal, 'The Landscape Moralized in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Australian Journal of Art* 4 (1985), pp.31-49; William Ruddick, 'Liberty trees and loyal oaks: emblematic presences in some English poems of the French Revolutionary period', in Alison Yarrington and Kelvin Everest (eds.), *Reflections of Revolution: Images of Romanticism* (London and New York, 1993), pp.59-67.

¹³ H.F. Watson, *The Sailor in English Fiction and Drama 1550-1800* (New York, 1931), pp.3-4; Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society, 1793-1815* (Oxford, 1995), pp.59-66, 95-121, 139-57. For the development of this stereotype in the first half of the nineteenth

In English literature at least this character had become established by about 1600. The sailor, however became a staple character of fiction and drama from the late seventeenth century, contemporary with the increased emphasis in political discourse on British naval and mercantilist aspirations. Through the eighteenth century the fictive sailor gets increasingly characterized by his habit of using vernacular nautical language in every situation. Tom Bowling and Captain Crowe in Smollett's *Roderick Random* and *Sir Launcelot Greaves* respectively are two of countless examples. Their specialized barely comprehensible language confirms the seaman as a species of foreigner, as he appeared to Sir John Fielding:

When one goes to Rotherhithe or Wapping, which places are chiefly inhabited by sailors, but that somewhat of the same language is spoken, a man would be apt to suspect himself in another country. . . . Yet with all, they are perhaps the bravest and boldest fellows in the world.¹⁴

The sailor's inability to moderate his vernacular even in the most inappropriate circumstances extrapolates the basic point of the 'heart of oak' metaphor. He cannot adjust his personality to the norms of landed society, in particular the etiquette of love

century, see J.S. Bratton, 'British Heroism and the Structure of Melodrama', in J.S. Bratton, Richard Allen Cave, Brendan Gregory, Heidi J. Holder, Michael Pickering (eds.), *Acts of Supremacy: The British Empire and the Stage, 1790-1830* (Manchester, 1991), pp.18-61; George D. Glenn, 'Nautical "Docudrama" in the Age of the Kembles', in J.L. Fisher and S. Watt (eds.), *When They Weren't Doing Shakespeare: Essays on Nineteenth-Century British and American Theatre* (Athens, Ga. and London, 1989), pp.137-51.

¹⁴ Cited in Hugh Phillips, *The Thames about 1750* (London, 1951), p.28. See also Rediker, *op. cit.*, pp.11, 162-9.

and courtship. Indeed, his mythical free spirit is focussed by his attitudes to love and marriage. These are always snares. Love, 'like a pirate, takes you by spreading false colours: but when once you have run your ship aground, the treacherous picaroon loofs'.¹⁵ And yet, female beauty is frequently compared to the form of a ship. The plain-dealing Durzo, for example, in Ravenscroft's *The Canterbury Guests*, sees three young ladies as 'Three very snug frigates, well Rigg'd; 'twere pity too but they were as well Mann'd. . . . Why, a woman's the finest thing I ever saw, except a *Cannon Mounted*, and a Ship under Sail'.¹⁶ Typical 'Restoration' *double-entendres* are repeated throughout the eighteenth century. The metaphorical sexualization of the ship provides a means for sailors to refer between themselves to the sexual character of virtually any personable young lady who happens to pass their way. Captain Tempest, for example, in *The Post-Captain*, at the first sight of Miss Million, exclaims, 'Ye Gods! what a clean run along the bends. Ambrosia and apple-dumplings! what projecting cat-heads! And how she has dressed ship! All the colours of the universe contend for the honour of decorating her rigging!'¹⁷ Parallel *double-entendres* appear in visual imagery, mainly in prints. Carrington Bowles published a series in 1781, showing tars 'in their flamboyant shore-going rig', rather than 'their working clothes', in the company of less-than-genteel women in the low districts of the docks, typically Billingsgate or Wapping. Their sexually-charged encounter is rendered in terms of a

¹⁵ William Wycherley, edited by J.L. Smith, *The Plain Dealer* (London and New York, 1979), Act II, Scene 1, ll.778-80.

¹⁶ Cited in Watson, *op. cit.*, p.145.

¹⁷ J. Davis, edited by R.H. Case, *The Post-Captain; Or, The Wooden Walls Well Manned; comprehending A View of Naval Society and Manners* (3rd edn., London, 1808, repr. London, 1928), p.173.

naval engagement such as *An English Man of War, taking a French Privateer* (fig.81).¹⁸

There are notable ironies here. On the one hand, the sailor's roving spirit and amorous nature are sharpened by contrast to the 'enslavement' of marriage: 'A man that is marry'd . . . is no more like another man than a gally-slave is like one of us free sailors, he is chained to an oar all his life; and may-hap forc'd to tug a leaky vessel into the bargain.'¹⁹ On the other hand, the notorious sexual liberty and penchant for casual sex of sailors is heightened by the metaphorical interchange between the female body and the ship (reinforced by naming vessels as Charming Jenny, or Sally).

The sailor's sexual appetite, sharpened by compulsory abstinence at sea and arguably the pronounced assertion of his physicality, opposed to its effacement into a commodity of labour, is, conversely, shown in these images in the moneyed exchange of prostitution. Hayman's *The Wapping Landlady* (fig.75) illustrates the proverbial notion that the sailor, like the fool, is soon parted from his money. The fact that the

¹⁸ Rodger, *op. cit.*, p.15. Other prints in the same series, published by Carington Bowles in 1781 are: *Deceitful Kisses, or the Pretty Plunderers* (BMC5946), *Fielding's Myrmidons Spoiling Bob Booty's Morning Draught* (BMC5947), *The Bird of Paradise* (BMC5948), *Like Mistress - Like Maid* (BMC5949), *Master Lavender Qualifying Himself for the Army* (BMC5950), *An English Sloop engaging a Dutch Man of War* (BMC5952), *Lady Gorget raising Recruits for Cox-Heath* (BMC5953), *A Man of War, Towing a Frigate into Harbour* (BMC5954), *Mr Deputy Dumpling and Family enjoying a Sumer Afternoon* (BMC5955), *An Engagement in Billingsgate Channel, Between the Terrible and the Tiger, Two First Rates* (BMC5956), *A Fleet of Transports under Convoy* (BMC5957). A detailed analysis of these prints is not possible here, but they all play on the same theme: the proximity between criminality and the naval, dockyard or army communities.

¹⁹ Congreve, *Love for Love*, Act III, scene 4. Watson, *op.cit.*, p.144.

verb 'to wap' meant 'to copulate, to beat' makes it clear to what lengths she will go to separate the tar from his hard-earned wages.²⁰ This is a 'wapping landlady' who lives and works in Wapping. When the sailor gets the girl in a spirit of unsullied, unconditional romance, it is generally because he is not a tar at all, but either rising through the ranks, or an officer. Midshipman Echo in *The Post-Captain* has a virtuous and pure love for Sophonisba, which is contrasted with his rival's, a soldier who wants her for her inheritance. He wins her love just as he is promoted to Lieutenant for bravery in his ship's capture of an enemy frigate. It is implied that it is his natural ability and nobility which will elevate him from a lowly station, and the litmus test is the nature of his love: its purity is directly proportional to his patriotic heroism.

We must ask if this literary mythology spreads into voyage narratives. Novels and travel literature were closely related in form and content.²¹ And the association of the seaman's physical prowess, like his physical labour, with the abstract economy of moneyed exchange, throws an interesting gloss on celebrated reports of sexual licentiousness on voyages, in particular to the South Seas. Wallis' 'discovery' of Tahiti

²⁰ *The 1811 Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue; Buckish Slang, University Wit and Pickpocket*

Eloquence (facsimile repr. London, 1994), which also gives examples of the term's usage: 'If she wont wap for a winne, let her trine for a make; if she won't lie with a man for a penny, let her hang for a halfpenny. Mort wap-apace; a woman of experience, or very expert at the sport.'

²¹ Watson, *op. cit.*, pp.98-9; Percy G. Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars 1660-1800* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962); Philip Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage: Sea-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.6-8; P.J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (London, 1982), pp.51-4; G.R. Crone and R.A. Skelton, 'English Collections of Voyages and Travels 1625-1846', in E.Lynam (ed.), *Richard Hakluyt and His Successors* (London, Hakluyt Society, 1946), pp.78-89.

and Cook's first voyage to the Pacific became notorious, through their publication in Hawkesworth's unprecedentedly popular volume of 1773, with its accounts of permissiveness among both crew and quarterdeck. The domestic imagination was further stimulated by Hawkesworth and Bougainville describing Tahiti as a modern Eden, with the non-Biblical but infinitely interesting addition of a native female population of unbridled licentiousness.

The consequent satires and lampoons were principally directed at the apparent libertinism of Joseph Banks, whose behaviour was that of the lower deck, not an antiquarian connoisseur and botanist; and it was questioned what sort of 'plant' Banks was hoping to cultivate in the South Seas. The crew were not exempt from critical satire, and it was noticed that Tahitian women who were soon demanding payment, in nails and other trinkets, for their favours; a demand met first by stealing from the ship's stores and, ultimately, by extracting nails from the ship itself.²² The episode relates to various conventions of travel literature, notably the profitable bartering for slaves on the African coast with 'Toys and trifles scarce worth naming' such as beads

²² J. Beaglehole (ed.), *The Journals of Captain Cook*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1955-74), vol.1, *The Voyage of the Endeavour 1768-1771* (1955), pp.96-99, 102, 114-6, 127-8; George Robertson, edited by Hugh Carrington, *The Discovery of Tahiti: A Journal of the Second Voyage of H.M.S. Dolphin Round the World, Under the Command of Captain Wallis, R.N. in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768* (London, Hakluyt Society, 1948), pp.183-7, 207-9; Denning, *op. cit.*, pp.262-9; Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas* (2nd edn., New Haven and London, 1985), pp.41-51; Edwards, *op. cit.*, pp.109-21.

and bits of iron.²³ It was also, as many contemporary commentators pointed out, as a conspicuous demonstration of the paradox of eighteenth-century commercial ideology. Navigation and commerce, while improving knowledge and extending the benefits of Christianity and trade, also caused the moral and social decay of hitherto happy societies by the unnatural introduction of western forms of luxury and corruption. Georg Forster observed that

If the knowledge of a few individuals can only be acquired at such a price as the happiness of nations, it were better for the discoverers, and the discovered, that the South Sea had still remained unknown to Europe and its restless inhabitants.²⁴

As Philip Edwards notes, this pessimism, when navigation itself was the mark of a degenerate Age of Iron, went back to Ovid. From the prelapsarian grace of the Age of Gold when travel, trade and war were non-existent, there finally arrived the Age of Iron, characterized by crime, plunder, treachery, greed, and significantly, voyaging.

Now sailors spread their canvas to the winds, though they had as yet but little knowledge of these, and trees which had once clothed the high mountains were fashioned into ships, and tossed upon the ocean waves, far removed from their own elements.²⁵

²³ *Atlas Commercialis et Maritimus* (London, 1728), p.99 (quote). This of course brings into question the degree of proximity in European attitudes to enslaved Africans with those towards other independent but implicitly 'inferior' peoples.

²⁴ Georg Forster, *A Voyage Round the World*, 2 vols. (London, 1777), vol. 1, pp.367-8.

²⁵ Ovid, translated by M.M. Innes, *Metamorphoses* (Harmondsworth, 1955), p.32.

A greater and more time-honoured denial of the virtues of navigation as expressed by Christian mercantilism could hardly be imagined. Here within the hallowed bounds of classical literature and learning was an equation of the building and use of ships with every anti-social and immoral tendency, the precise opposite of the supposedly socializing effects of commerce. And in eighteenth-century British culture, self-consciously proclaiming its grandeur by virtue of its maritime supremacy, both military and mercantile, of its industry and manufactures, and of its colonial expansion, such an account had a heavy and ominous significance, which could be felt, firstly, in the slave trade, as we shall see, and more generally, in the unsure morality of European contact with seemingly 'golden age' societies such as that of Tahiti. As Edwards points out, western exploration had initially been inspired by greed for gold; now, in the Pacific, sexual favours were bartered for iron nails.²⁶

The artwork from Cook's voyages has been comprehensively compiled and discussed by Bernard Smith and Rudiger Joppien, and others. We thus see that most pictures of Tahiti, particularly when adapted from originals done on the motif and intended for domestic consumption in exhibitions or publications, emphasized the idea that the island was a modern Arcadia or equivalent of Homeric Greece, and place the exotic landscape within the formal tradition of 'classical' landscape.²⁷ Hodges' *Oaitepeha Bay or Tahiti Revisited* (fig.5), one of the oil paintings commissioned by the

²⁶ Edwards, *op. cit.*, p.118.

²⁷ Smith, *op. cit.*, pp.62-5; idem, *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages* (New Haven and London, 1992), pp.; Rüdiger Joppien and Bernard Smith, *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages*, vol.2: *The Voyage of the Resolution and Adventure 1772-1775* (New Haven and London, 1985), pp.58-65.

Admiralty on his return to England, is worth considering at length for the way in which it pictures the natural beauty and luxuriance of the island within the basic format of conventional pastoral landscape, but in a topographical documentary way, as well as an idealizing one, to locate the ideal in the realm of the factual.²⁸

The view focusses on the river and surrounding hills. Like a primitive Thames, the river was held to provide the island's natural abundance, by virtue of its ecological harmony with the terrain and climate:

The high hills . . . attract by their situation, all the vapours and clouds that pass near them; . . . and though it does not constantly rain there, yet such a regular supply of moisture is derived from these hills, that their very tops are crowned with trees, and their sides fringed with shrubs and agreeable plants during the whole year; and all the surrounding valleys collect in their bosom the salutary humidity, which is not absorbed by these plants, and which is generously screened by them against the sun's power; so that in every one a gentle stream is collected from the smaller rills, which unite into one bed.²⁹

As we saw, the Thames' absorption of smaller streams into its vast bulk was later understood by Thelwall as a paradigm for the corruption of commercial society by the self-enrichment of an aristocratic oligarchy at the expense of the poor.³⁰ In contrast, the more balanced and equitable distribution of the streams and rivulets of Tahiti

²⁸ Smith, *European Vision*, p.65.

²⁹ Johann Reingold Forster, *Observations made during a Voyage Round the World* (London, 1778), pp.106-7, quoted in Smith, *European Vision*, p.65.

³⁰ See above, chapter 3.

become a naturalizing analogy for the contemporary admiration of 'the social equality of an island where a king could paddle his own canoe without loss of dignity'.³¹

Forster continues,

This rivulet the natives stem here and there by weirs, made of large stones, in order to water the plantations of eddoes; the frequent trees that are growing along the banks of the sweet purling stream, extend their shady branches, give a coolness to the virgin-water, and thus bring refreshment, and the principles of bread-fruit, apple and cloth trees, and bannana's (*sic*), and spread happiness and plenty. These rivers become the fountains and chief causes of the great variety of fruit, which grows everywhere; they enliven the picturesque scenery, and afford a cooling liquor for the inhabitants.³²

Bernard Smith has noted how this painting virtually visualizes this passage. The hazy humidity creating exaggerated aerial perspective, the numerous valleys down which the water runs to collect in the foreground river, the weir, the verdure of the 'picturesque scenery', and the refreshing quality of the water, are all displayed. The fertile beauty of the scenery equates with the native beauty of the bathers. They might personify the 'virgin-water', save for the obvious iconographical references introducing ambiguities, which recall the morally uncertain reputation of the island. The most obvious classical reference is to the iconography of Diana bathing, a popular subject for eighteenth-century artists, notably Boucher, and one treated by Hayman and Zoffany in the 1760s. This subject, where the illicit voyeurism reduces the male spectator from cultured man

³¹ Smith, *European Vision*, p.85.

³² Forster, *loc. cit.*

to bestial nature, followed by his death by his own hounds, significantly correlates with the perceived possible effects of civilized European intervention into the natural state of Tahiti, an intervention which was commonly characterized as a sexual one.

The principal figure is draping herself, exposing her back in a pose which later became, in the work of Ingres, synonymous with the erotically charged, and implicitly illicit, male view of the harem.³³ She reveals extensive tattooing, both to underline the element of reportage, that ‘the girls must be painted not as ideal beauties but with their typical tattoo markings’, thus to exoticize this form of Arcadia, and so distance it from established European constructs of ideal society; and to refer to a vulgarly carnal association, undermining the figure’s capacity to be a Tahitian Diana.³⁴ One of the most celebrated features of Hawkesworth’s accounts of the sexual encounters with the Tahitian women, was the disclosure that they tattooed their buttocks, and the revelation, first to Banks, then to the reading public, that Oberea, the ‘queen’ of Tahiti, had a tattooed posterior. This was taken to epitomize the real nature of the contact between

English courtly cultivation seen through innocent primitive eyes, [and] raw savages seen by exquisite sophistication: ‘Here painted faces bloom on every strum / In Otahiete we tattoo the bum.’ ‘Vain Oberea will in vain beseech / And to the bawdy winds betray her painted breech’.³⁵

³³ Joppien and Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-5, cat. nos. 2.41-3, also note that this painting, and the other version in Anglesey Abbey, make a sophisticated reference to the amorous associations of Tahiti.

³⁴ Smith, *European Vision*, p.64 (quote).

³⁵ Denning, *op. cit.*, pp.266-7. It is important to note that in the sketch *Vaitepiha Bay* (Joppien and Smith, *op. cit.*, cat. no. 2.41), which may possibly have been executed on the voyage, the figures are

The painting amalgamates conflicting discourses. The sexualization of Tahiti is seen, within an inherited Biblical and classical framework, as both the natural post-Edenic condition of humanity in such a paradise, and also the innocence to be corrupted by civilized intervention into it. And it is expressed here by the integration of the sexual female body with the paradisiacal landscape.

Yet, the sailors who availed themselves of Tahitian sexual freedom, and whose 'amours' (as Cook termed them) established the enduring reputation of the island as the manly tar's dream-come-true (so to speak), are nowhere to be seen.³⁶ In all the detailed and in many cases sympathetic studies of indigenous Pacific peoples, there is nothing of their interaction with, or the activities of, the seamen, even though the lower deck would have been as 'foreign'. Even in a directly observed work, such as *The Resolution and Adventure Taking in Ice for Water* (fig.82), Hodges reduces the crew's presence to the two men on deck pulling the rope, to explain the operation of using the block and tackle to take in the ice. The procedure takes precedence over the performance, the sailor's labour seems to disappear into the fabric of the ship itself.

absent, and were only included at a later stage for the more poetic and contemplative exhibition piece on Hodges' return to London. It is possible therefore that they were included partly in response to the public reaction to Hawkesworth's account and Banks' notoriety. On the significance of tattooing in relation to metropolitan concepts of masculinity and nationality, see Harriet Guest, 'Curiously Marked: Tattooing, Masculinity and Nationality in Eighteenth-Century Perceptions of the South Pacific', in John Barrell (ed.), *Painting and the Politics of Culture* (Oxford, 1992), pp.101-34.

³⁶ Despite the fact, for example, that sailors had their own culture of tattooing, which became something of a nautical tradition in contact with the native culture of the Pacific: Guest, *op. cit.*, pp.130-4; Simon P. Newman, 'Reading the Bodies of Early American Seafarers', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 55/1 (1998), pp.59-82.

Hodges is not at all unusual. Marine imagery generally paid scant attention, if any, to the crew. Ships are presented as 'portraits', and as icons of commerce, the state, or national identity. Tahiti, in this sense, becomes a paradigm for the sailor's invisibility. His mythical libido is affirmed, and given great attention in the voyage accounts, but transformed, like his labour, into a currency transaction, in the medium of the nails from his own ship. Even the liberalizing potential of his sexual physicality could be erased and metaphorically fused with the fabric of the ship, into its collective social significance, and could function to reinforce his identity within a structure of commodity exchange.³⁷

The ironies inherent in the construction of the seaman's sexuality occur elsewhere, most conspicuously with respect to his labour, at which he is virtually never shown as a pictorial subject in his own right, before the nineteenth century. While in

³⁷ One might further question the degree to which, 'in an age when the navy sailed on rum, sodomy, and the lash', this popular conception of the 'manly' tar's eye for women and his prodigious sexual appetite was an hyperbolic assertion of a normative heterosexuality, to deflect from any serious reflection upon what fifty or more, mostly young, men, confined together in a cramped space for extended periods in the middle of the ocean, might engage in. The extent to which homosexuality existed at sea appears impossible to determine fully, but it certainly existed. There might then be a second order of signification in the tar's constructed sexual identity, by which its autonomizing and transgressive potential is doubly suppressed: Gerald Jordan, 'Admiral Nelson as Popular Hero: The Nation and the Navy, 1795-1805', in Department of History, U.S. Naval Academy (ed.), *New Aspects of Naval History. Selected Papers from the 5th Naval History Symposium* (Baltimore, Maryland, 1985), pp.109-19 (quote, p.112); Rediker, *op. cit.*, p.176; A.N. Gilbert, 'Buggery and the British Navy, 1700-1861', *Journal of Social History* 10, pp.72-98; Rodger, *op. cit.*, pp.80-1, however, rejects the argument that homosexuality on board ship was anything other than 'an insignificant issue' (p.81).

many respects the conventional image of the amorous, hard-drinking plain-dealer is evidently based on the actualities of seafaring experience, values and ethics (though such actualities are brought within the bounds of politeness), in others it is directly contrary. No more pertinent and paradoxically ironic example of this exists than that of his English liberty, of which he was supposed both to be the defender and the embodiment, as can be seen in the numerous political prints showing the sailor in the role of defending the constitution from the despotic clutches of France or Spain (figs.66, 67, 71).³⁸

Such a role was contradicted, however, by the practice of impressment, decried as an infringement of the sailor's native rights as a 'free-born Englishman', and as a violation of Magna Carta. Tom Paine looked forward to the day when 'the tortured sailor, no longer dragged along the streets like a felon, will pursue his mercantile voyage in safety.'³⁹ And many prints deal with this theme. Gillray (fig.83) pointedly shows the press in operation directly below the dome of St. Paul's, icon of British liberty, in a composition reminiscent of Hogarth's *March to Finchley* (fig.88). But the

³⁸ See also Herbert M. Atherton, *Political Prints in the Age of Hogarth: A Study of the Ideographic Representation of Politics* (Oxford, 1974); H.T Dickinson *Caricatures and the Constitution 1760-1832* (Cambridge, 1986); Michael Duffy, *The Englishman and the Foreigner* (Cambridge, 1986).

³⁹ Thomas Paine, edited by Henry Collins, *Rights of Man* (1791-2; Harmondsworth, 1969), p.290; Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth, 1991), pp.66-7; Rediker, *op. cit.*, pp.34, 252; Lemisch, *op. cit.*, p.400. Rodger, *op. cit.*, pp.164-82, calls for a more revisionist approach, emphasizing that there are 'few aspects of eighteenth-century history which have aroused more passion and less accuracy than the press gang' (p.164).

sailor's ideal liberty was negated at a deeper level of political discourse. Richard Price provided a general definition of individual and collective liberty:

Without physical liberty, man would be a machine acted upon by mechanical springs, having no principle of motion in himself, or command over events; and, therefore, incapable of all merit and demerit. Without moral liberty, he is a wicked and detestable being, subject to the tyranny of base lusts, and the sport of every vile appetite. And without religious and civil liberty, he is a poor and abject animal, bending his neck to a yoke, and crouching to the will of every silly creature who has the insolence to pretend authority over him.⁴⁰

In these terms, the paradigm of a subject without liberty would be the sailor. The fact that this passage comes from a treatise on colonial America is suggestive of the degree of 'invisibility' of the sailor's experience in eighteenth-century Britain. Yet, while at sea, he was subject to the absolute, and often tyrannical, control of the master, to the motion and direction of the ship, and to the master's decision in this regard; so he could have little 'principle of motion in himself', and no 'command over events'. That the seaman was often 'wicked and detestable', and certainly 'subject to the tyranny of base lusts, and the sport of every vile appetite', was a notorious axiom: they were conventionally regarded as 'unthinking, ungovernable Monsters . . . when once from under Command'.⁴¹ His disrespect for religion and conscience, and his apparent

⁴⁰ *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty* (1776) in D.O. Thomas (ed.), *Richard Price: Political Writings* (Cambridge, 1991), p.23.

⁴¹ A. Dewar, (ed.), *The Voyages and Travels of Nathaniel Uring* (London, 1726, repr. London, 1928), pp. 234-5; Rediker, *op. cit.*, p.226.

disregard for the social value of property, along with his lack of formal rights, particularly regarding impressment, complete the picture.

An insistent defence to charges of disobedience or mutiny, and which came to the fore particularly during the 1797 mutinies, was that the men were subject to the inept, negligent or cruel command of a 'silly creature'.⁴² In several respects, seamen were regarded in the same manner as slaves. For Edward Barlow, seamen were

of that lazy, idle temper, that, let them alone and they never care for doing anything that they should do, and when they do anything it is with a grumbling unwilling mind, so that they must be forced and drove to it . . .⁴³

And it was an axiom of slavery throughout history, that, 'if occasionally as loyal and faithful as good dogs, [they] were for the most part lazy, irresponsible, cunning, rebellious, untrustworthy, and sexually promiscuous.' Just like the sailor or the fisherman, whose duty and productive industry could always turn into mutiny, smuggling or wrecking, no master 'could forget that the obsequious servant might also be a 'domestic enemy' bent on theft, poisoning or arson.'⁴⁴

These values (complex and discursive though they be) diametrically oppose all the values of Christian mercantilism espoused by Hanway and his fellow merchants at

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp.228, 240-2; James Dugan, *The Great Mutiny* (London, 1960), pp.89, 97-8, 178-9.

⁴³ *Barlow's Journal, His Life at Sea in East and West Indiamen* (London, National Maritime Museum, Manuscript Department), p.452; Rediker, *op. cit.*, pp.208-13.

⁴⁴ *Universal History* (23 vols. 1736-65), cited in James Walvin, *England, Slaves and Freedom, 1776-1838* (London, 1986), p.79; David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution 1770-1823* (Ithaca and London, 1975), p.41.

the Russia Company, East India Company, Guildhall, Foundling Hospital and Society of Arts. While Hanway proposed commerce and the accumulation of wealth and property as the prerequisite of social improvement, so long as its potential excesses were held in check by the cultivation of a benevolent sensibility through the practice of religion and philanthropy, the workforce which operated the ships providing the trade were his ideological negative. It is therefore a deep irony that Hanway founded the Marine Society with the purpose, among others, of redeeming delinquent lower-class boys by bringing them up to a life at sea. Of course, he was intent on reforming the lower deck as well, but as we have seen from the prints associated with the Marine Society publications, he was rather redeeming the boys for a life as the romanticized ideal of the champion of Britannia, the heart of oak. In this sense, once again, the Marine Society engravings operated as a bridge between the sailor as a reprobate antinomian, and the cultural stereotype of the patriotic icon.

Representations of the tar must be placed against this theoretical and cultural background that the visual. The phenomenon is one of extreme and contradictory complexity. The irreligion, immorality and anti-authoritarianism, which connoted the seaman as the 'spirit of rebellion' or 'collective worker', when applied to the seaman as patriotic icon, became positive values of self-reliance, plain-speaking realism, comradeship and integrity (values which likewise were increasingly attributed to the figure of John Bull).⁴⁵ As might be expected, the representations of the sailor in the former guise are rare, largely because of the lack of images showing him at his work. Sympathetic realistic representations of the tar, such as those of political prints

⁴⁵ For the figure of John Bull as the embodiment of national character, see Atherton, *op. cit.*, pp.97-100.

(fig.66), offer a down-to-earth view of the battered, maimed and humble tar, but as the loyal 'son of Britannia', whose rebellious collectivism is directed not at the quarterdeck but at the despotism of France or Spain. Similarly, ship-of-state allegories like *The Infernal Sloop Chasing the Good Ship Britannia* (fig.69), neutralize the subversive aspect of his anti-authoritarianism by representing it in the guise of true English plainness and sincerity, to be contrasted with an aristocratic officer class infected by luxury and effeminacy.⁴⁶

Such anti-authoritarianism could epitomize the English national character, and thus underpin English liberty. Citing Montesquieu's admiration in *De l'Esprit des Lois* for the independence of the subject under the English constitution, Richard Price concludes:

We may learn from it that we have nothing to fear from that disposition to examine every public measure, to censure ministers of state, and to be restless and clamorous which has hitherto characterized us. On the contrary, we shall have every thing to fear when this disposition is lost. As soon as a people grow secure and cease to be quick in taking alarms they are undone. A free constitution of government cannot be preserved without an earnest and unremitting jealousy. Our constitution, in particular, is so excellent, that it is the properest object of such jealousy.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ On sincerity, see Louis Guilhamet, *The Sincere Ideal: Studies on Sincerity in Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Montreal and London, 1974); Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740-1830* (London, 1987), pp.128-55.

⁴⁷ Richard Price, *Two Tracts*, in Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.95.

Thus it is the crew, characterized by such a disposition, which attempts to save the ship, and, by implication, the constitution, from being 'lost'.

Likewise, showing the tar as mutilated, as the stereotyped peg-leg, which became common toward the end of the century, particularly during the French Wars, offered a sympathetic portrayal along similar lines, emphasizing the seaman's loyal sacrifice for his country, and his right to be rewarded, now not a 'heart' but a 'leg' of oak.⁴⁸

By contrast, the depiction of tars by fashionable artists such as Wheatley or Ibbotson for exhibition at the Royal Academy or Society of Artists generally stress his youth, good looks and gallantry, conforming much more to the prospective ideal of 'Britannia's steady champion' aspired to in the Naval School illustration (fig.70). We can return to Wheatley's *The Sailor's Return* (fig.10) as representative of many examples, to make the point. Far from being a view of the sailor in his element, he is shown as distant from it as possible, returned to the bosom of his family in idyllic rusticity. The only sign of his vocation appears to be his uniform. In the light of the earlier argument concerning the sailor's invisibility, it is striking that he is made visible here by reclaiming him for the land in an extreme form; by placing him within the comfortable aesthetic familiarity of a genre scene set in Georgic countryside. The pictorial aesthetic thereby serves to extract the sailor from the unpredictable and ideologically unstable realm of the imaginary, away from the cultural negativity of the sea, and reintegrate him within the fixity of the established norms of landed society. Here the familiar values are those of industry (connoted by the prominently placed

⁴⁸ Rowlandson's satire, *Naval Triumph or Favors Confer'd* (engraving, 1780, BMC 5705), combines both these themes, the peg-leg tar literally carrying the officers at the entrance to Greenwich Hospital.

spinning wheel), of property (by the house, chairs, and again the spinning wheel, which in turn appeals to another nostalgically-valued tradition, that of the cottage labourer and artisan, who, unlike the waged seaman, possesses the tools of her/his trade), and of the Georgic aesthetic itself.

Importantly, the sailor's amorous licentiousness is transformed, via an overt symbolic reference to the three ages of woman, into a properly decorous regard for the opposite sex. Thus he is simultaneously dutiful son and devoted husband and father. The relocation of the sailor, and the concomitant fusion of the ideas of land and sea, is echoed elsewhere in the picture, notably in the embrace of the humble cot by the spreading branches of the oak tree, and in the sub-narrative 'conversation' between the child's two birds. The chaffinch (as it appears) held by the child engages the exotic parrot so thoroughly that the latter (no doubt a gift from the child's attentive father), apparently shows no inclination to fly away, the episode becoming a metaphor for the relationship of Britain to its transoceanic colonies, and a commentary on the relation of the roving tar to his home.

It is worth examining his figure in more detail. His hat doubles as a halo, complementing his posture reminiscent of the blessing Christ. His hands are slender and pale (though that offering the bag of money to the mother appears larger and coarser than the one offering silk to the wife), and his face is preternaturally youthful and delicate in complexion. Not only is he transported from his element, then, but his appearance is likewise transformed from that which virtually every spectator would have recognized, applicable to both officers and crew as an inevitable consequence of life at sea, and a standard characteristic of the tar in literature. The land-lubbing hero

of *The English Rogue*, for example, sentenced to transportation, but escaping to an adventurous life at sea, ends up in a short time

so like a seaman . . . that none could distinguish me from one that received his first rocking in a ship. I carried about me as deep a hue of tarpaulin as the best of them, and there was no term of art belonging to any part of the ship or tackling but what I understood. . . . And to make me more complete, I had forgot to wash either hands or face, or what the use of a comb or shirt was . . .⁴⁹

Likewise, the eponymous hero of Cumberland's *Arundel* is

a rough and martial figure above six feet high, his head bald to the crown, and a few grey curling locks in his neck, with a deep cut across his forehead, over which he wears a black patch . . . a face which defies *the winds of heaven* . . .⁵⁰

The most consistent truism about the sailor's appearance, both in fiction and in reported fact, was his tanned, leathery, wind-blown face.⁵¹

⁴⁹ *The English Rogue*, pp.245-6.

⁵⁰ Richard Cumberland, *Arundel, by the Author of the Observer*, 2 vols. (1776), cited in Watson, *op. cit.*, p.176.

⁵¹ Rediker, *op. cit.*, pp.11-12. Tom Bowling, for example, in Smollett's *Roderick Random* is described as 'somewhat bandy-legged, with a neck like a bull, and a face which (you might easily perceive) had withstood the most obstinate assaults of the weather': Tobias Smollett, edited by Paul-Gabriel Boucé, *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748; Oxford, 1979), p.8.

Alternatively, Smollett's character of Captain Crowe is the epitome of the honest but simple tar: 'an excellent seaman, brave, active, friendly in his way, and scrupulously honest; but as little acquainted

Wheatley's sailor therefore is a misrepresentation of the tar's social reality in virtually every respect, a misrepresentation enforced by the transforming function of the aesthetic. This in itself is reinforced by the correspondence of Wheatley's scene to contemporary theatrical performances, particularly comic operas or melodramas. Indeed, the clean-shaven fair complexion of Wheatley's tar brings to mind the contemporary practice of leading actresses to play male roles.⁵² The theatricality operates on an internal pictorial level also, in the painting's compositional similarity to depictions of stage productions, such as Zoffany's *Garrick . . . in 'The Farmer's Return'* (1762). And it invites comparison with popular plays such as the similarly-titled *Thomas and Sally; or, The Sailor's Return*, which ran regularly from its opening in 1760 to the end of the century, and no doubt beyond, or *A Pill for the Doctor* (1790), which tells the story of sailor Ben 'coming back with "six hats full of money" just in time to save his love Polly from being forced by her parents to marry rich Dr. Lotion, sixty-three years old.'⁵³

with the world as a sucking child; whimsical, impatient, and . . . impetuous': Smollett, edited by David Evans, *The Life and Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* (1760-1; Oxford, 1973), p.2.

⁵² For a case study, see, for example, Claire Tomalin, *Mrs Jordan's Profession: The Story of a Great Actress and a Future King* (Harmondsworth, 1994). Russell, *op. cit.*, pp.102-3, sees this theatrical gender reversal as a further exoticization and mystification of the sailor's identity, and as an oblique expression of the taboo of homosexuality in the navy: 'The tantalizing androgyny of Dorothy Jordan was one way of embodying the alterity of the navy, at the same time allowing civilain society to express its desire to know or appropriate that alterity.'

⁵³ Watson, *op. cit.*, p.198; C.B. Hogan, *The London Stage 1660-1800*. Part 5: 1776-1800, 3 vols. (Carbondale, 1968).

Wheatley's pictorial aesthetic is clearly also a political discourse. His visualization of the sailor, his redeeming him from the invisibility of the imaginary, within an environment more commonly associated with Gainsborough's rural peasantry or his own happy cottagers (fig.84) immediately neutralizes the historical actuality of the seaman's, and the maritime community's, political expressiveness. This community (whether at sea, or resident around the docks of the major Atlantic ports) led labouring-class riots and mob disturbance throughout the century. Wheatley's denial and disguising of this was central to eighteenth-century British attitudes towards seamen.

Sailors had been directly involved in every major urban rebellion of the century, from the Penlez riot, the Wilkite and Gordon disturbances, to the 'crimp' riots of the 1790s and the 1797 mutinies, while American seamen were also highly active in the cause of colonial independence.⁵⁴ The very term 'strike' derives from the practice, initiated in 1768, of striking the sails as a refusal to work in a labour dispute.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ On the 1797 mutinies and seamen's involvement in political disturbance in general, see Dugan, *op. cit.*, Linebaugh, *op. cit.*, and John Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England, 1700-1832* (2nd edn., London and New York, 1992), pp.80-1, 89-90, 155-7, 180. On the Penlez riots of 1749, see Peter Linebaugh, 'The Tyburn Riot against the Surgeons', in Denis Hay, Peter Linebaugh and E.P. Thompson (eds.), *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (1975), especially pp.85-6, 89-101. On the 'crimp' riots, see J. Stevenson, 'The London "Crimp" Riots of 1794', *International Review of Social History* 16 (1971), pp.40-58. And on colonial seamen's politicization, see Jesse Lemisch, 'Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America', *William and Mary Quarterly* 25 (1968), pp.371-407.

⁵⁵ Rediker, *op. cit.*, p.110.

Wheatley negates what might have been a politically-active and socially volatile figure. As a general rule it appears the greater the aestheticization of the sailor, the greater the misrepresentation. There are few humane, accurately observed depictions of the lower deck until Louthembourg's portrait drawings of the men on Nelson's ships, of the turn of the century, or perhaps Rowlandson's caricatures of the same period. And the more refined the medium, the further removed tends to be the portrayal from any sense of lived maritime experience. The mechanical media of print-making were considered suitable to depicting the sailor's more brutish and brutalized, as well as politicized, character. Blake, for example, in his 1800 *Little Tom the Sailor* (fig.85), illustrating a poem by Hayley, used white-line metal-cut technique, a method in keeping both with the popular broadside tradition of which the work was self-consciously a part, and with the subject of the sailor. So the prints 'are rough like rough sailors', as Blake himself put it.⁵⁶ Of course, there are notable exceptions to this generalization, particularly the heroic attitudes, scale, medium, and integrated design of Copley's *Brook Watson and the Shark* (fig.86), and the question of aesthetic propriety in relation to the seaman was radically revised during the course of the 1790s. Prior to the French Wars, we see either the cheap and unsophisticated polemic of *The British Flag Insulted* or the romanticized midshipmen of Wheatley or Ibbotson. Marine specialists tend to dwell exclusively on the vessel.

Many images draw on several or all of these aspects. Carrington Bowles' series of salacious prints of the amorous seaman are clear examples. *The Sailor's Return* (fig.87) is a revealing variant upon Wheatley's treatment of the subject, and pinpoints

⁵⁶ William Blake, edited by Geoffrey Keynes, *The Letters of William Blake* (London, 1968), p.49;

R.N. Essick, *William Blake, Printmaker* (Princeton, 1980), p.153.

the uneasy division in the tar's characterization between decorum and depravity. It resembles the *Wheatley* in format as well as title. The protagonists are again the returned young sailor, his sweetheart and her mother, who is associated in both pictures with the acquisition of the sailor's cash. In both there is an emphatic focus on coinage as his payment (once more placing his labour within the nexus of capitalist exchange). Both sailors are given poses of theatrical nobility. But in the print these genteel aspects collide with the vulgar side of the seaman's identity. Rather than the light-suffused, pastoral composition of the *Wheatley*, the engraving directly recalls Hogarth. The disposition of the figures and the perspective of the background buildings echo *The March to Finchley* (fig.88), and the Demosthenean attitude of the tar also resembles Hogarth's centrally-placed soldier. And just as the latter is presented with a modern choice of Hercules, so the sailor is also offered a choice, but hardly one between virtue and vice. The accompanying verse clarifies whatever might be obscure in the image. On the one hand Jack recognizes and is in turn recognized by his Molly, who, in her surprise, 'then drops the brittle Goods she sells for Bread', which appear to be eggs. One of these breaks on the ground, a symbolic event which emphasizes, along with her status as a street-seller, that she is unlikely to have awaited Jack's return uncomforted.⁵⁷ Meanwhile her mother, characterized by broad shoulders and heavy, rough features, 'more sagacious opes The wealthy Chest, on which she plac'd her hopes, And for the Richest Prizes careful Gropes.' The honest tar's genteel

⁵⁷ On the ambiguous character of female peddlers, see G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago and London, 1992), p.55. The dropped or broken eggs, symbolizing the loss of female virtue, was a common visual device at this

pretensions are contrasted with figures of rapacity and promiscuity, heightened by the similarity of the aged, ugly mother to the traditional type of the procuress in Dutch moral genre painting.⁵⁸

On the other hand, interrupting the amorous mutual recognition of Jack and Molly, his ‘Messmate Ned . . . points where flows the Bowl & Gen’rous Red’, like a nautical inversion of the traditional figure of Virtue. The building he indicates in the background recalls the brothel in *The March to Finchley*, and, to judge from the activities taking place inside and out, it clearly serves the same purpose. The verse again leaves no room for doubt:

The settled Crew gay Mirth and Love proclaim.

One leads aloft the mercenary Dame

Who drunk returns her load from whence it came

This refers to the top right corner where a woman vomits out of the window over the figures below. The visual juxtaposition of the alehouse’s whoring and drinking with the mother rummaging through Jack’s chest for money reinforces the central axis of currency exchange within the culture of consumption, shown here in its excess, and within which the seaman was a pivotal figure.

The contrasting sides of consumption and the cash economy meet in the figure of the seaman, fitting to the aesthetic and cultural contrast of his base and heroic personality. And the resulting tensions are well illustrated in this image. Behind Jack is

period, particularly in the sentimental genre works of Greuze, for example, *The Broken Eggs* (1756, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art)..

⁵⁸ Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London, 1988), pp.467-80.

the open sea, the ship at anchor, and on the shore the cask and bale, all constituents of a compound sign for maritime commerce as an abstract value. And Jack, dressed in his low-class seaman's rig, but in an oratical attitude, is placed between the excesses of commercial consumption, lust, avarice and boozing, which the seaman was supposed to personify; and on the left, the extensive plan of commerce which constituted the object of his labour and of his consumption. There is an uneasy aesthetic compromise between nobility and crudity, a duality which Mandeville had long since recognized as central to any commercial system, the crux of which he identified as sailors' use of brothels:

The Passions of soem People are too violent to be curb'd by any Law or Precept; and it is Wisdom in all Governments to bear with little Inconveniencies to prevent greater. If Courtezans and Strumpets were to be prosecuted with as much Rigour as some silly People would have it, what Locks and Bars would be sufficient to preserve the Honour of our Wives and Daughters? . . . some Men would grow outrageous, and ravishing would become a common Crime. Where Six or Seven Thousand Sailors arrive at once, . . . that have seen none but their own Sex for many Months together, how is it to be suppos'd that honest Women should walk the Streets unmolested, if there were no Harlots to be had at reasonable Prices?⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Bernard Mandeville, edited by Phillip Harth, *The Fable of the Bees* (1714-24; Harmondsworth, 1970), pp.127-8; see also Schama *op. cit.*, p.467.

The implication is that Jack's only proper territorial habitat is the environment of the quayside tavern and brothel.⁶⁰ The mutual recognition between Jack and Molly marks the social confinement of his potential for the social passions, of love, sensibility, and commerce itself. The only virtuous solution to the conundrum for the versifier is to take Jack back to sea, the realm of the imaginary, and elide him once more with the mechanics and noble utility of the ship by finding in his profligacy a virtuous disdain for wealth:

Contemning Wealth which they with Risk obtain,
Thus sailors live and then to Sea again.

⁶⁰ As Mandeville goes on, in Amsterdam the brothels 'are allow'd to be no where but in the most slovenly and unpolished part of the Town, where Seamen and Strangers of no Repute chiefly lodge and resort': Mandeville, *op. cit.*, p.128.

Chapter Seven: The negative face of the sea: smuggling and wrecking

If the sailor could personify the conflicts and contradictions at the heart of the discourse of commerce, so too were the dockyard and coastal communities decidedly ambiguous social phenomena. Although the fishing community and the business of offshore fishing were commonly valued as providing a nursery for seamen, and thus a continual resource for national trade and defence, the same communities were extensively involved in two other trades which were regarded not just as direct threats to national government and economy through the deprivation of state taxes, but had associated political overtones by which they could constitute a form of espionage, insurrection and treason: smuggling and wrecking.¹ Given smuggling's associations, it is not surprising that the visual depiction of smugglers becomes more common during the Revolutionary period, and that, conversely, prior to the 1780s, it is rare. Nor should it be a surprise that in the 1790s picturing smugglers was a specialization of George Morland; for this artist was notorious for his radical tendencies and disreputable lifestyle.² Smuggling and wrecking were a cause for widespread social concern for three reasons; as a bastard species of trade, with important implications for national economic statistics and policy; as communal activities which transcended class differentiations; thirdly, for their strong historical associations with subversive politics.³

¹ On the general history of smuggling, see Neville Williams, *Contraband Cargoes: Seven Centuries of Smuggling* (London, 1959).

² For Morland, see John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape* (Cambridge, 1980), pp.89-129.

³ Adam Smith certainly recognized this and placed much emphasis on the necessity of redefining smuggling, not as a crime, but as misdirected commerce. See T.D. Campbell and I.S. Ross, 'The

Virtually parodying the metropolitan growth of box-clubs and professional organizations, smuggling and wrecking produced an extraordinary communal cohesion akin to that enjoyed by seamen. Reports cited gangs of two hundred or more men involved in the organization of the unloading of goods, and their subsequent storage and inland distribution. And frequent recourse was had to the army to combat such gangs as the Hawkhurst, and to provide protection for customs and excise officers. In 1737 it was estimated that 'at St Margaret's Bay and the three adjoining parishes there are about 200 families which subsist by smuggling', which operated some 300 vessels running between the Kent coast and France. Even the force of army regiments could not subdue a determined smuggling community.⁴ The Parliamentary report on smuggling of 1783 'noted "a partial state of anarchy and rebellion", stemming from smuggling'.⁵ The tone of political crisis in such a statement certainly matches the contemporary estimates of the smuggling trade, which suggested that consistently through the century between one third and two fifths of legitimate trade was lost to

Utilitarianism of Adam Smith's Policy Advice', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42/1 (1981), pp.73-92.

⁴ In 1783, for example, a party of forty-five men of the 38th Light Dragoons was sent to conduct a search for smuggled goods at Deal. They were opposed by the warehouse owners and "a large body of the townsmen" . . . The troops opened fire, which was returned, and at length the dragoons, "finding a very powerful and formidable body against them, thought proper to decamp with precipitation": Paul Muskett, 'Deal Smugglers in the Eighteenth Century', *Southern History* 8 (1986), p.51.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.59-60.

smuggling.⁶ It also matches the inherited historical links between smuggling and subversive politics.

Certainly during the first half of the century smugglers, through a combination of paternalistic patronage of their activities by landed Jacobite families, and an anti-aristocratic, anti-government patriotic politics common to other of the merchant and maritime classes (particularly around 1740) were associated with the threat of Jacobitism.⁷ Conversely, opposition advocates of patriotic liberty and free trade could contrast the apparent nefariousness of the smuggler to the real evil of government. William Owen, publisher of *The Remembrancer*, in 1749 published anonymously *A Free Apology In Behalf of the Smugglers, So far as their Case affects the Constitution. By an Enemy to all Oppression, whether by Tyranny, or Law*, asking whether ‘Tyrants, wicked Ministers, Conspirators, Inquisitors, nay Devils themselves, have had their several Apologists; and is a poor *Smuggler* a greater Monster than all these?’⁸ More generally, smuggling was seen as a threat to national security, because of the way in which ‘a knowledge of the coasts, all too useful to an invader, was being

⁶ A.L. Cross, *Eighteenth-century Documents relating to the Royal Forests, the Sheriffs and Smuggling* (New York, 1928), pp.289-90. See also G.D. Ramsay, ‘The Smugglers’ Trade: A Neglected Aspect of English Commercial Development’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 2 (1952), pp.131-57; G.D. Davies, ‘Incentive Payments and the Sale of Smuggled Goods in Dorset in the Eighteenth Century’, *Southern History* 14 (1992), pp.29-45.

⁷ Paul Monod, ‘Dangerous Merchandise: Smuggling, Jacobitism, and Commercial Culture in Southeast England, 1690-1760’, *Journal of British Studies* 30 (1991), pp.150-82.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.178.

acquired by Frenchmen through smuggling', and as an incitement to indolence and luxury.⁹ Admiral Vernon, reporting from Deal in 1745, described it as

a nest of smugglers, with '200 able young men and seafaring people, who are known to have no visible ways of getting a living but by the infamous trade of smuggling, many keeping a horse and arms to be ready at all times. Honest, industrious fishermen,' had become 'lazy and profligate smugglers,' peddling information to the French.¹⁰

While the direct association with Jacobitism all but disappeared after 1745, smuggling itself continued to prosper, particularly during the early 1780s and 1790s when it was stimulated by the increase of duties to finance war.¹¹ Its political character and implications persisted, as it became increasingly enveloped within the opposition of 'plebeian culture' to 'patrician society', being proposed as a traditional customary right of the rural poor in response to the incursions made into rural life by incipient industrialization, land-enclosure and civil law.¹² 'Smuggling, wrecking, poaching and related activities were held not to be crimes in the popular view', and criminalization of smuggling, as Adam Smith observed, turned somebody who was 'in every respect an

⁹ Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p.135.

¹⁰ Muskett, *op. cit.*, p.52; Monod, *op. cit.*, p.167.

¹¹ Muskett, *op. cit.*, pp.67-9; W.A. Cole, 'Trends in Eighteenth-Century Smuggling', in W.E. Minchinton, (ed.), *The Growth of English Overseas Trade* (1969), pp.121-43.

¹² Monod, *op. cit.*, p.158. E.P. Thompson, 'Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture', *Journal of Social History* 7 (1974), pp.382-405; J.G. Rule, 'Social Crime in the Rural South in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', *Southern History* 1 (1979), pp.134-53. Cal Winslow, 'Sussex Smugglers', in Denis Hay, Peter Linebaugh and E.P. Thompson (eds.), *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1975), pp.119-66.

excellent citizen had not the laws of his country made that a crime which nature never meant to be so' into a social and political subversive, a member of a marginalized, volatile community, requiring surveillance and restraint, which was, as we have seen, a dominant characterization of maritime society in general.¹³ Increasingly, such marginalization of the smuggler and wrecker came to dominate their cultural portrayal, both in literature and art, and particularly from the 1790s on.

Before then the social ambivalence of smuggling as a form of 'free trade' which involved all sections of the community, and in which the line between law and crime was blurred by the sympathy and complicity of local magistrates, merchants and revenue officers, had become discernible in representations dealing with it.¹⁴ A set of four accomplished engravings by Pouncy after Kitchingman is particularly interesting (figs.89-92).¹⁵ They display different aspects of a cutter, a vessel first developed around 1740 and, because of its speed and handling, widely adopted by the Revenue for patrolling the coasts.¹⁶ Two of the set, *Building of a Cutter* and *Chace of a Cutter* (figs.89, 90), are dated March 1, 1783; the other two, *Unlading of a Cutter* and *Dissolution of a Cutter* (figs.91, 92), were published October 1, 1785. The difference in dates is suggestive, and helps to clarify what sort of cutter is portrayed here. According to Falconer's *Marine Dictionary*, a cutter is

a small vessel commonly navigated in the channel of England; it is furnished with one mast, and rigged as a *sloop*. Many of these vessels

¹³ Rule, *op. cit.*, pp.140, 143; Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations.*, (1904 ed.), vol. 2, p.429.

¹⁴ On the involvement of the authorities in smuggling, see Muskett, *op. cit.*, and Davies, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ National Maritime Museum Prints and Drawings Collection, nos. PAD6019-PAD6022.

¹⁶ Peter Kemp (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea* (Oxford, 1989), p.221.

are used on an illicit trade, and others employed by the government to seize them; the latter of which are either under the direction of the Admiralty or Custom-house.¹⁷

The Ensign on the boat on the stocks (fig.89) places it in the latter category as a Revenue vessel, being fitted out presumably on the south coast to pursue the smugglers, who are the subject of the other 1783 print (fig.90). The vessels of the Revenue and of the smugglers under pursuit are virtually identical, and this ambiguity, along with the ambiguity of the common sympathy for smuggling, invites the question as to which vessel the foreground figures lining the shore are cheering on. These prints, exploiting the heightened cultural awareness of smuggling around 1783 (with the Parliamentary report, and the wide notoriety of the Kent smugglers), provide an aesthetic frame of reference for a contemporary social issue. This is effected by picturesque composition, oval format, and the linked series of images, which consciously refers to the format adopted and popularized by Vernet in his sea pieces, of the times of day tradition, or the pairing of a calm with a storm.¹⁸ But the ambiguity becomes more pronounced in the 1785 prints where the cutter appears to undergo a change of identity. The *Unlading of a Cutter* echoes the sheltered cove setting of the *Building*. But the activity of unloading the boat, piling up the bales and casks (which licitly should symbolize properly conducted commerce), then carried up the beach to the cave on the right, is surely that of smugglers. Revenue practice was to take any

¹⁷ William Falconer, *An Universal Dictionary of the Marine* (4th edn., London, 1780; repr., Newton Abbott, 1970), p.93.

¹⁸ Philip Conisbee, *Claude-Joseph Vernet 1714-1789* (exhibition catalogue, London, Kenwood, 1976): see, for example figs. 44, 45.

seized goods to the nearest town harbour to be impounded. Moreover, the image corresponds to contemporary reports of smuggling methods, whereby the vessels

wait for a favourable but pretty stiff Gale of wind . . . when they make for the first convenient place . . . there they sink their brandy . . . carry of their Tea . . . and land the same lodging it among the Rocks, Bushes, Ditches and Fields adjoining where it can be most conveniently secured until it can be carry'd off which is generally the same night . . .' On any stretch of coast thinly protected by customs men, smugglers commonly landed their goods openly . . .¹⁹

The scene prefigures Morland's depictions of smugglers landing and unloading (fig.93), and emphasizes the wild and rugged irregularity of the coastline, in contrast to the neat natural terracing of the coast in the *Building*. It thus offers a naturalizing commentary on the brutishness of smuggling, which conforms to the increasing stress in reports on its moral debasement. As one observer wrote in 1783,

From the first landing of the goods to the final disposing of them, it exhibits such a source of violence, and every species of iniquity, as calls aloud for the interposition of Government, not only as an object of revenue, but as it substantially affects the norals of the people, and even the police of the kingdom.²⁰

Consequently, the final print, *Dissolution of a Cutter*, presents the the vessel (the smugglers', surely) afflicted with the ultimate catastrophe, shipwreck; a localized

¹⁹ Davies, *op. cit.*, p.31.

²⁰ Cited in Rule, *op. cit.*, p.150.

Deluge which succeeds to the Burnet-like vision of ‘scars’ and ‘fractures’, the ‘rocks . . . mountains, . . . hollow Caves’ of the other 1785 image; and an assurance that, even if the revenue cutters, with the ‘interposition of Government’ could not prevent smuggling (and it was clear, they could not), then the thunder and lightning of divine intervention would.

This series of prints offers, therefore, a contrast between two types of cutter, - law-breaking and law enforcement - framed within the established pictorial rhetoric of the times-of-day tradition, within which calm is contrasted with tempest. So that the *Building of a Cutter*, if located on the south coast, would correspond to morning, the *Chace* to midday, the *Unlading* to evening, while the *Dissolution* is a moonlight. In turn the two pairs of prints are each divided into a calm and a scene of contest or tempest. As such, the subject’s significance is imbued with the more elevated connotations of national morality, divine punishment, and the nature of good and evil, which informed Vernet’s series paintings and their Dutch antecedents.²¹ But the generalized moralism of Vernet is made particular to a specific political issue of early 1780s Britain, undoubtedly given wider impact by the defeat in the war with America and the doubts voiced in that context by Price, Smith and others, concerning the morality of commerce and colonial imperialism. Moreover, the aesthetic division of the

²¹ Conisbee, *op. cit.*, Introduction, n.p., where he cites Diderot’s eulogy of Vernet, that ‘The *Marines* of Vernet, which show all sorts of incidents and scenes, are as much history paintings to me as the *Seven Sacraments* of Poussin.’ For the moralization of shipwreck in Dutch art, see L.O. Goedde, *Tempest and Shipwreck in Dutch and Flemish Art: Convention, Rhetoric, and Interpretation* (Pennsylvania University Press, University Park and London, 1989), esp. pp.114-206; also Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London, 1988), pp.25-50.

different vessels, in the sense of the different uses to which vessels could be put, not only recalls Hume's and Smith's relation of beauty to utility, and of vice to the destruction of the 'immense machine' of society, but suggests also the growing cultural rift between sociable and criminal behaviour, and the increased marginalization of 'social crime' such as smuggling. Such marginalization became pronounced, to the point of demonization, from the 1790s on, and was given corresponding aesthetic expression.

Hence smuggling was drawn even further beyond the moral pale by being associated with wrecking. This topos, popular at the end of the century, was in numerous tales and pictures characterized as an act of total immorality committed by unscrupulous, murderous thieves, who would happily await the wreck of a ship, or even in extreme cases draw it onto the rocks by using false lights, in order to plunder it and its passengers and crew, stopping at nothing, including the murder of survivors of the wreck, to achieve their nefarious purpose.²² However, as Rule observes, wrecking, like smuggling, was regarded by its perpetrators as a customary right, claiming salvage of a wreck landed on the coast, even though an act of 1753 had made plunder of any such vessel a capital offence.²³

Wrecking is distanced from any civil behaviour by the overwhelming emphasis on the physical violence of the wreckers towards their victims in histories of it, revealing wreckers to be barbarous and grotesque. This distancing was also expressed

²² J.G. Rule, 'Wrecking and Coastal Plunder' in Hay, Linebaugh and Thompson (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp.167-88, who points out the lack of any firm evidence of the use of false lights to lure ships onto the rocks.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.168.

geographically. Wrecking was common along the whole of the southern coast and the west coast up to the Wirral peninsula, yet, it was popularly identified with the wild and distant coasts of Cornwall, Wales and the Scilly Isles, regions whose communities were seen as intractable, incorrigible and sociologically retrograde.²⁴ Wrecking communities, as the products of their remote and brutalizing environment, became subjects for potential reform. In one reforming tract of around 1822 the wrecking carried out on the Lizard peninsula is directly analogized with the sublimity of the landscape, while the almost inhuman exertions and determination of the wreckers distances their livelihood from the realm of the natural still further.

The neighbourhood [of Mullion] is sadly infested with the Wreckers.

When the news of a wreck flies around the coast, thousands of people are instantly collected near the fatal spot; pick-axes, hatchets, crow-bars, and ropes, are their usual implements for breaking up and carrying off whatever they can. The moment the vessel touches the shore she is considered fair plunder, and men, women, and children are working on her to break her up night and day. the precipices they descend, the rocks they climb, and the billows they buffet, to seize the floating

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.169-73. In an account of a 1795 shipwreck on the Dorset coast, the novelist Charlotte Smith noted that the local inhabitants ignored the victims 'in the hopes of sharing what the lower inhabitants of this coast are too much accustomed to consider as their right, the plunder of ships wrecked on shore - and, in the gratification of their avarice, they are too apt to forget humanity': Charlotte Smith, *A Narrative of the Loss of the Catherine, Venus, and Piedmont Transports, and the Thomas, Grove, and Aeolus Merchant Ships, Near Weymouth, on Wednesday the 18th of November Last. Drawn up from Information taken on the Spot, by Charlotte Smith, And published for the Benefit of an unfortunate Survivor from one of the Wrecks, and her Infant Child* (London, 1796), p.16.

fragments, are the most frightful and alarming I ever beheld; the hardships they endure (especially the women) in the winter, to save all they can, are almost incredible. Should a vessel, laden with wine or spirits approach the shore, she brings certain death and ruin, to many, with her. The rage and fighting, to stave in the casks and bear away the spoil, in kettles and all manner of vessels, is brutal and shocking. To drunkenness and fighting, succeed fatigue, sleep, cold, wet, suffocation, death, and-what? an eternity! . . . Imagine to yourself, my dear Sir, 500 little children in a parish, brought up every winter in this way, and encouraged, both by precept and example, to pursue this horrid system.²⁵

The deviancy of their supernatural industry, the ‘unsexing’ of the women through their involvement, and in mothering their children to such a life, their abnormal ability to labour night and day, and to overcome the most ‘frightful’ and ‘alarming’ obstacles of the terrain, and the subsequent descent into individualistic and savage gratification of sensual appetite, are all qualifications for hell and oblivion. But they are also directly compared to the sublime landscape, a description of which immediately follows:

The view of the cliffs and promontories, for nearly three miles on the coast, is tremendous and sublime, far exceeding in romantic grandeur the rocks at Land’s End. The sea-gulls, curlews, and murricks, those sole inhabitants of the frightful precipices, contribute to the awful scenery; while the roaring of the winds through the caverns beneath,

²⁵ Rev. G.C. Smith, *The Wreckers; or, a Tour of Benevolence from St. Michael’s Mount to the Lizard Point interspersed with Descriptive Scenery of Mount’s bay, Cornwall* (London, n.d. [1822?]), pp.8-9.

and the foaming of the billows against the shore, perfected a scene that is scarcely to be paralleled for sublimity and terror. My heart sunk within me at the affecting anecdotes of our guide. O, what tales of woe did he unfold! of wrecks and mangled corpses, death and graves! How did we shudder while he pointed out the frightful rocks on which they struck! I feel even now, while reciting these circumstances, a cold chill, similar to that produced by his pointing to the innumerable graves and pits into which the ill-fated mariner, or delicate passenger, has been thrown; frequently would the tear start from my eye, while passing over those regions of death; and often would my bursting heart exclaim, 'Good God, what has sin done!'²⁶

The 'frightful precipices' upon which the ships struck are of course the same 'frightful' and 'alarming' precipices, rocks and buffeting billows which the wreckers defy to 'seize the floating fragments', and there is a clear metonymic relation supposed here between the 'awful scenery' and the 'horrid system' of wrecking. And all the rhetorical devices of the text impress further the inhuman scale of the environment and of the barbarity of its inhabitants. The 'roaring of the winds' and 'foaming of the billows' provide a pathetic fallacy for the invocation of 'unparalleled . . . sublimity and terror'. That sublimity is intensified by the appeal to the subjective feelings of the author, and to the authenticating detail of the first-hand account of the guide, by which the landscape, through its associations, as well as its appearance, impresses the emotions of the viewer to an unbearable degree.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.9-10.

The open confessional tone of the first-person and the transition to the present tense enforce the subjectivity of the emotional response to the landscape, an authorial subjectivity, mediated first by the tales of the guide, then through the personal recollection impelled by the act of writing, which produces a ‘cold chill’; all of which is paralleled by the subjectivity of the reader’s own emotional response mediated at another remove by the sublime rhetoric of the author. I have analysed this text in detail, because its major rhetorical features, the appeal to sensibility and sublimity, are all conspicuous in the idiom of shipwreck as it developed in the 1790s.²⁷ Thus the same components govern the structure of an apparently more mundane and low-key image, such as Rowlandson’s *Clearing a Wreck on the North Coast of Cornwall* (fig.94). An authorial presence is again asserted by the titular postscript ‘sketched in 1805’, which elaborates the self-consciously linear style (imitating a hand-drawn directness), to deny the mechanical mediation of the print technique. And the details of lowering clouds and sublime and ‘awful’ scenery likewise frame the corresponding ‘horrid system’ of an entire community stripping the wreck, with, we may suppose, a ruthless and callous disregard for the prostrate victim and his four mourners, who form an isolated contrapuntal group of sensible suffering to the ‘insensible’ cycle of plunder which dominates the lower left side of the composition. The contrast is emphasized by the way in which the lines of figures, animals and wagons up the beach parallel the fissures of the cliffs beyond, integrating the wreckers and their activity with an unfeeling hardness in the surrounding uncultivated landscape. The emphasis upon the naturalism of the eye-witness account perhaps obscures the second-order ideological load. But the isolated scene of lamentation at the right, where the victim’s figure is disposed as

²⁷ See below, chapter 9.

Whose hearts never learnt e'en their maker to fear,

Or reflect on the end of their time.

By contrast again, the hopes of the few survivors and their expectations of rescue are confounded by the mercenary intent of the wreckers, who 'begin their glad toil', 'curse and blaspheme' and 'rejoice in the cries of despair', deaf to the prayers of 'the Captain and crew for assistance', Only one 'fine youthful sea-boy' makes it to land, but instead of being tended, he is subjected to an interrogation about the ship's cargo. In his naive goodness, he entrusts his chest to the wreckers, enjoining them to pass it on to his mother 'old and gone blind', who is virtue incarnate: 'Who ask'd her relief, never ask'd it in vain, For she lov'd to dry up mis'ry's tear'. Of course the wreckers' sense of family ties is that of 'wolves [who] hear the ewes intercede For the lambkins they torture and slay'.

What is particularly offensive is not just this inversion of commercially-sanctioned social values of property, piety and charity, which can all be traced to the wreckers' inhumane lack of compassion and sympathy, but the reversal of patriotic love of one's country. The crew's patriotic sympathy at the sight of their native coast is countered by a denial of any form of civic or national affiliation, compounded by its enactment 'On the shores of this hard-hearted land.' So the wreckers' relationship with the landscape is further complicated, in a way which is discernible in visual images such as Morland's and Rowlandson's (figs.93, 94), by its potential for denying formally and aesthetically its proper value as a homeland. Rowlandson's landscape, like Morland's, is characterized by its inhospitable aversion to any form of cultivation. As such it may be subject to redemption or damnation. Smith, evidently with a Burnet-like theorization of the Deluge in mind, concludes his description of the Cornish coastline

by stating that contemplation of it would induce tears, but then goes further: ‘and often would my bursting heart exclaim, “Good God, what has sin done!”’. He thus establishes a clear correlation of the form of the landscape with original sin in general, and with the local proclivity for the sin of wrecking in particular. Similarly, the dying boy of the poem, when finally tended by the local vicar, questions the divine tolerance of wrecking:

“Oh Sir! can kind Heaven look on all the while,
 And refrain its dread thunders to hurl?
 Methinks its blest spirits would speed down, and smile
 To inflict their dread anger on *wreckers* so vile,
 And all angels their vengeance unfurl.”

The sin of wrecking, then, like those other forms of commerce perverted towards goals of material greed and self-interest, is naturally subject to divine punishment, ironically in the form of a storm. But the versifier does not address the possible contradictions here. Similarly, in Smith’s view, redemption of Mount’s Bay could only come about by reclaiming the moral values of the people for the socially-cohesive principles of ‘Christian mercantilism’, and the land for the overarching ideological value of the ‘nation’, through the interposition of Methodism. By the conversion of the wreckers to God

how much might be done to preserve the property of merchants and underwriters; restore the morals of the people; roll away the reproach from the country; and raise the tone of this part of British society.²⁹

²⁹ Smith, *The Wreckers*, p.19.

This set of localized motives, like those proposed by Hanway for establishing the Marine Society, will redeem the Cornish community. The fact that these could be expressed partly in terms of a landscape aesthetic extends the problems encountered in the representation of the seaman into related areas and related types of social persona. Fishing communities remained on the cusp of sanctioned or illegitimate behaviour, as the inactivity of the figures, supplied with no pictorial hint of proper employment, sitting looking out to sea in Morland's *Calm off the Coast of the Isle of Wight* (fig.95) of about 1800, plays upon this tension, for the south coast of the island was notorious for smuggling. More typically, wreckers were pictured in a melodramatic contrast of virtue and vice akin to that of *The Wreckers* verse. This was particularly the case in the 1790s. Pictures such as Morland's *Coast with Wreckers* (fig.93), along with his numerous smuggling scenes, or Louthembourg's *Shipwreck* (fig.96) expressed a general cultural sensitivity to maritime disasters and crime.³⁰ Apart from the increased publication of shipwreck narratives, the London theatre, no doubt in response to anxieties created by the war, staged plays on similar themes: Birch's *The Smugglers*, which opened on 13 April 1796, Cobb's *The Pirates* (21 November 1792), *The Shipwreck; Or, French Ingratitude* (27 May 1792), *The Shipwreck* (10 December 1796), and *The Shipwreck; or, Walking Statue* (11 November 1789).³¹

³⁰ Louthembourg's picture is more properly a scene of wreckers. It is directly comparable in composition and treatment both with the Morland and with Louthembourg's own earlier Vernet-inspired treatment of the theme: *The Wreckers*, (1767, York City Art Gallery).

³¹ Details of the numerous shipwreck narratives published at this date are given in Keith Huntress, *A Checklist of Narratives of Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea to 1860* (Ames, Iowa, 1979). For theatre productions see C.B. Hogan, *The London Stage 1660-1800. Part 5: 1776-1800*. 3 vols. (Carbondale, South Illinois University Press, 1968).

The only London theatrical precedent had been MacKenzie's 1783 *The Shipwreck*, an adaptation of Lillo's *Fatal Curiosity*, and that lasted only one performance,³² although plays like *The Tempest* which dealt with disaster at sea and were in the standard repertoire were staged. As a title, *The Shipwreck; Or, French Ingratitude* is very suggestive of the aesthetic based upon contrasts by which wreckers were characterized, and which was also typically employed to represent revolutionary France, by opposing the virtue of British constitutional stability and freedom with French regicidal anarchy, most popularly, and controversially, articulated in Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Burke's demonization of the French revolution focussed upon its apparent rejection of the values of tradition, national history, natural law, social hierarchy, religion and property (thus bearing a close resemblance to the similar exaggerated claims about wreckers), and was seized upon by satirists such as Gillray and Rowlandson.³³

Typically, Rowlandson in *The Contrast* (fig.97) juxtaposes British and French versions of virtue, loyalty and freedom. So 'British Liberty', comprising 'RELIGION, MORALITY, LOYALTY, OBEDIENCE to the LAWS, INDEPENDANCE [sic], PERSONAL SECURITY, JUSTICE, INHERITANCE, PROTECTION OF PROPERTY, INDUSTRY, NATIONAL PROSPERITY, HAPPINESS', is represented by a graceful, classically-profiled Britannia seated beneath an oak, the

³² *Ibid.*, vol. 2., pp.638, 679-80.

³³ For extensive discussion of the British artistic responses to the Revolution, see especially David Bindman, *The Shadow of the Guillotine: Britain and the French Revolution* (exhibition catalogue, London, British Museum, 1989); also Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolution (1789-1820)* (New Haven and London, 1983).

British lion resting at her feet, holding in one hand the scales of justice, in the other a scroll of 'MAGNA CHARTA'. The national prosperity and felicity she connotes is signalled by the now familiar fully-rigged ship pointed towards the open sea in the background, a signifier both of ship of state (implied in the correlation of the Union ensign with the Union Jack on Britannia's shield), and the ship of global commerce. In the French version there is notably no sea at all in the background, only a modern city street-lamp with a gentlemanly figure hanged from it. Opposed to the sheltered, restrained, quiet propriety of Britannia (whose mouth is firmly closed) is the Medusa-headed, screaming open-mouthed, energetically muscular and 'unsex'd' masculinization of the allegorical personification of French liberty, sword in one hand, trident (clearly Satan's not Neptune's) adorned with the head of the corpse over which she strides, in the other. This figure is directly adapted from an earlier personification of the 'unnatural' America rebelling against its mother land (fig.98), to maintain a tradition in pictorially demonizing other cultures and alien social systems.

The corpse (headlessness apart) is reminiscent of contemporary representations of shipwreck, Deluge or wrecking victims; for example, West's *Deluge* (fig.99), probably exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1791, and projected for Windsor Castle,³⁴ or Copley's Brook Watson in *Watson and the Shark* (fig.86), which also deals with bodily dismemberment, and has been claimed to have direct correlations of form and meaning with political prints of the American War of Independence.³⁵ The pose is very

³⁴ Nancy L Pressly, *Revealed Religion: Benjamin West's Commissions for Windsor Castle and Fonthill Abbey* (exhibition catalogue, San Antonio, Texas, 1983), pp.27, 40.

³⁵ A. Uhry Abrams, 'Politics, Prints, and John Singleton Copley's *Watson and the Shark*', *Art Bulletin* 61/2 (1979), pp.265-76.

similar, but turned from a lateral to an oblique, foreshortened viewpoint. As we have seen from contemporary prints of the ship of state, such as Gillray's *Britannia between Scylla and Charybdis* (fig.72), the visual currency of the ship and shipwreck as allegories for the nation was well-developed and sophisticated. Gillray's portrayal of the opposition 'democrats' as sharks pursuing the vessel of the constitution extends the metaphor and locates it more precisely in a given political situation. Shipwreck, generally, could offer a nexus of references from a well-established iconography of western art, particularly through its close relation to the Biblical account of the Deluge, which had the potential to be adapted to almost any aspect of political or social life in late eighteenth-century Britain: in particular wrecking could be adapted as a ready image for the threat of French republicanism, and the activities of British democrats. So Gillray in *The Storm rising,-or-the Republican FLOTILLA in danger of 1798* (fig.128) makes an extended play upon the parallels between wrecking and republicanism. By labouring to bring safe to British shores the ungainly and precarious *French* ship (no object of beauty and utility, this), Fox and his crew turn what in normal circumstances would be an act of heroic patriotism into the attempted wrecking of the British state.³⁶ It indicates the ease with which heroism in the iconography of maritime disaster could turn into treachery, a recurrent characteristic of its literary and pictorial representation in the 1790s.

³⁶ An almost identical print was published at the same time by Isaac Cruikshank, as well as numerous prints illustrating the supposed French invasion raft which was rumoured to be under construction, indicating the popular receptiveness for this type of maritime analogy for Britain's political situation at this period: BMC 9160.

So Loucherbourg's *Shipwreck* (fig.96), itself probably adapted from the *Eidophusikon*, which linked the scene of shipwreck with a Miltonic vision of Hell, may be seen to adapt a Vernet-esque shipwreck to the 1790s sensitivity about the political character of the social (and implicitly, revolutionary) values inscribed in wrecking.³⁷ The drama is again constructed around a set of contrasts very similar to *The Wreckers*: here, the forceful tonal contrast of the foaming waves and moonlit sky with the blackness of the rocks, enveloping cloud and distant sea. This is complemented by the colouristic contrast of the red clothes, faces and torsos of the figures with the dominant dark green of the rocks and sea, and forms the setting for the dramatic focus of the picture, pushed down into the bottom right corner, where the few survivors, particularly the kneeling white-robed woman, have their hopes of rescue confounded by the onset of the wreckers. At the opposite edge of the composition is the ship lying upon the characteristically barren rocks. The encounter between the female figure of virtue-in-distress and the savagery of the assailants is the conventional one between sensibility and inhumanity, the figure of innocence and pity confronted by a hostile environment whose landscape dominates the picture and forms its principal subject.

In 1793 this elemental human drama had an unmistakably political aspect, with the execution of Louis XVI and the subsequent flood of anti-Jacobin propaganda, particularly prints and paintings. On the one hand these recreated the last moments of Louis XVI with the hyperbolic sentimentalism of Mather Brown's highly popular image *The Final Interview of Louis the Sixteenth* (fig.100), in which the women are shown in similar attitudes of helpless imprecation to Loucherbourg's shipwrecked

³⁷ On the *Eidophusikon* see Rüdiger Joppien, *Philippe Jacques de Loucherbourg, R.A., 1740-1812*

(exhibition catalogue, London, Kenwood, 1973).

woman); and on the other demonized the Revolutionaries, as in Gillray's *Un Petit Souper a la Parisienne - or - A Family of Sans-Culottes refreshing after the fatigues of the day* (1792, fig.101), with an infernal imagery of cannibalism and murder, extrapolated as an hysterical exaggeration of Hogarth's *Four Stages of Cruelty*.³⁸

The politicization of wrecking likewise suggests a related significance for Louthembourg's *Shipwreck*, which has several affinities with contemporary political prints, in particular Gillray's exactly contemporary *Britannia between Scylla and Charybdis*. The boat of the shipwreck victims is very similar and similarly disposed in the painting, to the 'vessel of the constitution' in the print. Most telling perhaps in this context is the emphasis which Louthembourg places upon the central, highlighted triangular rock, as the formal linking device for the different parts of the composition, to intimate a three-way connection between the principal elements of the narrative:- the shipwreck in the background, the extinguished lighthouse in the middle distance, and the action among the figures in the foreground. Its shape is closely similar to the shape of the Jacobin cap of liberty; as worn by the central figure in Gillray's *Un Petit Souper*, or atop the rock in *Britannia between Scylla and Charybdis*. Moreover, Gillray labels this 'the Rock of Democracy', an emblematic conceit which Louthembourg appears to have elaborated as a metonym, by equating the democratic levelling of shipwreck and, notoriously, of wrecking, with the symbolic transformation of the coast, thereby investing the landscape with its 'atheism', 'murder', 'madness', 'cruelty' and 'equality'. This is precisely analogous to the Rev. Smith's identification of the formal aesthetic character of the Cornish terrain with the moral anarchy of its wrecking community, save that in *The Shipwreck* the actions of the wreckers seems to

³⁸ Bindman, *op. cit.*, cat. nos. 95, 81.

have morally (and thus aesthetically) transformed the landscape, rather than themselves evolving from the character of the environment. The strong interrelations between popular and polite art can be further demonstrated by comparing Louthembourg's shipwrecked woman to the figure of Britannia in Gillray's *The Genius of France Triumphant - or - BRITANNIA petitioning for PEACE* of 1795 (fig.102). The suppliant Britannia is similarly posed and dishevelled, and countered by her antithesis, here a grotesque incarnation of the 'Genius of France', who is seated on a conspicuously sexualized triangular mitre labelled 'LIBERTAS', and whose head is formed out of a mass of issuing black cloud which, like that in *The Shipwreck*, threatens to extinguish all light.

Chapter Eight: The negative face of commerce: representing the slave trade

It would appear, then, that shipwreck iconography and its derivatives were capable of highly specialized references and meanings within a given visual culture. Within its inherited, generalized admonitory significance it had particular relevance for the self-styled maritime nation and empire. The precarious condition of commerce, in that its instability could easily turn it into an unwelcome and unhealthy luxury, was, as we have seen, a constant anxiety among eighteenth-century commentators. Moreover, the philosophical notion of luxury was, as Sekora demonstrates, rooted in the theological formation of original sin.¹ Thus the trope of shipwreck, with its implicit significance for the interruption and destruction of commerce, and consequent injury to the maritime nation, was readily referred to Old Testament prophecy and Revelation, as well as, through its intrinsic associations with the iconography of the Deluge, to the typology of the Fall.

In this sense the rise, from the late 1780s, of interest in shipwreck literature and imagery constitutes an adjunct to the increased popularity of apocalyptic millenarianism, which culminated perhaps with the notoriety of Richard Brothers in 1795, who directly, along with many others, linked the contemporary political situation to Biblical prophecy and the coming millenium, to the extent of deriding George III as

¹ John Sekora, *Luxury: The concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett* (Baltimore and London, 1977), pp.23-43, *et passim*.

the Antichrist.² Given the highly-charged political and religious culture of the period, it is perhaps to be expected that the potential moral meanings of shipwreck became correspondingly amplified.

In the wake of the loss of the American colonies, which itself could be accounted for as the natural outcome of the disturbance to a divinely-ordained world order produced by the excessive ambitions of commercial empire, the most urgent and sensitive target as the negative face of commerce was the slave trade.³ No doubt the

² Brothers was extreme but by no means unusual in this. Among the artistic community Blake and William Sharp gave graphic expression to similar ideas: see John Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790s* (Oxford, 1992), pp.20-74. For the general context of radicalism and millenarianism in the 1790s and subsequently, see J. Ann Hone, *For the Cause of Truth: Radicalism in London 1796-1821* (Oxford, 1982); Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 50-63, who also notes the notional correspondence between prophets and radicals in the 1790s ('even in the absence of direct influence from radicals, the predictions and doctrines of such prophets threatened to turn the world upside down in a similar way to political revolutionaries', p.61).

³ For example, Richard Price, *A Fast Sermon* (1781), and *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution, And the Means of Making It a Benefit to the World* (1785) in D.O. Thomas (ed.), *Richard Price: Political Writings* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.101-51, esp. p.119: Price sees the American Revolution as, next to the introduction of Christianity itself, the most important event towards bringing about 'a general diffusion of the principles of humanity', which will be 'the means of setting free mankind from the shackles of superstition and tyranny':

Religious bigotry, that cruel demon, will then be laid asleep. Slavish governments and slavish hierarchies will then sink and the old prophecies be verified, 'that the last universal empire upon earth shall be the empire of reason and virtue, under which the gospel of peace (better understood) *shall have free course and be*

radicalization of political discourse in the American War, the shock to the imperial expansionist mentality occasioned by defeat, and the organization of the antislavery movement, which culminated in the 1787 foundation of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, were not simply coincidental occurrences.⁴ But the abolitionist arguments were steeped also in the rhetoric of retribution, individual and civic corruption, and the morality of the theologically-derived conception of luxury. It is neither coincidental that the most recurrent visual and literary figure employed to express such complexities was that of shipwreck.⁵

There is a distinct problem when attempting to deal with the impact of slavery and abolition upon the visual arts, as so little work treats of the subject directly. And this is particularly true of maritime imagery. While celebratory ‘portraits’ of East

glorified, many will run to and fro and knowledge be increased, the wolf dwell with the lamb and the leopard with the kid, and nation no more lift up a sword against nation.’

It is a conviction I cannot resist that the independence of the English colonies in America is one of the steps ordained by Providence to introduce these times . . .

See also Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780-1840* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.65-73.

⁴ J.R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade 1787-1807* (Manchester, 1995), p.33. On the political after-effect of the American War see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992), pp.143-5.

⁵ It is worth noting in this context that the millenarian prophets Richard Brothers and Robert Wedderburn were both ardent abolitionists (Wedderburn also being black and brought up on a West Indian plantation), and, interestingly, ex-naval veterans: Mc Calman, *op. cit.*, p.62.

Indiamen and Navy vessels were produced in abundance, similar images of slavers are extremely rare, despite the fact that, as James Walvin argues, slavery and the commodities produced by it underpinned virtually every aspect of metropolitan commercial progress in eighteenth-century Britain, from the London coffee house to the colonial plantation, from theories of racial classification to the empirical botanical research (resulting from Cook's voyages) which was the foundation of the project to transplant breadfruit to the West Indies. Of course it remains extremely questionable how many domestic consumers would have made the conscious connection 'between black slavery and the material pleasures of white life', although with the abolitionists' techniques of mass-publicity in the late 1780s, and the popular boycotts of West Indian sugar, an increasing number of people did.⁶ But for a trade which its supporters argued was of inestimable benefit for the country, not only in terms of financial profits, but as a nursery for seamen, and as a means of preventing colonial expansion and enrichment by other European powers, principally France, it has to be questioned why there is so little corresponding visual culture.

No doubt this has something to do with artistic patronage. West India planters of the stature of William Beckford, for example, employed the most fashionable and

⁶ James Walvin, *Black Ivory: A History of British Slavery* (London, 1993), p.10 (quote); idem, *England, Slaves and Freedom, 1776-1838* (London, 1986). Oldfield, *op. cit.*, pp.125-79; David Turley, *The Culture of English Antislavery, 1780-1860* (London and New York, 1991), pp.19-39; Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition* (London, 1975). On Linnaean racial classification see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York, 1992), p.32. On the project for transplanting breadfruit (which was, of course, not completed in the first instance because of the mutiny on the *Bounty*) see David Mackay, *In the Wake of Cook: Exploration Science and Empire, 1780-1801* (London, 1985), pp.123-43.

talented artists of the contemporary social scene, and Beckford certainly did not align himself with the maritime or trading community, either socially or aesthetically.⁷ Likewise, while merchants involved in the slave trade certainly did buy paintings, and occasionally by contemporary marine artists, they tended to buy them as cultural accessories, in order to associate themselves further with the norms of taste and culture of the polite metropolitan society to which they aspired. Therefore they bought works by recognized artists usually of genteel subjects, particularly Dutch or French 'old masters'.⁸ Art would thereby serve to distance the slave-trader from the source of his material prosperity, in a culture where trade in general, not just slavery, was supposed to be tainted, and wealth disinterested. Furthermore, the West India planter and the maritime slave trader were not known for their concern with aesthetics, being generally seen as uncouth upstarts, and it is therefore unlikely that they would have provided much of a source of patronage for marine artists.⁹ Finally, what few maritime works do exist were clearly made for private consumption, and privately commissioned. William Jackson's *Liverpool Slave Ship* of about 1780 (fig.103) is an unidentified slave vessel, but is clearly, from its format and detail, a 'portrait'. Recent

⁷ See James Lees-Milne, *Beckford* (Tisbury, Wilts., 1976).

⁸ David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.347-75, 431-45. For the social status of the planter against the background of attitudes to new wealth generally, see James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* (Oxford, 1992), pp.208, 221-48.

⁹ On the character of the planter see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution 1770-1823* (Ithaca and London, 1975), pp.61-2; Michael Craton, *Sinews of Empire: A*

cleaning has revealed three small boats returning from the African coast in the distance to the left, transporting captured Africans to the ship. Its status as a slaver is anyway shown by the row of port-holes below the gun deck, which provided some ventilation for the slaves amassed in the hold.¹⁰ One of the most interesting aspects of the painting is that it clearly shows the seamen engaged in their labour, and the process of transferring captured slaves from the coast to the ship, to be shipped on the notorious voyage known as the 'Middle Passage' to the Americas. In this sense it may be seen as a justification of the trade through a transparent description of its industrial methods, and it stands in opposition to the contemporary criticisms of the brutal treatment of slaves (and seamen) which were promulgated by abolitionists, including ex-slavers such as John Newton.¹¹ But it is also notable that the seaman becomes 'visible' in the context of slavery, and is given a representational equivalence to the human cargo he is shipping.¹²

Even rarer are images such as Stothard's engraving *The Voyage of the Sable Venus from Angola to the West Indies* (fig.104), executed to accompany the poem *The*

Short History of British Slavery (London, 1974), pp.199-207; D. Hall (ed.), *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750-86* (London, 1989).

¹⁰ M.K. Stammers, "'Guineamen': Some Technical Aspects of Slave Ships", in A. Tibbles (ed.), *Transatlantic Slavery: Against Human Dignity* (exhibition catalogue, Liverpool, National Galleries and Museums on Merseyside, 1994), p.40, cat. no. 87.

¹¹ John Newton, edited by Bernard Martin and Mark Spurrell, *The Journal of a Slave Trader, 1750-1754: with Newton's 'Thoughts upon the African Slave Trade'* (London, 1962).

¹² But it is worth noting, in the context of 'visibility', that the location and activity of the vessel and its crew have only been confirmed by the recent cleaning. At some point the ship's identity as a slaver had been disguised through discreet over-painting: Stammers, *loc. cit.*

Sable Venus: An Ode which prefaced the third (1801) edition of Bryan Edwards' *History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies of the West Indies*, another defensive apology for the slave trade in the face of abolitionist arguments. Stothard's extraordinary plate to illustrate a poem than which 'No more preposterous misinterpretation was ever perpetrated of the "Middle Passage"' puts the African woman, in the pose of the Medici Venus, in the traditional place of Britannia. The conch-blowing triton and its deferential Neptune carrying the British flag reveal the picture to be a clear variation on Hayman's *Triumph of Britannia* (fig.62).¹³ But the figure's placement in a scallop shell on the open sea also recalls Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, to recast the nakedness of the plantation slave into the 'disinterested' aesthetic Platonism of an ideal classical European beauty. To accommodate this the print has to invert the accepted structures of aesthetic, and thus implicitly moral, practice. This, as we shall see, is a recurrent and characteristic tendency of antislavery culture, anticipated here in the context of a pro-slavery apology. The point is that it constructs its approbatory stance by relocating the subject of slavery from the sphere of political economy into the aesthetic.¹⁴ The same method of aestheticization of the West Indies, which 'provides a means of simultaneously acknowledging and suspending awareness

¹³ Hugh Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art. IV: From the American Revolution to World War I*. Vol. 1: *Slaves and Liberators* (Houston, 1989), p.33

¹⁴ The strategy of displacement is accentuated by the skittish and prurient tone of the poem which the print accompanies, which attempts to construe the beauty of the African woman within a veneer of whimsical sexuality, making it clear that her beauty is only carnal, not spiritual, but also both acknowledging and evading the well-known culture of sexual exploitation and abuse of slaves by planters, and the latent anxieties concerning miscegenation and moral corruption which such

of the social and economic institutions of the slave colony', has been noted in the literary descriptions of plantations and slaves.¹⁵ In a similar vein to the written descriptions of the landscape, the pictorial approval of slavery is usually rendered tacitly by focussing on its exotic luxuriance.

Many of the colonial subjects exhibited at the Society of Artists in the 1770s did something similar, whether as landscapes, or, as appears to have been the case with Wickstead's *A Mulatto Woman teaching Needlework to Negro Girls* (exhibited at the Society of Artists exhibition, 1777), as genre pieces. They emphasized the environment as a benign one of industry and education, and thus implicitly giving support to the traders' defence that the slaves were treated as well as, or better than, the poor in England (and, in any case, better than in their natural savage state).¹⁶ They are clearly products of a period which 'between the end of the Seven Years' War, when England acquired new colonies in the Windward Islands, and the onset of the American Revolution, was a golden age for the British planter, who could look forward to high sugar prices, lowered transportation costs, and an ample supply of labour. The American Revolution, though, shattered the illusion of [the] eternal cornucopia'.¹⁷ This is presented in Mason's engraving (published by Boydell) of George Robertson's *A View in the Island of Jamaica of the Spring-head of Roaring River* of 1778 (fig.105), which was no doubt one of the four paintings of Jamaican landscapes exhibited by

practices provoked. See Walvin, *Black Ivory*, ch.3; Hall, *op. cit.*, pp.87-9, 185-6, 221; Honour, *op. cit.*, pp.33-4.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Bohls, 'The Aesthetics of Colonialism: Janet Schaw in the West Indies, 1774-1775', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 27 (1994), p.373.

¹⁶ Honour, *op. cit.*, pp.31-3.

¹⁷ Davis, *op. cit.*, p.52.

Robertson at the 1777 Society of Artists exhibition.¹⁸ Robertson's, like Hodge's views of Tahiti (exhibited at the Academy a few years earlier), were noticed for their novelty, to reinforce the implication that colonial discovery was presenting a need for revision of landscape aesthetics:

[The] Views in Jamaica, by *Mr. Robertson*, are entirely new objects in the Painting Way, as no Artist of Mr. Robertson's Abilities ever was in Jamaica before him. The Views are well chosen; the Variety of Trees discover great Skill in the Painter. His Touch is free, the Fore-ground of his Pieces well finished, and he has omitted nothing that could mark the Spots; they cannot fail of pleasing People who have been on the Island, since they do one who never was there, and only took Notice of them as being excellent Landscapes.¹⁹

The assurance that the artist has 'omitted nothing that could mark the Spots' only emphasizes the degree of displacement of the social economy of slavery facilitated by the aesthetic. The slave colony may present a new subject for art, but only within the established aesthetic structure, as the reviewer is at pains to point out. He hardly has any sympathetic attachment to the subject-matter. On the contrary, they only attract him in the first place as 'excellent Landscapes'. The review thus sublimates any particular character of the landscape within the universalizing discourse of an extended

¹⁸ 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, 1907; facsimile repr., Bath, 1969).

¹⁹ *St. James's Chronicle* (Sat., May 10-Tues., May 13, 1777), p.2. The same reviewer notes Wickstead's 'Malatto Woman' as 'natural and expressive'.

aesthetic, within which the representation of Jamaica may be judged on equal terms alongside those of Tahiti, Ireland or Dovedale: or else alongside an imaginative recreation of English rusticity such as Gainsborough's *Watering Place*. Jamaica is depicted as a form of pastoral or georgic Arcadia, from which the toil of the plantation is erased. Indeed the ideologies of industry, manufacture and navigation which underpinned the colonial enterprise are also dispelled from this evocation of 'an eternal cornucopia' where the 'earth itself, without compulsion, . . . produce[s] all things spontaneously'. As with Tahiti, the lifestyle enabled by such a climate and terrain appears to be one of relative ease, and the image reinforces the view commonly expressed by British visitors, that the West Indies was a form of terrestrial paradise. Janet Schaw remained spellbound by the beauty of Antigua:

the beauty, the Novelty, the ten thousand charms that this Scene presents to me, confuse my ideas. It appears a delightful Vision, a fairy Scene, or a peep into Elysium; and surely the first poets that painted those retreats of the blessed and the good, must have made some West India Island sit for the picture.²⁰

In Robertson's image the recreation of Jamaica as a 'peep into Elysium' naturalizes the presence of the figures. One of these, the kneeling man, seems to offer gifts of the bounteous store of the island to the standing woman, in a manner similar to that in

²⁰ Schaw, *Journal*, p.91, cited in Bohls, *op. cit.*, p.374 and n. The work of Agostino Brunias in Dominica at the same period forms a complement to Robertson and Schaw, which also exoticizes and pastoralizes the landscape, as well as showing Brueghelian scenes of slaves at play, dancing, etc. They are not (like the sailor) shown at their labour. See Hans Huth, 'Agostino Brunias, Romano: Robert Adams' "Bred Painter"', *Connoisseur* 151 (1962), pp.265-9.

which Britannia is offered the riches of the east in Spiridione Roma's East India House decoration.²¹ But his pose also ironically prefigures that of the suppliant slave in the abolitionists' most famous icon, the Wedgwood medallion 'Am I not a Man and a Brother?' (fig.106) Such naturalization of the figures of course suppresses the fact of forcible transportation, via the Middle Passage, involved in their appearance in the 'fairy Scene'. In another sense, however, it tacitly, if unwittingly, acknowledges it, since Africa was also conventionally described as an earthly paradise. Indeed, one of the main methods of the abolitionists to counter such hubristic visions as Robertson's and Schaw's was simply to invert the terms of the 'paradise' argument, and amplify the moral connotations of its Biblical source. A 1784 tract, for example, rejects the paradisiacal associations of the colony, where the slave's life

day after day presents the same dreary situation of unrewarded toil, miserable food, and severe whippings, inflicted for trifling, and sometimes for imaginary offences. When this situation is compared with the liberty, the ease, and the independence which the Africans enjoy in their own country, where, according to the relations of travellers, there seems to be a sort of exemption from the general doom of man to perpetual labour, and nature produces the fruits of the earth almost

²¹ Spiridione Roma, *Britannia Receiving the Riches of the East*, 1778, ceiling painting for East India House, Leadenhall Street, illustrated and discussed in Brian Allen, 'From Plassey to Seringapatam: India and British History Painting c.1760-c.1800', in C.A. Bayly (ed.), *The Raj: India and the British 1600-1947* (exhibition catalogue, London, National Portrait Gallery, 1990), pp.27-8.

spontaneously, who but must condemn the rough hand of power which forces them, or the arts of treachery which entice them, to leave it!²²

The slave trade here is cast as a form of original sin, the serpent of commercial luxury, effecting the expulsion of the natives of paradise, in a modern re-enactment of the Fall, and condemning them to a life of perpetual labour.

The strategy of rhetorically inverting contrasting values, apparent in the imagery of Jacobins and wreckers, is displayed, too, in Morland's highly popular pair of paintings and engravings dealing with the slave trade, *Execrable Human Traffic* (fig.107), and *African Hospitality* (fig.108).²³ The paintings, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1788 and 1789 respectively, follow the pattern of picturing moral subjects as a contrasting pair, taken up by Morland in *The Miseries of Idleness* and *The Comforts of Industry*.²⁴ But the expected relation of the terms of virtue and vice are exchanged in the slave trade images. Based on a poem by William Collins, their 'familiar theme in abolitionist literature, namely, the enforced separation of black families', is extrapolated by Morland into a complex exploration of the iconographic stereotypes used to represent commerce.²⁵ The earlier picture, *Execrable Human*

²² *Thoughts on the Slavery of the Negroes* (London, James Phillips, 1784), pp.9-10.

²³ On these images see also Honour, *op. cit.*, pp.67-72; Oldfield, *op. cit.*, pp.167-72.

²⁴ In the present context this visual device directly recalls the precedents of Hogarth's moralizing contrasts in the *Industry and Idleness* series, or the pair of *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street*.

²⁵ Oldfield, *op. cit.*, p.169. Collins' poem, *The Slave Trade; A Poem. Written in the Year 1788*, was not published until 1793, and was thus clearly intended 'to capitalise on the interest generated in Morland's paintings by the engraver, John Raphael Smith' (Oldfield, *op. cit.*, pp.182-3, n.48).

Traffic, conforms to the much-publicized first-hand accounts of abduction and enslavement by the ex-slaves Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cuguano:

The last embrace of the beloved husband and wife may be seen, taking their dear offspring in their arms, and with the most parental fondness, bathing their cheeks with a final parting endearment. But on this occasion they are not permitted to continue long, they are soon torn away by their unfeeling masters, entirely destitute of a hope of ever seeing each other again; and no consolation is afforded to them in this sorrowful and truly pitiable situation. Should any of them still linger, and cling together a little longer, and not part as readily as their owners would have them, the flogger is called on, and they are soon drove away with the bloody commiseration of the cutting fangs of the whip lashing their naked bodies.²⁶

One of the most noticeable features of this passage is the appeal, also emphasized in the title of the book, to the reader's sympathies and sentiments. In Morland's image, however, the 'commercial humanist' construction of sympathy is conferred onto the uncivilized 'savages' who have intrinsically not yet attained the Enlightenment notion of the Age of Commerce. What is shown here is essentially a structural reversal of the depiction of wreckers. Instead of the ship as a symbol of beneficent commerce and prosperity, being lured onto the rocks, and its crew falling victim to the brutality of the uncivilized local inhabitants, the ship's flourishing commerce in Morland's image

²⁶ Ottobah Cuguano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, humbly submitted to the Inhabitants of Great Britain, by Ottobah Cuguano, a Native of Africa* (London, 1787, facsimile repr., London, 1969), p.96.

(connoted by precisely the same visual sign, the ship at anchor in the distance, as in, for example, Rysbrack's Foundling Hospital relief) visits destruction and torment upon the innocent, unsuspecting (and nobly savage) natives. The reversal of values is extended in the accompanying picture, in which the shipwreck victims, contrary to the usual iconography of death, vulnerability, and lamentation surrounding them, find themselves in precisely the sort of paradise of natural social affections which was conjured up by the abolitionists. Shipwreck here, then, is not a disaster or a retributive event, but a form of deliverance. And this inversion of the usual cultural value of shipwreck is also typical of antislavery rhetoric, in which the wreck of the slave ship becomes a blessed irruption into an immoral and luxurious trade. It is encountered repeatedly in antislavery poetry, where shipwreck is construed as both a deliverance and an appropriate form of divine punishment, placing its secular commerce within a theological ambit. What was perhaps the most popular such poem, Cowper's *The Negro's Complaint*, like Collins' *The Slave Trade*, contrasts the 'human feelings' of the African with the 'iron-hearted' 'slaves of gold' who 'sever' him from his 'home, and all its pleasures'. The slave-narrator understandably questions the European concept of a benign god, who can allow the iniquity of the slave trade in the world. But the presence of God in nature, and the controlling, paternalistic authorial voice, are reaffirmed when the slave-narrator's scepticism is overcome by God stirring up the elements to wreak destruction on the slave-ship and plantations.²⁷

²⁷ H.S. Milford (ed.), *The Poetical Works of William Cowper* (4th edn., Oxford, 1963), pp.371-2. The relevant stanzas are:

Is there, as ye sometimes tell us,

Is there one who reigns on high?

This was not new. Thomson had evoked a similarly moralized storm at sea, engulfing slaves and slavers alike, in *Summer* from *The Seasons*, the passage to which Turner referred in his later *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying*.²⁸ Cowper's use of the controlling narrative voice, however, leaves a space within the moral condemnation of slavery for the reclamation of colonialism itself within the discourse of benign commerce. For the slave's sceptical and ignorant narrative voice is subsumed and answered by the meta-narrative voice of God, suggesting both a re-affirmation of the existence of an harmonious universal plan within which the existence of slavery is to be explained, but also perhaps to exalt commerce as the agency and exercise of free will, by which God's harmonious plan may be instituted in the world.

Has he bid you buy and sell us,
 Speaking from his throne the sky?
 Ask him, if your knotted scourges,
 Matches, blood-extorting screws,
 Are the means which duty urges
 Agents of his will to use?

Hark! he answers - Wild tornadoes,
 Strewing yonder sea with wrecks;
 Wasting towns, plantations, meadows,
 Are the voice with which he speaks.

He, foreseeing what vexations
 Afric's sons should undergo,
 Fix'd their tyrants habitations
 Where his whirlwinds answer - No.

²⁸ Thomson, *The Seasons* (1726-46): 'Summer', ll.1013-25.

Abolitionists took great care to distinguish commerce as a generally beneficial and socially-improving system from the particular immoral excesses of the slave trade. The African writers take pains to align themselves with the fundamental tenets of Christian commercialism, Ignatius Sancho expressing himself in terms which could have come straight from Hanway: 'Commerce was meant by the Deity to diffuse the various goods of the earth into every part - to unite mankind in the blessed chains of brotherly love'.²⁹ Thus, for Cowper, commercial and imperial ideology could be paradoxically reinforced by the analogy of shipwreck.

Morland probed the relationship of colonized to colonizer more acutely, by reversing the norms of shipwreck imagery. So, while in *Execrable Human Traffic*, the left-hand group of two slavers seizing the African man is a sublimated reference to the Choice of Hercules, the motif describes the denial of free choice to the subject. It is the spectator who has to decide between virtue and vice, between support or abolition of the slave trade. Because it was couched in the rhetoric of sensibility and sympathy, the choice was pointedly directed to the citizen-viewer's own immediate personal circumstances and conscience, confusing the distinction implicit in the received theory of painting between public and private virtue. Similarly, if '[t]he identification of blacks as slaves excluded them from the ranks of heroes in art. They could acquire heroic status only when they rebelled', Morland here suggests an heroic status for the slave by

²⁹ Paul Edwards (ed.), *The Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho* (London, 1969), pp.149-50. See also Olaudah Equiano, edited by Paul Edwards, *The Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa the African: Written by Himself* (1789; London, 1989), pp.167-70; Cuguano, *op. cit.*, pp.60-1, 143-4.

a form of aesthetic rebellion, inverting the construction of the heroic.³⁰ This has implicit consequences. Through the political urgency created by the abolition campaign, a ‘modern moral subject’ is developed for the late 1780s which enables the heroic representation of unelevated, and labouring or mechanical, subjects, even, during the French Wars, the tar.³¹ The setting of maritime disaster augmented this potential, for, in literature and art, this subject focussed increasingly upon the heroic (or villainous) disposition of the individual. The ominously subversive potential of Morland’s binary oppositions was acknowledged. The 1789 print *Abolition of the Slave trade, or The man the Master* (fig.109), published by Dent, is a ‘distorted reflection of *Execrable Human Traffic*’, and plays both upon the immediate political fear of rebellion in the slave colonies, but also upon the abolitionist rhetoric of retribution.³²

³⁰ Honour, *op. cit.*, p.19. Morland’s subversive aesthetic here is, of course, entirely consistent with his equally subversive tendencies in his depictions of the rural poor: John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting 1730-1840* (Cambridge, 1980), pp.95-129.

³¹ This will be discussed in chapter 10, below.

³² Honour, *op. cit.*, p.73. Cuguano invoked the same image in ridiculing the arguments of the planter James Tobin, who had rejected James Ramsay’s call for abolition and the conversion of slaves to Christianity:

he brings in a ludicrous invective comparison that it would be “an event which would undoubtedly furnish a new and pleasant compartment to that well known and most delectable print, call’d, *The world turn’d up side down*, in which the cook is roasted by the pig, the man saddled by the horse,” &c. If he means that the complicated banditties of pirates, thieves, robbers, oppressors and enslavers of men, are those cooks and men that would be roasted and saddled, it certainly would be no

There is no commerce in this print, no ship in a distant harbour. Instead the bales and casks are piling up uncollected and 'waiting for a purchaser owing to the advanced Price'. The rich metropolitan dress of the black man (perhaps a jibe at the social pretensions of successful Africans in London such as Equiano or Sancho) is contrasted with the mocking pose of the enslaved 'Massa', which directly mimics that of the figure in the Wedgwood medallion. Strikingly, in his savage state he resembles no one so much as a South Sea Islander, suggesting a nearer identification between the 'savages' of the Pacific and the slaves of the West Indies in imperial consciousness than is generally assumed.³³ The reversion of the civilized man to a savage state also feeds on wider cultural anxieties about the ruin of empire. Bowles' poem *The Spirit of Discovery; or, The Conquest of Ocean* conjured up the dire prospect that England's empire of the seas will go the same way as the Biblical-historic empires of Tyre and Egypt, and in its place arise a presently savage country:

And like a goddess, glittering from the deep,
Hereafter sway the sceptre of domain,
From pole to pole; and such as thou now art,

unpleasant sight to see them well roasted, saddled and bridled too; and no matter by whom, whether he terms them pigs, horses or asses.

Cuguano, *op. cit.*, p.16

³³ Compare, for example, William Hodges' *A Man of Tanna* (1774, Ottawa, Public Archives of Canada); Rüdiger Joppien and Bernard Smith, *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages*, vol.2: *The Voyage of the Resolution and Adventure 1772-1775* (New Haven and London, 1985), plate 2.129.

Perhaps NEW-HOLLAND be.³⁴

A satire such as *Abolition of the Slave Trade* feeds upon the series of cultural paradoxes at the heart of commercial, and therefore maritime, ideology, which were brought into the spotlight by the abolition question. In visual imagery nowhere were these paradoxes more acerbically apparent than in what remains probably the most well-known image of the antislavery movement, the cross-section of the Brooks slave-ship (fig.110). At first sight this appears to fall so clearly into the category of politically dissident 'propaganda' that it seems marginal to a discussion of artistic culture. It remains, nevertheless, a highly public maritime image of the slave trade, and the most explicit depiction of the Middle Passage available before well into the nineteenth century.

Its 'deliberately unartistic' rendition stands as a refutation of the aestheticized, and implicitly misleading, views of the West Indies produced by Robertson and Brunias.³⁵ While the latter valorize the slave trade by omitting its moral and political economy, the Brooks print links civic morality with aesthetic representation, by reversing the terms and producing an exclusively economic focus. In one respect, it adopts the mode of informational, educative prints and diagrams such as that of *The WATERWORKS at LONDON-BRIDGE* (fig.23), which contributed to a discourse of progressive commercial improvement centred on the Thames. And it is important to remember in this context that the founders of the abolition movement were, in large part, from the same 'middling' merchant or industrial background as those City

³⁴ William Lisle Bowles, *The Spirit of Discovery; or, The Conquest of Ocean. A Poem, in Five Books* (Bath and London, 1804), book III, ll.111-14.

³⁵ Honour, *op. cit.*, pp.20 (quote), 64-6; Oldfield, *op. cit.*, pp.163-7.

merchants who were most vocal in their articulation of commercial expansionist ideology. And we might legitimately see the antislavery movement developing from the same ideological stock of Christianity, mercantilism and philanthropy, which formed the basis of the mid-century commercial impulse to charity.³⁶ While Wilberforce and Clarkson were the spokesmen of Christian conscience, it was industrialists like Samuel Whitbread and Wedgwood who were responsible for the organization and financing of techniques of mass-production and printing to publicize the movement's aims and motives.³⁷

More pointedly, the Brooks print opposes the formal conventions of marine depiction in almost every way. A ship 'portrait', like Jackson's Liverpool slaver, it follows the format of naval architectural plans, rather than conventionally showing the ship in full sail on the high seas. Rather, it appeals to a visual discourse of impartial and empirically-derived statistical measurement, to disguise its own partiality, and to render its moral point all the more strongly. It thus draws on the two most important discursive practices by which the visualization of imperial-commercial ideology through maritime iconography was produced: the investment of the sea and the icon of the ship with values of national identity and commerce, and the naturalizing scientific detachment of cartography and the art of voyages of discovery. Then, characteristically of antislavery rhetoric, it reverses the accepted relations of these practices by investing the the formal appearance of precise, informational objectivity with the extreme moral charge of abolition. Unlike marine painting, it presents the icon of the ship as a detailed description of the ship's cargo, slaves. The objectification of the ship's plan starkly

³⁶ Oldfield, *op. cit.*, passim; Turley, *op. cit.*, p.9

³⁷ Oldfield, *op. cit.*, pp.155-72.

emphasizes the legal and political status of the slaves, as property, to be sold like the sugar and tobacco they would toil to produce:

The leading idea in the Negro System of Jurisprudence is that which was first in the Minds of those most interested in its Formation: namely, that Negroes were property, and a species of Property that needed a rigorous and vigilant *Regulation*.³⁸

The print uncompromisingly shows the horrors of ‘rigorous and vigilant *Regulation*’, and points up the aesthetic invisibility of slaves, as products to be stashed with the utmost attention to the maximal use of shipboard space. The accompanying text asserts that the cargo of the Brooks was about two slaves per ton. The average tonnage of slave vessels increased markedly during the century, and in Liverpool, doubled between 1765 and 1797, from 113 to 226 tons; but showed its greatest increase during the last fifteen years of the century, doubling from 139 tons in 1785 to 281 tons in 1800.³⁹ Ironically, the formal arrangement of the Brooks print to accentuate this sort of statistical rhetoric makes it resemble nothing so much as Captain Bligh’s plan for stowing the breadfruit plants on board the *Bounty* (fig.111). The cross-referencing between different ‘paradises’ is subtended by a shared visual language to describe a common moral economy. And the ambiguous colonialist interchangeability between attitudes to the South Seas and the West Indies is revealed, at its economic base, in the structural coincidence of images such as these, which assigns an equivalence to their

³⁸ ‘A Statement of the Laws that at present subsist in the West India Islands . . .’, *British Sessional Papers, Commons, A.P.*, vol. XXXVI (London, 1789), p.646a, cited in Walvin, *England, Slaves and Freedom*, p.74.

³⁹ Stammers, *op. cit.*, pp.35-8.

subjects, despite their very different purposes and their disparate cultural and political motives, and their reference to distinct, though related, practices of global navigation.

The Brooks print disabuses the visual language of diagrams such as Bligh's of their claims to disinterestedness, and conversely allows an appeal to be made to the viewer's sense of pity, through a rhetoric of dispassionate argumentation propounded in the statistical plainness of the accompanying text. As well as producing a print of great power, this served the necessary purpose of deflecting the pro-slavery dismissal of the Abolitionist case as being steeped in emotive naivety, with no understanding of the hard facts of commercial reality. In this sense also, the print is exceptional, since most antislavery imagery did indeed rely upon moral appeals to individual pity and divine retribution.

Fuseli's 1806 painting *The Negro Revenged* (fig.112), the basis for an engraved illustration to Cowper's *The Negro's Complaint*, inverted values still further by depicting the heroic African of Morland's images as a Miltonic Satan summoning an elemental fury upon the slave vessel, which is correspondingly wrecked on the rocks below, to follow the common antislavery poetic metaphor of the shipwreck as both justice and deliverance.⁴⁰ Fuseli's apocalyptic image is further emphasized by the scale

⁴⁰ The geographical location of the West Indies, and its susceptibility to hurricanes, was also cited as evidence of a divine plan for retribution. Southey, for example, construed this elemental force as the 'Genius of Africa':

And thou hast heard! and o'er their blood-fed plains
Swept thine avenging hurricanes;
And bade thy storms with whirlwind roar
Dash their proud navies on the shore

and pose of the African, a profile view of the same Colossus-like pose used by Blake for his '*And the Angel I saw lifted his Hand up to Heaven*' of c.1805.⁴¹ And the antislavery appeal to shipwreck and revelation continues even into post-Abolition imagery, such as Henry Thomson's *The Booroom Slave* (1827, fig.113), which combines the kneeling figure of the Wedgwood medallion with the background shipwreck of Fuseli's painting to produce a paternalistic colonial expression of slave emancipation, whereby the significance of the pose and the apocalyptic wreck are

Robert Southey, 'To the Genius of Africa' in *Poems 1797* (facsimile repr., Oxford, 1989). See also Cuguano, *op. cit.*, pp.99-102.

It may also be that the noticeable rise in shipwreck imagery, relating to the hurricanes of the early 1780s, in which many Navy vessels were destroyed in the Caribbean, is evidence of a cultural doubt about continued divine approval of the morality of the British maritime empire, in the face of natural disaster and the reversals of the war with America. See, for example, the series of paintings showing the loss of the *Ramillies*, by Robert Dodd, four of which were exhibited in 1786 at the Royal Academy: nos. 13, 'A storm coming on, the *Ramillies* making a signal, etc.', 15, 'The *Ramillies* water-logged', 29, 'The *Ramillies* in distress', and 30, 'The blowing up of the *Ramillies*': Algernon Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their Work from its Foundation in 1769 to 1904*, 4 vols. (London, 1905). Five paintings of this series are now in the National Maritime Museum collection at Greenwich: BHC2212, *Loss of the Ramillies, September 1782: before the storm breaks*, signed and dated 1783, 71 x 106.5cm; BHC2213, *Loss of the Ramillies, September 1782: on her beam ends*, signed and dated 1783, 71 x 106.5cm; BHC2214, *Loss of the Ramillies, September 1782: ship abandoned in abating storm*, signed and dated 1783, 71 x 106.5cm; BHC2215, *Loss of the Ramillies, September 1782: blowing up the wreck*, signed and dated 1783, 71 x 106.5cm; BHC2217, *Loss of the Ramillies, September 1782: taking to the boats*, signed and dated 1785, 71 x 106.5cm.

⁴¹ Blake, '*And the Angel I saw lifted his Hand up to Heaven*', c.1805, signed, 39.3 x 26.2cm., New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

subjoined into a moment of conversion of the savage slave to Christianity, a form of revelation which both satisfied the increasing missionary aims of the abolition movement, but also brought prospective emancipation firmly within the colonial ambit, and adduced it as evidence of the moral agency of the metropolitan empire. It thus demonstrates how readily the open-ended gestures of abolition rhetoric, which have been noted particularly in Cowper's *The Negro's Complaint*, could be absorbed within imperial discourse in the wake of the first (1807) Abolition Bill.⁴²

But the antislavery imagery of the 1790s and early 1800s also articulated wider anxieties about the nature of empire, within which the slave system was perceived to be an intrinsically destabilizing influence. For James Stephen, like the 1790s millennialists, the French Revolutionary overthrow of governmental order, the war with France, and the subsequent rise of Napoleon as a despotic European Antichrist, were evidence of divine wrath at the extent of that European commercial luxury epitomized by the slave trade. The final result of which would be, within imperial discourse, literally a world-turned-upside-down. In *The Dangers of the Country* he explained that

induced by a common temptation, the lucrative oppression of the African race, many nations start together in a new race of guilt; a strange source of unprecedented evil immediately burst forth and suddenly overwhelms them all. A cruel and unlimited slavery is the subject of their crimes: a lawless and ferocious liberty is made their common scourge. Order, security, public morals, the sacred principles which mitigate the horrors of war, and regulate the intercourse of nations, have vanished, from this civilized quarter of the globe. . . . The

⁴² Honour, *op. cit.*, p.130.

public law of the slave coast may soon be upon a level with that of polished Europe.⁴³

The national virtues undermined by slavery are those threatened by Jacobinism in Rowlandson's *The Contrast*. And for Stephen, the intervention of the excessively private commercial interest of slavery into public policy results in an interchangeability of civilization and savagery within which the entire continent of Europe appears to be cast at the moral level of wreckers, in which the excessive liberty, 'lawless and ferocious', of the individual to pursue the ends of profit collides with and displaces 'order, security [and] public morals'.

The erosion of the distinct boundaries between the public and private spheres was of course a focus for increasing cultural debate from the 1790s on, and was understood to have problematic implications for the ennobling potential of a public art. Fuseli's own assessment, inveighing against the privatization of culture, foresees its incompatibility with producing a virtuous art informed by eternal principles of truth and beauty.⁴⁴ In a wider sense, such debates can be placed within the increasing focus

⁴³ James Stephen, *The Dangers of the Country* (London, 1807), cited in Ronald Kent Richardson, *Moral Imperium: Afro-Caribbeans and the Transformation of British Rule, 1776-1838*, Contributions in Comparative Colonial Studies, Number 22 (New York, Westport, Connecticut and London, 1987), p.164.

⁴⁴ Henry Fuseli, 'On the Present State of the Art, and the Causes which check its Progress', in Ralph N. Wornum (ed.), *Lectures on Painting, by the Royal Academicians. Barry, Opie and Fuseli* (London, 1848), pp.550-60. See also John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: 'The Body of the Public'* (New Haven and London, 1986), pp.258-307; and idem, 'The Functions of Art in a Commercial Society: The Writings of James Barry', *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 25/2 (1984), pp.117-40.

in late eighteenth-century culture upon the nature of the self, and the construction of individual moral and civic identity. Within the highly politicized atmosphere of the 1790s, however, the emphasis of sensibility upon individualism and phenomenological sensation gave it a political urgency and volatility, because of its consequent potential to be brought to bear, philosophically and physiologically, upon the libertarianism of Paine, Godwin, and others.⁴⁵ Likewise, the discourse of antislavery was informed by, and increased the politicization of, the construction of sensibility, because of its emphatic intent to address its arguments to the conscience of the individual subject.⁴⁶

The apocalyptic tone of antislavery rhetoric, whereby the ‘detestable markets for human flesh, constitute the last stage of all false principles; the greatest of all abuses; the inversion of all order’, a system of commerce ‘so debased, as to regard man himself as a merchandize’, which originated in ‘a degenerate love of *dominion*, and *possessing the property of others*’, was aimed at both portraying the slave trade in

⁴⁵ On sensibility, see G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago and London, 1992). And for the literature of sensibility as political discourse in the 1790s, see Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s* (London, 1993).

⁴⁶ Such an intent was in turn fed by the background of Methodism and Quakerism among many abolitionists, who asserted that a cosmetic display of antislavery sentiment was inadequate for moral salvation: the conversion to the cause must be sincere, from the heart: see Turley, *op. cit.*, p.19.

The corollary of this construction of antislavery sentiment was that ‘Those who can stand and look on and behold no evil in the infamous traffic of slavery must be sunk to a wonderful degree of insensibility’: Cuguano, *op. cit.*, pp.58-9.

its true moral light, but also at rousing the conscience towards benevolent acts on behalf of the trade's victims, through the address to individual sensibility.⁴⁷

Morland (figs.107, 108) concentrates on the contrast between benevolence and insensibility, accentuating the moral point by placing the scene on the liminal space of the beach, and conflating it with a Vernet-esque shipwreck. This takes a painterly licence, for eye-witness accounts stress that Africans were kidnapped inland by hostile tribes in the pay of the white slave traders, before being brought to the coast to be sold.⁴⁸ Morland thus exploits a conventional sign system which moralized the sea, in order fully to arouse the sympathy, pity and benevolence of the viewer.⁴⁹

The emphasis on eye-witness accounts, the appeals to individual sensibility and private virtue, and the moral message communicated by the image of divinely-instigated maritime and elemental disaster, so apparent in the antislavery literature of

⁴⁷ C.B. Wadstrom, *Observations on the Slave Trade, and a Description of some Part of the Coast of Guinea, During a Voyage, Made in 1787, and 1788, in Company with Doctor A. Sparrman and Captain Arrehenius* (London, James Phillips, 1789), iv-v.

⁴⁸ Wadstrom, *op. cit.*, pp.11-12; Equiano, *op. cit.*, pp.8-9, 15-28.

⁴⁹ It may be that this appeal to sensibility can therefore be aligned with the conventional poetic image of the 'shipwreck of the soul', so persistently a theme in late eighteenth-century poetry, particularly of Cowper, and perhaps most famously in Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. See G.P.Landow, *Images of Crisis: Literary Iconology 1750 to the Present* (Boston and London, 1982), pp.87-108. On the political significance of the *Ancient Mariner*, see J.R. Ebbatson, 'Coleridge's Mariner and the Rights of Man', *Studies in Romanticism* 11 (1972), pp.171-206; W. Empson, 'The Ancient Mariner', *Critical Quarterly* 6 (1964), pp.289-319; Jerome J. McGann, 'The Meaning of the Ancient Mariner', *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1981), pp. 35-67. Coleridge himself used a metaphor of individual bodily corruption in describing the slave trade as 'a commerce which is blotched all over with one leprosy of evil' (Ebbatson, p.202).

Equiano, Cuguano, Wadstrom or Falconbridge, is precisely analogous to the general cultural construction of shipwreck. Antislavery imagery, on the one hand, could not produce eye-witness depictions. One could hardly render the slave trade a subject of empirical and scientific artistic investigation like the exploratory voyages to the Pacific. And to pre-empt the possible accusations of melodrama and enthusiasm one had to resort to the unemotional statistics and diagrams of the Brooks print. It is notable that when Wadstrom, in his 1794 *Essay on Colonization*, enlists the Brooks print in his support (fig.110), he modified its caustic economic reductionism by adding a cartouche of his own (fig.114), based on an eye-witness account, of a ship-board slave revolt.

The cartouche shows 'how the crew fire upon the unhappy slaves from behind the BARRICADO, erected on board all Slave Ships, as a security whenever such commotions may happen'. And it is inserted on the original plate, given to him by the proprietors: 'the *only* liberty he has taken, has been to insert the figure representing an insurrection on board a slave ship, taken from a sketch which, with the explanation annexed, was communicated to him at Goree in 1787'.⁵⁰ He tells us that, because the Middle Passage is only dealt with in general terms in his essay, the plate is included for instruction. The fine quality of the cartouche contrasts markedly with the heaviness of

⁵⁰ C.B. Wadstrom, *An Essay on Colonization, particularly applied to the Western Coast of Afrioca, with some free thoughts on Cultivation and Commerce; also brief descriptions of the Colonies already formed, or attempted, in Africa, including those of Sierra Leone and Bulama* (London, 1794), plate VII. This volume was a continuation from the author's earlier *Observations*, offering a carefully considered proposal for the abolition of the slave trade through the establishment of benevolent colonies and free trade with western Africa, and numbered among its subscribers an unlikely mixture, including Arrowsmith, Joseph Banks, Alderman Boydell, Gustavus Vassa [Equiano], Mungo Park, Joseph Priestley, Adm. Sir George Young, Robert Smirke.

line and stark tonality of the plan of the slave ship. It shows a two-masted vessel in port profile, the top foresails and mainsails unfurled, indicating that it has weighed anchor and set out for sea. The deck teems with slaves, fired on by the crew lined up in ranks on the quarterdeck. The foremost level their rifles at the confused mass of Africans, who in their panic jump overboard from the bow. The ship is conspicuously named 'THE FAIR TRADER', an ironic licence with the supposed authenticity of the eye-witness account: for Wadstrom tells us that the insurrection took place on a 'French slave-ship, lying off a factory near S. Leone.'⁵¹ The event is adapted for a specifically English audience, for whom the plate is doubly instructive. The economics and sociology of the Middle Passage explained by the plan and cross-section is matched by the morally instructive extrapolation of a given incident. The moral message is made clear not only in the ironic commentary of the ship's name, but in the composition of the cartouche itself. For the opposition of the riflemen against the slave victims follows that of Wilkite print *The Pillars of the State* (fig.115), which describes the same contrast between the anonymous rectilinear regularity of the soldiers on the right versus the chaotic jumble of lines and shapes by which their targets are characterized, and significantly extrapolates this action into the shipwreck of the vessel of the state.⁵² Wadstrom's insertion thus brings the politics of the slave trade within the discourse of general imperial oppression, linking the cause of Africa to that of the now-liberated America, positing the moral relations produced by slavery as a form of extended political martyrdom. In generalizing the significance of the incident, all

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, part 2, p.86.

indication of topography, despite the textual identification of the location of the event, is omitted. The ship is shown only at sea, isolated and adrift like Cowper's *Castaway* or later visualizations of the drifting boat.⁵³ And because the print appears in an essay on colonization, one may see the ship as a paradigm of the ship of state, or of empire, within the system of slavery, a visual counterpart to the totalizing discourse of corruption which subtends Wadstrom's earlier description of the 'debased' commerce, which, 'instead of diffusing the genial influence of benevolence and liberty, produces, in their state of inversion, all the horrors of tyranny and slavery'.⁵⁴

Wadstrom's modification of the Brooks print both humanizes it and brings it within the more conventional aesthetic of maritime disaster, a movement which is exacerbated by the accompanying narrative of the circumstances of the insurrection. It was, he says, incited by a tribal chief who, having served the slave traders as an abductor and supplier of slaves, was himself taken by his erstwhile paymasters. His rebellion failed to breach the barricade, and, as ring-leader, he was hanged from the yard-arm.⁵⁵ The moral is clear: the virtues of loyalty and sensibility are so debased by the slave system that even honour among thieves has no place in it, and the complicity of one part of the African population is no guarantee that it will not fall victim to its own methods.

⁵² An intermediary image, again employing the motif in the context of proletarian radicalism, is the celebrated print of the American Revolution, *The Fruits of Arbitrary Power; or the Bloody Massacre, Perpetrated in King-Street, Boston, by a Party of the XXIXth Regt.* (1770; BMC4839).

⁵³ Landow, *op. cit.*, pp.87-101; Adele M. Holcomb, 'John Sell Cotman's *Dismasted Brig* and the Motif of the Drifting Boat', *Studies in Romanticism* 14 (1975), pp.29-40.

⁵⁴ Wadstrom, *Observations*, v.

⁵⁵ *Idem*, *Essay on Colonization*, pp.86-7.

The print is thus related more directly to the tendency of the depiction of shipwreck in the 1780s and 1790s to embrace the characteristics of sensibility. And while the antislavery rhetoric fed into an established convention of maritime disaster in British and European culture, there was a reciprocal influence, whereby the noticeable innovations in shipwreck iconography indicate its perceived relation to contemporary issues of abolition, the cult of sensibility, and national crisis. This will form the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Nine: The iconology of maritime disaster: shipwreck

There are many important aspects to the late eighteenth-century culture associated with shipwreck, most of which can be dealt with in the first instance through an examination of the treatment of one of the most enduringly popular late eighteenth-century poems, Falconer's *The Shipwreck*. This was a highly significant work for expanding the aesthetic potential of the maritime. First published in 1762, its immediate success no doubt owed a great deal to the prevailing climate of maritime awareness occasioned by the war. Its third edition was prepared by Falconer just before his death in 1769, and by 1802 it had run to eleven editions. Increasingly, from the 1790s, these were illustrated, often, as in the 1804 edition dedicated to the Earl of Egremont, with very fine engravings by well-respected artists, in this case Pocock, whose drawings were engraved by Fittler (fig.116). Importantly, the artists employed as illustrators were not exclusively from the maritime community, nor did they necessarily have a maritime background. For the 1795 edition the artist was Thomas Stothard. Others employed marine artists for the shipping scenes, while another hand executed the figure scenes.¹ The overlap of marine and non-marine artists parallels the idiosyncratic character of the poem itself, and its author, as crossing the cultural divide between polite and maritime culture:

¹ For example, the 1803 edition (London, printed by J. Cundee, Ivy-Lane, for T. Hurst, Paternoster Row), which has marine depictions by William Anderson, and figure scenes by W.M. Craig and Richard Corbould. Stothard produced four illustrations for the 1795 edition, published by T.Cadell, which were re-used for subsequent editions, for example, the 13th (T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1811).

[Falconer] was bred to the sea, and spent the greatest part of his life as a sailor, but in a very low situation. Curiosity is naturally excited to learn how a man thus untutored, and busily employed in such an active capacity, had either talents or leisure to court the Muses:- how a youth, so unfavourably situated for literary acquisitions, had imbibed the taste and knowledge which have ranked him so high among the British poets.²

The same curiosity is aroused about the form of the poem itself, divided into three cantos mixing epic Augustan structure, a clear acknowledgment to the tradition of Pope and Thomson, with a consistent and specialized nautical vocabulary, so abstruse as to require extensive commentary. The story of the poem is that of the merchant ship *Britannia*, which sails from Candia in Crete on a voyage to Venice. But the prospect of the commercial fortune to be made induces a complacent disregard of the natural signs of a coming storm:

The waning moon, behind a watery shroud,
 Pale glimmer'd o'er the long-protracted cloud;
 A mighty ring around her silver throne,
 With parting meteors cross'd, portentous shone.
 This in the troubled sky full oft prevails;
 Oft deem'd a signal of tempestuous gales.³

² *Ibid.*, iii.

³ William Falconer, *The Shipwreck*, in *The Shipwreck and other Poems: by William Falconer; with a Life of the Author. The Chase: by William Somerville; with Dr. Aiken's Critical Essay, and a Life of the Author* (London, n.d.), p.29.

The ship obviously stands as a generic sign for Britain, and the poem's major theme may be taken as a schematized warning about the hasty pursuit of wealth and empire:

Of fam'd Britannia were the gallant crew,
 And from that isle her name the vessel drew.
 The wayward steps of Fortune, that delude
 Full oft to ruin, eager they pursu'd;
 And, dazzled by her visionary glare,
 Advanc'd incautious of each fatal snare;
 Though warn'd full oft the slippery track to shun,
 Yet Hope, with flattering voice betray'd them on.
 Beguil'd to danger thus, they left behind
 The scene of peace and social joy resign'd. (p.12)

The poem has a confused and inconsistent structure, in which the Augustan epic tradition is awkwardly interleaved with an autobiographical account of shipwreck more akin to the voyage narrative, a series of descriptive vignettes of Mediterranean scenery, and occasional paeans of a conventional type to British imperial and maritime glory, which sit uneasily with the moralizing bias. This has been accounted for as the inevitably compromised outcome of the authorial conflict between poetic and maritime backgrounds.⁴ But the fact that a purser could cast his experience at sea in the language of Milton or Homer could be seen as living evidence of the degree to which commerce had extended taste and the polite arts throughout society, in a country and an age when seamen are bards and their lives are Odysseys. Certainly, this is the

⁴ G.P. Landow, *Images of Crisis: Literary Iconology 1750 to the Present* (Boston and London, 1982), pp.75-7.

consistent thrust of the several prefatorial accounts of the poem and the author's life. It is 'one of those happy productions in which talent is seen in so exquisite adaptation to the nature of the subject, that it is difficult to determine whether the author is most indebted to his subject, or the subject to the author . . . It was not more necessary that he should be a poet, than that he should be a seaman. He was eminently both . . .' Of this 'unique production' of 'nautical ability, as well as poetical talents'

it has been observed by a learned and judicious commentator, "That if Homer has been justly admired for reducing a catalogue of ships into tolerable flowing verse, what praise must be due to Falconer, that poetical sailor, the nursling of Apollo, educated by Neptune, who has versified his own language with equal skill and propriety!"⁵

Elsewhere he is compared to Virgil.⁶

The Shipwreck, then, bridged the divide between maritime and polite culture. Its evident popularity no doubt accorded it something of the cultural status of Thomson's *The Seasons*, Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*, or Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, as one of the literary accoutrements of polite society. Moreover, it extended the literary base of the shipwreck theme, adding to an already established poetic and dramatic canon, ranging from *The Odyssey* to *The Tempest*, to the shipwreck scenes in Thomson's *The Seasons* or Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination*, and gave an

⁵ 1819 edn. (London, John Sharpe), pp.5-6; 1803 edn. (see n.1), pp.viii-ix.

⁶ For example, J.S. Clarke, in his preface to the 1804 edition: *The Shipwreck, A Poem by William Falconer, A Sailor . . . The Text Illustrated by Additional Notes, and Corrected from the First and Second Editions, with A Life of the Author, by James Stanier Clarke, F.R.S. Vicar of Preston, and Chaplain of the Household to the Prince* (London, 1804).

immediate and contemporary aesthetic respectability to this particular aspect of maritime iconography. Its location in the sphere of the poetic, something notably lacking in other maritime imagery, brought shipwreck and marine disaster more firmly within the frame of reference of academic theory and the question of *ut pictura poesis*, whereby they could become viable subjects for the highest and most virtuous forms of visual art. Thus not only do we find non-marine artists producing engravings for new editions of the poem, but 'society' artists as unexpected and varied as Romney, Blake, Northcote, and as have been seen in other contexts, Fuseli and Louthembourg, producing paintings on the shipwreck theme (figs.123, 112, 96).⁷

The dates of these paintings, from the mid-1780s on, coincides with the production of illustrated volumes of *The Shipwreck*. In a wider perspective, both these developments need to be placed against the the increased cultural interest in the theme as evidenced by the rise in published shipwreck narratives. The period 1781-1812 saw over fifty percent more of these than the previous eighty years.⁸ This may be taken as

⁷ On shipwreck as a painterly theme at this period, see T.S.R. Boase, 'Shipwrecks in English Romantic Painting', *JWCI* 22 (1959), pp.332-46; Lorenz Eitner, 'The Open Window and the Storm-tossed Boat: An Essay in the Iconography of Romanicism', *Art Bulletin* 37 (1955), pp.281-90; Adele M. Holcomb, 'John Sell Cotman's *Dismasted Brig* and the Motif of the Drifting Boat', *Studies in Romanticism* 14/1 (1975), pp.29-40; Barry Venning, 'A Macabre Connoisseurship: Turner, Byron and the Apprehension of Shipwreck Subjects in Early Nineteenth-Century England', *Art History* 8/3 (1985), pp.303-19; L. Johnson, 'The 'Raft of the Medusa' in Great Britain', *Burlington Magazine* 96 (1954), pp. 249-54; G. Levitine, 'Eighteenth-century shipwrecks and deluges: rebirths, metamorphoses, and exhaustion of the catastrophic subject in France', *Art Quarterly* 34 (1974-5).

⁸ These figures are derived from the titles listed in Keith Huntress, *A Checklist of Narratives of Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea to 1860* (Ames, Iowa, 1979): he gives, for the period 1700-80, forty-

part of the general rise in print culture, and more particularly, of the increased publication of sensational novels and the literature of sensibility.⁹ But it also implies a ready market for such accounts. This is further supported by the fact that the same period saw a wholly new development in the shipwreck narrative: the publication of large compilations of tales of marine disaster, often running to many volumes. While compilations of voyage narratives had a history going back to Hakluyt and Purchas, the exclusive attention to shipwreck was new.¹⁰

Likewise, there was in the compilations an increasing use of graphic illustration to accompany the texts. Significantly, these appear across the range of publication, alike in those volumes appealing to the lower end of the market, as well as those at the top. The same pattern occurs in the case of the publications of *The Shipwreck*, emphasizing the text as a multivalent cultural artefact which could appeal to a heterogeneous readership, across a broad range of social and economic classes. So while the more prestigious 1804 edition is expensively bound, and is illustrated with plates engraved by Fittler after Pocock (fig.116), the cheaper *Cooke's Pocket Edition of the Original & Complete Works of Select British Poets* of 1796, despite its claims to

five single narratives; and for the period 1781-1812, sixty-eight single narratives, plus, importantly, eleven compilations. These figures do not, of course, include the compilations of voyage narratives of a general character, which had been produced consistently since the beginning of the century.

⁹ James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* (Oxford, 1992).

¹⁰ On the history of the voyage narrative, see G.R. Crone and R.A. Skelton, 'English Collections of Voyages and Travels, 1625-1846', in Lynam, E. (ed.), *Richard Hakluyt and his Successors* (London, Hakluyt Society, 1946), pp.63-140; Philip Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage: Sea-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1994).

be 'Superbly Embellished', has second-rate engravings by W. Hawkins after the little-known artist Richard Corbould. Similarly, the same poetic subjects tended to get illustrated. These usually comprise a combination of conventionally grandiose shipping scenes (such as a view of the *Britannia* leaving Candia, the ship reefing topsails in the face of the storm, the final wreck upon the rocks), with scenes of human interest (the consultation among the officers in the captain's cabin at the height of the storm, the parting of Palemon and Anna, the death of Palemon); though depending upon the relative strengths of the artist, the combination might vary: while Stothard, brought up in the academic tradition, focusses solely upon human-interest scenes, Pocock, a marine specialist, includes none, but concentrates on the maritime scenes. In the final wreck (fig.116), clearly indebted to Vernet, but also similar in treatment to his depictions of actual contemporary wrecks on the British coast (fig.129), he highlights the moralizing tone of the poem by associating the *Britannia's* demise with the ruins of classical civilization.

Evidently, the moral and aesthetic relevance of *The Shipwreck* was held to be applicable to every constituency of the reading public, in broadly similar ways. This has a clear though indirect importance, particularly given the type of accolade accorded to the poet and the mythologization of his genius, for the construction of the character of the maritime nation, and the heroic and virtuous individuals it could produce. The supposed cohesion of the reading public projected by the cumulative publication of the poem is taken further, in the similarity not just of the pictorial subject-matter across different editions, but in the stylistic and compositional similarity of the same scene by different artists. Westall's version of the parting of Palemon and Anna (fig.117) is typical of the treatment of the scene, being very similar to Stothard's 1795 illustration,

showing the lovers embracing in a forest clearing, outside a cottage, placed in the same theatrical light and space as Wheatley's *The Sailor's Return*. Anna is crying on Palemon's shoulder, and in the distance, a gap in the trees reveals the reason why: a ship at anchor in the bay. The 1803 version (fig.118) is set in a clearing, but its ideological basis is more explicit. The full-length figures embrace by the light of the moon, consistent with the other versions and with the passage in the text, he in uniform, and she in a fashionable white dress and stole. Again their gestures are highly theatrical, pointing out the ship in the background which is the reason for this scene of parting. But Anna also appears to gesture with her other hand to the thick trunk of the oak tree under which they stand; and her Britannia-like figure of innocence and virtue incorporates the connection between the oak and the ship. In turn her intense gaze focusses this connection upon Palemon, and may be understood as the index of the patriotic investment of the poem as a whole, as it revolves around their love being unfulfilled because of Palemon's dutiful embarkation, and subsequent shipwreck and death, in the cause of his father's commercial interests, in the good ship *Britannia*. At this level it is a tale of the conflict of private affections with public duty, and, to the degree that this conflict becomes one of the major focal points of the illustrations, particularly in the final pathetic scene of Palemon's death upon the shore, in which he expresses his undying love for Anna, and with his last breath enlists Arion, the narrator, to bear her the news of his death, *The Shipwreck* partakes of the noticeable tendency of shipwreck narratives of the end of the century to focus less and less upon the technical aspects of maritime crisis, such as the handling, rigging, broaching and break-up of the ship, and more upon the emotional and psychic impact of the catastrophe upon the passengers and crew.

Of course, the idea of shipwreck could have a profound political significance for a maritime nation threatened at its very root by contemporary events in France, but precise meanings between a generalized iconography and specific material circumstances are elusive. Boase quite rightly noted Dalyell's prefatorial comment in his 1812 compilation *Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea*, that 'In a country such as Britain, where every individual is either immediately or remotely concerned with the fortune of the sea, the casualties attendant on the mariner must be viewed with peculiar interest. . . Perhaps not less than 5000 natives of these islands yearly perish at sea.'¹¹ But he does not investigate the implications of such a claim, leaving it as a self-explanatory context for the Romantic interest in the shipwreck theme. Dalyell, however, goes on to locate the significance of maritime disaster within specific discourses of patriotic individualism and commercial nationalism:

Our glory, our security, and our riches, alike rest in our dominion over the Ocean. It is the nursery where growing warriors are inured to enterprise, and taught to guard the soil of their nativity; it proves a barrier to the most inveterate foe; and it bears the produce of distant colonies to enhance the national wealth and prosperity. Yet all this may prove a source of misery and destruction to individuals. The mariner, in promoting the general good, or in obeying the calls of duty,

¹¹ [Sir J.G. Dalyell], *Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea; or the Historical Narratives of the Most Noted Calamities and Providential Deliverances which have Resulted from Maritime Enterprise* (Edinburgh, 1812), xi-xii; Boase, *op. cit.*, p.332-3

is exposed to nameless hazards, and too often falls a victim to the perils of the sea.¹²

This is cast in the same mould of exemplary individual sacrifice as *The Shipwreck*. The concern with the individual is extended and replicated through the function of the shipwreck narrative; a vehicle for the reader's refinement of sensibility, constructing the reading subject as a sympathetic and interested member of that commercial commonwealth for which the mariners described in the narratives laid down their lives. Far from being the product of prurience or commercialism, the publication is itself claimed as exemplary and useful along the same lines:

A natural desire to know the fate of their fellow-creatures seems implanted in the breast of mankind, and the most powerful sympathies are excited by listening to the misfortunes of the innocent. To record some impressive examples of calamity, or unlooked for deliverance, is the object of these pages, and in recapitulating the cause of disasters, to exhibit how, in many instances, they might possibly have been avoided.¹³

Despite such disclaimers, Dalyell's compilation was commercially-inspired, being based blatantly on Archibald Duncan's highly successful six-volume *Mariner's Chronicle*, published between 1804-8.¹⁴ Duncan goes much further in advocating the potential for benevolence in the lessons to be learned from shipwreck. The aim of his compilation

¹² [Dalyell], *loc. cit.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ There are problems in dating the volumes precisely: Huntress, *op. cit.*, pp.47-8.

was to 'to rouse the dormant sensations of sympathy and benevolence', through narratives which 'are of such a tendency as to excite those emotions of tenderness, those tears of sympathy. If but one heart, hitherto insensible to the appeals of suffering humanity, is led, by the perusal of these pages, to augment the number of the benevolent, the Editor will be more than satisfied.'¹⁵ The tendency of shipwreck narratives to instil the virtues of human sympathy is related by another compiler directly to the function of the novel, with a consequent potential to appeal to a more heterogeneous readership, including women.¹⁶

It was a well established idea that art and literature could arouse the sympathetic imagination of the viewer or reader, particularly through the presentation of scenes of pity or distress, which, by their being experienced vicariously at an aesthetic remove, could paradoxically induce pleasure.¹⁷ The novel, in other words,

¹⁵ Archibald Duncan, *The Mariner's Chronicle; or, Authentic and Complete History of Popular Shipwrecks: Recording the Most remarkable Disasters which have Happened on the Ocean to People of all Nations. Particularly the Adventures and Sufferings of British Seamen, by Wreck, Fire, Famine, and other Calamities incident to a Life of Maritime Enterprizes. By Archibald Duncan, Esq. Late of the Royal Navy. In Six Volumes* (London, n.d.), vol.1, iv-v.

¹⁶ James Stanier Clarke, *Naufregia or Historical Memoirs of Shipwrecks and the Providential Deliverance of Vessels by James Stanier Clarke F.R.S. Chaplain of the Prince's Household and Librarian to His Royal Highness*, 2 vols. (London, 1805-6), vol. 2, vii: he claims his book, 'yielding not in point of interest to the Horrors, and unnatural Incidents of the modern Novel, might engage even the female Mind, without poisoning its principles, or tainting its purity.'

¹⁷ Henry Mackenzie had defended novels on such grounds in 1785:

As promoting a certain refinement of mind, they operate like all other works of genius and feeling, and have indeed a more immediate tendency to produce it than most others, for their treating of those very subjects which the reader will find

like sensibility itself, was both product and producer of the refinement of manners resulting from the progress of commercial society. The difficulty, however, was that, just as commerce could spill over into luxurious decadence, sensibility (and manners in general) could become refined to such a degree of rarification, that the social priorities and connections (of, for example, family, class and country) which commercial sympathy was supposed to induce and naturalize, would be lost in an indiscriminate 'enthusiasm' of benevolence extended on an equal basis to all things and all people. The direct relation, therefore, of shipwreck narratives to the function of the novel has, perhaps, a deeper significance than would at first appear to be the case, shipwreck being, as Dalyell and Duncan are at pains to point out, the inevitable price in individual terms of social commercial progress, but also being symbolically linked with the idea of commercial excess, as commerce's nemesis.

around him in the world, and their containing those very situations in which he himself may not improbably at some time or other be placed. Those who object to them as inculcating precepts, and holding forth examples, of a refinement which virtue does not require, and which honesty is better without, do not perhaps sufficiently attend to the period of society which produces them. The code of morality must necessarily be enlarged in proportion to that state of manners to which cultivated eras give birth.

The Lounger 20 (18 June, 1785).

Kames and Blair, among others, also saw this imaginative engagement of the reader or spectator as the essential characteristic of art: Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism* 2 vols. (8th edn., Edinburgh and London, 1807); Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* 2 vols. (London and Edinburgh, 1783; facsimile repr., Carbondale, 1965). See also Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s* (London, 1993), pp.2ff.

For Kames the passion aroused by ‘an object so powerful as to make a deep impression’, mediated by art, was ‘*the sympathetic emotion of virtue*; for it is raised in the spectator, or in a reader, by virtuous actions of every kind, and by no other sort’. This offered a means by which the individual could be enlisted as a contributing member of the ‘republic of taste’ and of the commercial nation. Within the construction of the nation’s maritime identity, founded upon ideals of individual and civic liberty, meritocracy and bourgeois industry and sincerity, shipwreck could offer a paradigm of the subject’s individuated relationship to the public sphere, while yet referring to its potential instability. Certainly, shipwreck was recognized as a highly appropriate ‘theatre’ for the exercise of the ‘passion of duty’, and its representation, in narratives and pictures, provided a ready subject of ‘some grand and heroic action’, to provoke the ‘sympathetic emotion of virtue’ in the loyal subject of the maritime commonwealth.¹⁸

There is a heavy and complex irony here: that the aesthetic construction of civic identity should be produced via an iconography in which the invoked values of commerce and sympathy taken to constitute the enactment of such identity are interrupted, negated, or erased. The precariousness of this construction, the ease with which civic affiliation could turn to disaffection, recalls Eagleton’s analysis of the ideology of the aesthetic as an index of the bourgeois subject’s potential for civic virtue, whereby ‘virtue, the easy habit of goodness, is like art beyond all mere calculation’.¹⁹ An identical dilemma subtends the principle of art itself:

¹⁸ Kames, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp.44, 62-4.

¹⁹ Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford, 1990), p.37; see also chapter 4, above.

Every work of art that is conformable to the natural course of our ideas, is so far agreeable; and every work of art that reverses that order, is so far disagreeable. Hence it is required in every such work, that, like an organic system, its parts be orderly arranged and mutually connected bearing each of them a relation to the whole, some more intimate, some less, according to their destination.²⁰

The work of art, then, is a model of Smith's 'immense machine' of human society, but where its internal relations, like the social passions it promotes and orders, are authorized by their location in the realm of the organically natural.

This structural dilemma between order and disorder, noticed already in connection with the imagery of wreckers and smugglers, is one which is at the core of the shipwreck narrative. Repeatedly these dwell on the conflict between private desire and public duty, and on the disastrous communal effect of negligence, ignorance, or dereliction of duty. Often they ascribe the disaster to treachery, and conflate treacherous behaviour with individual physical or mental degeneracy, in a manner very similar to that by which progressive madness was linked by abolitionists with the practice of the slave trade. Among the first of Duncan's narratives is the recent story of 'The Sufferings of Part of the Crew of the Ship Thomas, of Liverpool, Bound from the Coast of Africa to the Island of Barbadoes, in 1797', in which the male slaves on board, having been taught the use of firearms to defend the vessel against French privateers, use them instead to mutiny.²¹ Twelve of the crew, displaying the lack of social sympathy and comradeship notoriously the product of the slave trade, escape in

²⁰ Kames, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p.23; see also the discussion in Jones, *op. cit.*, pp.43-54.

²¹ Duncan, *op. cit.*, pp.90-3

the ship's boat, abandoning their captain and shipmates to their fate. The narrative is thereby bound up with the moral inversions characteristic of discourse on the slave trade. The deserters pay the price of their double inhumanity (to the slaves and their fellow crew) in a diabolical way. After drifting for days with no sustenance other than 'a small turtle', and 'their shoes, and two hairy caps' soaked until edible, they cast lots to decide which of them should be eaten:

he upon whom the lot fell resigned his life with manly fortitude, in the persuasion that his body would become the means of existence to his wretched companions. He requested to be bled to death, the surgeon being with them, and having his case of instruments in his pocket when he quitted the ship.

No sooner had the fatal instrument touched the vein, than the operator applied his parched lips and drank the blood as it flowed, while the rest anxiously watched the victim's departing breath, that they might satisfy the hunger which preyed upon them. Those who glutted themselves with human flesh and gore, and whose stomachs retained the unnatural food, soon perished with raging insanity, from putrefaction having, it is supposed, superseded digestion. Thus the dreary prospect became still more terrible to the survivors, who beheld their companions expire from the very cause which they imagined would preserve their existence.²²

²² *Ibid.*, pp.91-2.

The correlation between anthropophagy and insanity recalls the anti-Jacobin propaganda levelled at the French, and prints such as Gillray's *Un Petit Souper a la Parisienne - or - A Family of Sans-Culottes refreshing after the fatigues of the day* (fig.101). The familiar inversion, turning European slave traders into their own popular racist stereotype of Africans, as 'brutish and savage, cruel and revengeful, devourers of human flesh, and quaffers of human blood', is magnified here by the clear Christian overtones of the description, despite its linguistic disingenuousness; the consumption of flesh and blood being a diabolical parody of the Eucharist.

Other narratives deal similarly with cannibalism, treating it not as a desperate means of survival so much as a mark of savagery and providential punishment.²³ Alternatively, shipwreck could provide the arena for acts of heroism and courage of precisely the sort demanded by Kames. Many narratives relate historic and contemporary examples of heroic virtue and resourcefulness. These, unsurprisingly, provide the subjects for the many illustrations, both accompanying the narratives in volumes such as Duncan's, and produced as independent works. Certain shipwrecks were widely known as *causes célèbres*, such as that of the Grosvenor East Indiaman in 1782, or the Earl of Abergavenny in 1805. Such subjects fulfilled not only Kames' stipulations for heroic and powerful subjects, but also the parallel aesthetic requirement of tragedy to elicit the compassion of the viewer.²⁴

²³ *Ibid.*, pp.176-8, vol.2, pp.70-1: the narrative of 'The Sufferings of Six Deserters' (vol.2, p.17-23) has particularly moral overtones for a nation at war. See also the narrative of the loss of the Peggy sloop, discussed in Edwards, *op. cit.*, pp.217-8.

²⁴ Cf. Blair, *op. cit.*, vol.2, pp.495-6:

To the extent that distress and suffering in the world were necessary for the exercise of the virtue of pity, shipwreck could be seen as the necessary corollary to commercial and maritime expansion. The compensation for its disastrous effects was to elicit and strengthen the bonds of sympathy and the sense of national community amongst its observers: 'The fate of the adventurous seamen . . . cannot be indifferent to those who remain at home, enjoying that security, and those conveniences, which his exertions so materially contribute to procure.'²⁵ In one sense we may see the shipwreck narrative as an attempt at recuperation, an extreme display of virtue in distress, and of heroism in adversity, thus a re-emphasis on the core values of the nation in a space beyond its conceptual boundaries.

Wherever man takes a strong interest in the concerns of his fellow-creatures, an internal satisfaction is made to accompany the feeling. Pity, or compassion, in particular, is, for wise ends, appointed to be one of the strongest instincts of our frame, and is attended with peculiar attractive power. It is an affection which cannot but be productive of some distress, on account of the sympathy with the sufferers, which it necessarily involves. But, as it includes benevolence and friendship, it partakes, at the same time, of the agreeable and pleasing nature of those affections. . . . We are pleased with ourselves, for feeling as we ought, and for entering, with proper sorrow, into the concerns of the afflicted.

²⁵ Duncan, *op. cit.*, vol.1, iv. There is again a sense here of elision between the value of 'home' and the 'fate of adventurous seamen', extending the ideological terrain of the domestic into the unstable value of the sea, the offshore, the implicitly non-national, and suggesting a potential for the domestic to assume an aspect of marginality or liminality, what Bhabha terms the 'unhomely': Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York, 1994), pp.10-18.

The narrative of 'The Loss of the Lady Hobart Packet', for example, recounting an event of 1803, combines authorial authentication ('Written by the Commander, William Dorset Fellowes, Esq.'), self-denial, resourcefulness, and stiff-upper-lip morale among the officers, passengers and crew, with appeals to sublimity and imaginative engagement, sympathy, sensibility and religious devotion. The behaviour of the French commander of the ship taken as a prize just before the Lady Hobart struck an iceberg, provides a foil for British virtue. The immediate crisis of launching the cutter and evacuating the ship sets the scene for a display of lower-deck quick-wittedness and uncharacteristic abstinence:

I perceived John Tipper, one of the seamen, emptying a demijean, (a bottle containing five gallons) which, upon enquiring, I found to be rum. He said he was emptying it for the purpose of filling it with water from the scuttle-cask on the quarter deck, which was the only fresh water that could be got at. This circumstance I relate as being highly creditable to the character of the British sailor; and the water thus procured, afterwards became our principal supply.²⁶

Faith in God, resolve and mutual encouragement are the only options in the ensuing scene of desolation, which enlists the reader's own imaginative faculties, in a typical device: the appeal to compensate the narrator's lack of linguistic range and rhetorical power:

I cannot attempt to describe my own feelings, nor the sensations of my people, thus exposed in two open boats upon the vast Atlantic

²⁶ Duncan, *op. cit.*, vol.1, p.126.

ocean, bereft of all assistance but what our own exertions could, under Providence, afford us. We narrowly escaped being swallowed up in the vortex of the wreck. Men accustomed to vicissitudes are not soon dejected, but there are trials which human nature alone cannot surmount. The consciousness of having done our duty, and a reliance upon a kind of Providence, enabled us to endure our calamity, and we animated each other with the hope of better fortune.²⁷

Duty and virtue are placed against the sublimity of their situation, accentuated by the melodramatic near-escape from the vortex. They drift for days, establishing a regular routine of rations of rum, and nightly prayers, 'particularly that for deliverance after a storm', read by one of the female passengers. The ladies are paragons of virtue in distress, and 'with a heroism that no words can describe, afforded the best examples of patience and fortitude.' These models of British virtue contrast sharply with the French commander's mental and emotional instability, for he succumbs to insanity, jumps overboard and drowns.²⁸

His nervous disposition and excessive Rousseau-esque sensibility are his undoing in such a crisis; while moderation and social sympathy among the rest bring their reward. Finally saved, after ordeals of rain, fog, another storm, hunger and thirst (without succumbing to thoughts of cannibalism), their sensibilities are exemplary, though again indescribable. The sublimity of sensation is referred to the control of religious devotion:

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.130, 135.

I wish it were possible for me to describe our sensations at this interesting moment. The prospect of a speedy relief from our sufferings affected us all in a most remarkable way. Many burst into tears, some looked at each other with a stupid stare, as if doubtful of the reality of what they saw; while several remained in such a lethargic state, that no language, however animating, could rouse them to exertion. At this moment, though overpowered by my own sensations, impressed with the recollection of our sufferings, and the sight of so many deplorable subjects, I proposed to offer up our thanks to heaven for our miraculous deliverance. Every one cheerfully assented, and as soon as I opened the prayer-book, which I had secured the last time I went down to my cabin, an universal silence prevailed: a spirit of devotion was manifested in such a striking manner on this occasion, that, to a sense of religion in uncultivated minds, must be ascribed the discipline, good order, and exertion, which even the sight of land could not produce.²⁹

This interesting and complex passage brings together all the major features of the shipwreck narrative identified so far: the authenticating eye-witness, first-person report; the stress on sublimity and indescribable physical and mental sensation; the various 'sensible' reactions of the people, from the 'spontaneous overflow' of tears, to the excess of sensation causing 'stupidity' and 'lethargy'. Their *innate* religion, a detail confirming shipwreck as a vehicle for individual redemption, revives them, and we understand that the 'discipline, good order, and exertion' which such simple devotion had inspired, also produced their 'miraculous deliverance'. The French commander's

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.139.

excess of sensibility and lack of self-control, it is implied, was underwritten by a basic lack of religious faith. The potential for multiple political readings of such a narrative published in the wake of renewed war with godless France, is unmistakable.

I do not suggest that the prints and paintings produced on this and other shipwreck subjects may all be 'read' as transparent political metaphors: but they do share similar structural characteristics of openness and a heavy second-order signifiatory load, by which they can be annexed to wider social and political concerns. Importantly, these structural features again characterize images at both higher and lower ends of the aesthetic and commercial scale. Louthembourg's 1793 *Shipwreck* is a generalized scene, and correspondingly makes its claims to an elevated, general aesthetic importance. Yet Turner's 1805 *Shipwreck* (fig.119), seemingly equally generalized, can be specifically related to the particular, highly celebrated contemporary wreck of the Earl of Abergavenny.³⁰ Turner's treatment, raising the particular incident to an aesthetic level of general import, may in turn be referred to a much wider body of imagery apparent from the mid-1780s, produced at the lower end of the aesthetic scale to illustrate popular shipwreck narratives.

The prints made, for example, for the compilations of Duncan and Tegg, illustrating the loss of the *Lady Hobart* (figs.120, 121), seize on the most dramatic moment of the narrative, the point at which, having struck the iceberg, they escape in the boats, to suffer the indescribable sensations of being 'exposed . . . upon the vast

³⁰ Venning, *op. cit.*, who also points out the notoriety of a particular incident in the wreck (p.315):

'the ruthless action of a Yorkshire man who had climbed the mast to safety and who cut the fingers of an unfortunate shipmate clinging on to his leg, causing the men to fall to his death.' This conforms with the moralization of shipwreck noticeable in other narratives.

Atlantic ocean, bereft of all assistance . . .’ The anonymous, very roughly executed print (fig.121) for Tegg’s cheaper volumes (published serially over several years) offers the more conventional composition, a panoramic moonlight juxtaposing the ship with the massive, irregular bulk of the looming ice, to epitomize the trial ‘which human nature alone cannot surmount’. In the bottom right foreground the women in the boat are in the familiar guise of virtue in distress, but also paragons of ‘patience and fortitude’, at the moment when ‘we narrowly missed being swallowed up in the vortex’. The traditional emphasis of an image such as Brooking’s *The Wreck of the Nuestra Senora de los Remedios* (fig.122), following Dutch prototypes by focussing exclusively upon the ship as the metaphysical symbol of mortal fragility in the face of ‘God’s wonders in the ocean’, is here superseded by the overriding importance of representing the human reaction to God’s sublimity, manifest in the iceberg and in the wreck itself. The panoramic view acknowledges a spectatorial distance from the scene, raising the problem in picturing shipwreck, of claiming an authorizing presence similar to the first-person narrator.

Corbould’s illustration for Cundee’s slightly more upmarket publication of Duncan’s anthology (fig.120) attempts to overcome this problem by focussing the same narrative moment within a narrower frame, in which the viewer is placed at sea level (as though in the accompanying boat), and is notionally threatened by the great swathe of ice protruding dramatically, if clumsily, out of the pictorial space. Corbould alludes to other principal narrative points, in an ‘historicizing’ manner which, while adhering to unity of time and place, infers the story’s diachronic structure. At the prow of the boat, in a Christ-like pose of neo-Classical regularity (as if to deny the raw power of the iceberg with his own heroic cast), Fellowes exhibits the virtues of

leadership and steadfastness which will culminate in his proposal to thank God for a 'miraculous deliverance'. Properly, his resourcefulness is here directed to the immediate necessity of extricating the boat from the iceberg and imminent vortex of the wreck. By contrast, sitting just behind him, the French commander stares out in wide-eyed terror at the 'vast Atlantic', prefiguring his own susceptibility to despair in the crisis. The print accentuates those aspects of the text which had a conspicuously didactic significance, conforming to the editorial intent of the anthology to direct its lessons at the younger (male) reader.³¹

Corbould's print also draws on the more elevated tradition of shipwreck imagery. His attempt to render the account in heroic form is largely indebted to the dramatic composition of Romney's *Shipwreck at the Cape of Good Hope* (fig.123), the picture which, being 'a most sublime scene of shipwreck', supposedly inspired J.S. Clarke to produce his own shipwreck anthology.³² A print of Romney's painting was published in 1800, and it was also later engraved by Blake for Hayley's *Life of George Romney* (1809). Corbould replaces the group of the man, woman and horse, with the iceberg; but the viewing position and eye-level, compositional diagonals created by the

³¹ Duncan, *op. cit.*, vol.1, v-vi: through the study of these volumes, the young man's knowledge of human nature

will . . . be enlarged by an attentive observation of the conduct of different individuals under the most trying circumstances to which man can be exposed. While he recoils with mingled horror and compassion from the recital of cruel necessity to which many of them were reduced, he will behold the traits of heroism, fortitude, and generosity manifested by others, with admiration.

³² Clarke, *op. cit.*, Preface (n.p.).

background masts and shrouds, and similarity of poses and facial expressions, all suggest Romney's *Shipwreck* as a model. This, although based, according to Clarke, on a wreck of 1773 at the Cape of Good Hope, extrapolates the scene from such particularities by focussing on the human interactions occasioned by the wreck, and by presenting all the main figures as heroic nudes. The iconography of shipwreck here becomes more conspicuously an essay in history painting, further suggested by the overt similarity of Romney's depiction to the iconography of the Deluge (fig.000).³³

In a similar vein, Turner's 1805 *Shipwreck* has been cited as innovatory in its isolation of the event at sea, and in its formal inventiveness. In contrast to Copley's *Watson and the Shark*, Louthembourg's naval battle scenes of the 1790s and early 1800s, Romney's *Shipwreck*, or Corbould's Lady Hobart engraving, or even to its Dutch prototypes, the viewer's sense of 'wallowing' is created by *raising* the eye-level until the visual field is largely taken up with the representation of the sea, an effect exacerbated by the oblique angle of the boats. Yet such dramatic formal devices as Turner employs here were familiar to a large extent (though not, of course, so brilliantly executed) from illustrations to popular shipwreck narratives. Although it is not unlikely that Duncan's and Tegg's illustrators may have been exploiting Turner's pictorial innovations, it is necessary to countervail the monographic, apotheosizing isolation of Turner as the solitary innovator, by contextualizing such works as *The Shipwreck* within a broad-based popular and nationalistic visual culture of which he

³³ It is important to note that similar iconographic features are evident in French painting of this period, for example, Regnault, *The Deluge* (1789, Paris, Louvre) and Girodet, *The Deluge* (1806, Paris, Louvre).

undoubtedly knew.³⁴ Moreover, prints earlier than 1805 display similar traits. *The Wreck of the Antelope Packet* (fig.124), published by Thomas Tegg in 1808, imitates the Turnerian devices of the high horizon, so that the crashing sea rises towards the upper edge of the picture plane; the isolated wreck in a turbulent sea; crowds of figures on the foreground raft; and the oblique angle of the raft and boats to the picture plane. But similar devices are also discernible in the 1803 print for John Fairburn's sixpenny edition of the *Narrative of the Loss of the Hindostan East Indiaman* (fig.125), which was produced not just cheaply, but quickly: the wreck occurred on January 11, 1803, and the *Narrative* was published on January 31. If Turner's *Shipwreck* does depict the contemporary wreck of the Earl of Abergavenny, it seems that he was also imitating in high art the practices of journeyman printmakers such as the draughtsman of *The Wreck of the Hindostan, East-Indiaman* in responding quickly to current events, and in a corresponding visual idiom. While the vessel rather than the sea in the latter dominates the pictorial space, the waves again reach up to the upper edge; the obliquely-angled boat is again placed in the foreground; with the figures on deck or clinging to rigging or spars similarly emphasized. In the critical political climate of the late 1790s, Gillray employs similar techniques in the field of satire, to depict the vessel of state (fig.126). We can find precedents for these stylistic devices as early as the 1780s, in Gillray's *The Wreck of the Nancy Packet* (fig.127), displaying the high horizon, the solitary, beleaguered vessel in the middle of the sea, and its open, oblique

³⁴ Venning, *op. cit.*, pp.309-10.

angle which counteracts the perspectival recession and forces the sea up towards the picture plane, to create the effect of the spectator's 'wallowing'.³⁵

By being promulgated through narratives to a wide and heterogeneous readership, as a subject quite literally of 'general interest', in that its evocation of the immediacy of crisis notionally erased class and social differences among the represented shipboard community, and thereby referentially among the reading public, shipwreck offered a paradigm of patriotic subjectivity through its appeals to sympathy and controlled compassion set in the mythical environment of the maritime. This was paralleled by its visual representations. The illustrations from Tegg's *Mariner's Marvellous Magazine*, Duncan's *Mariner's Chronicle*, or single narratives such as those published by Fairburn, of *The Wreck of the Antelope*, *The Wreck of the Hindustan* or *The Wreck of the Lady Hobart* (figs.124-5, 120-1) all draw on similar dramatic devices focussing on the human dilemma, and its potential resolution or catastrophe, in the total arena of the isolated ship. It is against the background of such a broad-based culture, implicitly extending its appeal to an imaginative and 'imagined', 'sensible' construction of the nation, that the better-known and more highly-valued work of Turner or Romney must be placed.

As such, shipwreck as a theme had a levelling potential, divesting individuals of their formal rank and social status, even if in narratives and images such as that of the *Lady Hobart* this was used to demonstrate a natural relation of authority and deference within the culturally-stripped context of maritime disaster. Its levelling aspect can be

³⁵ Robert Smirke's *The Grosvenor East Indiaman* (mezzotint, 1784, London, National Maritime Museum), also displays some of these characteristics, but incorporates them with the human drama of figures clinging to the upturned hull.

related to the contemporary tendency in poetry to attend to an ideal of raw sensibility and uncorrupted, if vulgar, ordinariness, expressed in correspondingly authentic and 'sincere' language, as a reaction against the denaturing caused by civilization. This poetic agenda, most famously proposed in Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, rejects Kames' contention that the mind is only 'inflamed' by 'an object so powerful as to make a deep impression'.

For the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know, that one being is elevated above another in proportion as he possesses this capability. It has therefore appeared to me, that to endeavour to produce or enlarge this capability is one of the best services in which, at any period, a writer can be engaged, but this service, excellent at all times, is especially so at the present day. For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. the most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies.³⁶

³⁶ William Wordsworth, edited by M. Mason, *Lyrical Ballads* (London and New York, 1992), p.64.

Famously, the remedy for such mental torpor is centred on the feelings, through the example of poetry which is 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. Against such a theorization the subject of shipwreck could again appear contradictory. On the one hand its propensity to stimulate the spectator's compassion and sympathy, particularly in relation to moral issues such as antislavery, would clearly be an antidote to 'savage torpor'. On the other, its direct association with 'the great national events' may place it as a cause of the dulling of emotional capability; and, worse, its subject-matter, dealing as it does with 'extraordinary incident', could be seen as a response to, and feeding of, the 'craving' produced by the unprecedentedly unnatural character of modern metropolitan (and, of course, commercial) life.

Shipwreck, then, could signify at a great variety of levels, and from almost any point within the cultural-political spectrum. It may better be described as a form of expression of a 'structure of feeling', rather than a straightforward iconography, which offered a paradigmatic resolution to a host of cultural concerns, through its value as an open-ended metaphor compounded by its direct material implications for national consciousness, commerce, and maritime mythology. As such, it could be appropriated to polarized political ends, without having necessarily any consistent intrinsic meaning. While an image such as Fuseli's *The Negro Revenged* (fig.112) shows shipwreck as a form of divine retribution upon the immoral empire and nation, Gillray's satire *The Storm rising,-or-the Republican FLOTILLA in danger* of 1798 (fig.128) enlists the storm and shipwreck to the aid of national defence and security against the impossible Bastille-like construction powered by windmills which forms the Republican invasion threat. Here the agent of the storm is Pitt himself, while those who would conventionally constitute the heroic rescuers turning the winch to bring the vessel to

safety, are here implicit traitors, acting against the natural elemental power of the nation. It is an image which thus transforms the usual signifiers of shipwreck, recuperating the divine ocean for the blessed nation, and reinforcing the ideological structure of the national maritime mythology. The contradictoriness of this problem of signification is enhanced by Gillray's narrative pictorial format being precisely that of the rescue narrative, closely resembling prints such as Pocock's *The Dutton East Indiaman* (fig.129). This depicts an incident of 1796, which in its use of ropes and tackle to haul the shipwreck victims ashore, was very similar to the method detailed by Gillray. He thus employs the discourse of the rescue narrative to present a grotesque inversion of the heroic shipwreck, presenting it instead as an antiheroic rhetoric which portrays the would-be democrat rescuers as the moral and political equivalent of wreckers, but through their attempt to save the vessel rather than plunder it. In doing so he recuperates the sea as an elemental force for the nation and constitution.

Through such a capacity to signify open-endedly, shipwreck offered a tangential means of addressing the numerous highly contentious political and social issues to which it pertained, particularly in the innervated political climate of the 1790s, without specifying any clear political or moral position. Even in the case of the antislavery adoption of the moralized shipwreck motif, it provided a means of maintaining a moral stance which filled the embarrassing lacuna which the slave trade had created for maritime iconography, but, with the exception of the Brooks print, of a detached, generalizing character, which hardly bore comparison with the powerful, detailed condemnations of Equiano or Cuguano.

Shipwreck iconography was therefore, within the 'structure of feeling' of the 1790s and early 1800s, a free-floating signifier. In this respect it provided the aesthetic

advantage of offering a model for reconciling the dichotomous constructed identity of the tar. The antislavery elevation of the slave as a potentially heroic subject for painting created a similar possibility for the seaman, but without necessitating a troubling analysis of his social identity. Within the context of the scene of shipwreck the sailor (fig.130) could be shown in a genuinely heroic guise, and, furthermore, both in his element (literally) and at his labour; but as at once an object of compassion (thus maintaining his low status through a constructed paternalism in the spectator), and as a participant in the contest between man and nature, thus obscuring the contest between man and man. On the contrary, the shipwreck, with its emphases on communal action in the face of the hostile elements, and the corresponding prominence of values of sympathy and sensibility, could offer a representation of the ship as an harmonious and well-regulated working environment, like the nation for which it worked. In this way, it could be employed aesthetically as a direct negation of, as a means of, once more, rendering invisible, the actuality of dissent and mutiny, which surfaced most alarmingly in 1797, and which I shall consider in the next chapter. Likewise, the resolution of the dualistic identity of the tar, via the subject of shipwreck, opened up a wider implied potential for addressing the painterly and aesthetic problem, of the disjunction between the low academic status of maritime iconography, and the high level of significance it held for the construction of Britishness, and for the articulation of the imperial project. This too will be further explored in the next and final chapter.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

A great paradox of the imagery of maritime disaster, particularly in the 1790s, was its capacity to symbolize the unity, common purpose and divine mission of the nation even though besieged by apparently overwhelming external forces. If the allusions to slavery attested to the contravention of natural morality by commercial interests, it still affirmed that the commercial nation was in direct dialogue with God. Shipwreck only re-emphasized the maritime dispensation of the nation which had earlier been implicit in the pragmatic ideologies of the Foundling Hospital and other charities and mercantile companies. Thus it is not surprising that, at a time of national crisis, shipwreck should have had such profound cultural significance.

Individual local disasters could register as profoundly as the theme of shipwreck in the abstract. Several pamphlets described the wreck of the Earl of Abergavenny in 1805, in which John Wordsworth, brother of the poet, was killed.¹ One of these made precisely such an extension from the local, particular event to the larger public sphere:

death, presented in any of its ordinary forms, though at all times awful, is too familiar to be tremendous; but when numbers are involved in one common fate, and that fate is attended with circumstances of unusual horror, the blow is felt by the whole community, the republic itself is

¹ *The Loss of the Earl of Abergavenny, East Indiaman, off Portland, on the Night of Fifth February, 1805 . . . corrected from the official Returns at the East India House* (London, 13 February, 1805); *An Authentic Narrative of the Loss of the Earl of Abergavenny East Indiaman, Captain John Wordsworth . . . By a Gentleman in the East-India House* (London, 21 February, 1805).

convulsed by the shock, and grief, pity, and regret expand among all orders and conditions of men.²

The pamphlet, along with other contemporary newspaper reports, also laid great store by the fact that Captain Wordsworth was popularly known as ‘The Philosopher’.³ This recalls the similar elevation to laureate status of the poet-sailor Falconer; and is another instance of the cultural aggrandizement, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, of every aspect of the maritime, in which pursers could be transformed into poets, naval captains to philosophers, or into subjects for heroic public sculpture in St. Paul’s or Westminster Abbey (fig. 131; this will be discussed in more detail below).

This was also done in formal aesthetic terms. Just as shipwreck, in the passage quoted, could turn the mundanity of death into the ‘unusual horror’ of the ‘tremendous’ sublime, so too could it eradicate the gap between the ordinary experience of seamanship and the poetic allegory of the ship-of-state, in which ‘while . . . laborious crowds / Ply the tough oar, Philosophy directs / The ruling helm’.⁴ Similarly, the sublime and philosophical aspects of maritime disaster received appropriate pictorial treatment, in which the pictorial subjects of sailors and the sea were given a revised visualization according to their urgent value to the imperilled maritime empire. The accepted Dutch-derived conventions of maritime painting

² *An Authentic Narrative of the Loss of the Earl of Abergavenny*, cited in E.L. McAdam Jr., ‘Wordsworth’s Shipwreck’, *Publications of the Modern Literary Association of America* 77 (1962), p.243.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.241-3.

⁴ James Thomson, *The Seasons* (1726-46), in J. Logie Robertson (ed.), *The Complete Poetical Works of James Thomson* (Oxford, 1908): ‘Summer’, ll.1777-9.

underwent significant transformations in the 1790s, conflating the aesthetic of mundane naturalism associated with the Dutch style with one of heroic grandeur and sublimity after the academic orthodoxies of history painting. This is most obvious in the naval battles depicted by Louthembourg (figs.132, 149), where fidelity to the accurate rendition of the combat in all its technical detail is supplanted by a concentration on the sublimity of war, and the heroism of its participants, through the employment of dramatic chiaroscuro, a unified composition, and classically heroic poses.

Equally importantly, the iconography of maritime painting - hitherto a socially specific genre - became increasingly interleaved with heroic, even Biblical subjects, undertaken by non-specialist society artists, such as Louthembourg, or in the 1800s, Turner. One of the primary artistic consequences of this process in the 1790s was that the image of nautical catastrophe permitted marine painting to overcome its academic limitations in the hierarchy of art, and aspire to an aesthetic status commensurate with the high social and cultural value of navigation; and at the height of the French Wars even provide a pictorial discourse for a secularized religious and nationalistic imagery without infringing on the iconoclastic tradition of the Anglican church.

By the first decade of the nineteenth century, as I shall demonstrate, the subject of the sea had reached the very centre of the aesthetic construction of the nation, resolving - or displacing - the problematic aspects of the maritime, such as slavery, wrecking and smuggling, the social volatility of Jack Tar, in ways which had highly important implications for the construction of national identity. By way of conclusion to this dissertation, I shall examine some of these implications, and the way they prepare the ideological ground which nurtured the Victorian orthodoxy that the British

empire's maritime character was self-evidently natural. The urgent meaning of the sea in the 1790s, in a cultural climate dominated by threats of invasion and mutiny, necessitated, I shall suggest, a radical revision of the place of the maritime in art - particularly through the trope of shipwreck - which can be analysed in relation to a change in its poetic treatment; and resulted in an elevation of the sailor's aesthetic status, more securely to the position of national hero.

Even though the sea's negative aspects, and the ideological correlations between the apparently distinct spheres of wrecking, smuggling, the sailor's proletarianization, abolitionism, and the French Revolution, could have been dismissed or overlooked for most of the 1790s, in 1797 they converged in a cataclysmic event which presaged disaster of national proportions, and likewise implicated every individual subject of the state. In the spring of 1797 the Navy mutinied.⁵ The extent to which connections between maritime culture and revolutionary mentality went unrecognized is indicated by this event appearing to have come as a complete surprise to the establishment, and to a nation in 'total isolation against the might of France and her continental allies'.⁶ One of the most extraordinary aspects of the first mutiny at Spithead was that

not an officer in the whole Channel fleet appears to have had a suspicion of anything of the kind having been in agitation . . . the

⁵ The events of the 1797 mutinies are dealt with in detail in C. Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797* (Manchester, 1913); James Dugan, *The Great Mutiny* (London, 1960); C. Lloyd, *St. Vincent and Camperdown* (London, 1963). For a useful survey of the literature and contextual history, see Roger Wells, *Insurrection: The British Experience 1795-1803* (Gloucester, 1983), especially pp.79-109.

⁶ Wells, *op. cit.*, p.84.

extraordinary part of the business is in the secrecy with which it was conducted . . .⁷

Certain aspects of the mutinies illuminate the development of maritime iconography and its aesthetic.

Firstly, there is the weightiness characteristic of historical analyses: ‘the gravest crisis in the history of [Britain’s] navy’, in ‘one of the darkest and most perilous [years] in English history’.⁸ The calamitous nature of these events made them of general interest. Between May and June, Farington records the mutiny as a subject for discussion on no less than sixteen separate occasions. On May 8 it was clearly an overriding concern at the Royal Academy:

⁷ Letter from Admiral Lord Bridport to Evan Nepean, Secretary of the Admiralty, 16 April, cited in *ibid.*, p.85.

⁸ Lloyd, *op. cit.*, p.94; Gill, *op. cit.*, p.3. The degree to which metaphors of shipwreck and the ship-of-state became historiographically naturalized as a method for the discussion of this period can be gauged by the opening of Gill’s book:

In 1802 Canning, in a birthday ode, referred to Pitt as ‘the pilot that weathered the storm.’ And the storm, which was the tempestuous period of the Revolutionary War, reached its climax in 1797. That year was one of the darkest and most perilous in English history, and it is certain that no statesman ever had to face greater difficulties than those through which Pitt was called upon to guide the country at that time. [p.3]

The image corresponds directly to Gillray’s *Britannia between Scylla and Charybdis* (fig.72).

Academy I went to. - met Dance there. much alarm abt. Mutiny of Sailors at Portsmouth.⁹

David Bindman has suggested that the apocalyptic and Miltonic imagery of radical sympathizing artists such as Blake, Fuseli, Banks, Romney, Barry, Sharp, Smirke, and even Girtin, may be seen as an oblique commentary upon the events and ideologies of the Revolution, to the extent that Fuseli's Milton Gallery (1790-1801)

must reflect on some way the artist's changing responses to the unfolding tragedy of the Revolution, though in what way is not immediately clear.¹⁰

It is as plausible (as I shall argue in due course) that the momentousness of the mutinies should have had some indirect effect upon the aesthetic understanding of the sea and the sailor.

For now it is important to point out that this mythology was complicated by the manner in which the extraordinarily efficient organization of the mutiny overturned the conventional image of the lower-deck sailor as either a robotic 'heart of oak', or a barely controllable, illiterate savage. The drawing up of petitions among the fleet was run according to democratic principles, with two representatives elected from each ship, and deriving precedents not from the British parliament, but 'from the United

⁹ K. Garlick and A. MacIntyre (eds.), *The Diary of Joseph Farington* 16 vols. (New Haven and London, 1978-84), vol.3, September 1796-December 1798. The other occasions in May and June when Farington mentions the mutiny are May 15, 20, 26, 27, 30, 31, June 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 27.

¹⁰ David Bindman, *The Shadow of the Guillotine: Britain and the French Revolution* (exhibition catalogue, London, British Museum, 1989), pp.66-74, 87 (quote).

States Congress, the French Assembly, the Irish underground, and the forbidden British reform societies.'

The mutiny - with its skilful planning, determination and discipline - wrecked the jolly jack tar mystique. It was hard for most officers to believe in the new man who had come unexpectedly on deck.¹¹

Certainly, the rhetorical sureness and skill of the seamen's addresses to the nation refute the usual paternalistic image of the seaman:

Shall we, who amid the rage of the tempest and the war or jarring elements, undaunted climb the unsteady cordage and totter on the top-mast's dreadful height, suffer ourselves to be treated worse than the dogs of London streets? Shall we, who in battle's sanguinary rage, confound, terrify and subdue your proudest foe, guard your coasts from invasion, your children from slaughter, and your lands from pillage - be the footballs and shuttlecocks of a set of tyrants who derives from us alone their honours, their titles and their fortunes? No, the Age of Reason has at length resolved.¹²

This is the language of the patriciate in the mouth of the lower deck, and demands a corresponding respect, particularly in the reference to the 'Age of Reason' with its Paineite overtones at this period. The mutiny, then, helped to establish the idea that the seaman was endowed with a potential for sophisticated political thought and organization, and for noble language and action. What remained the vital subject of

¹¹ Dugan, *op. cit.*, p.90.

¹² Mutineers address to 'their fellow-Subjects', cited in full in *ibid.*, pp.278-9.

contestation was the cause for which such language and action was to be enlisted. Significantly, the contest was fought on an aesthetic ground also.

The visual rhetoric of the few prints dealing directly with the mutiny is instructive. The supposed linkage between Revolutionary politics and the mutiny is made explicitly by Isaac Cruikshank's *The Delegates in Council or Beggars on Horseback*, published June 9, 1797 (fig.133), an antipathetic attempt to expose the mutineers as the mere stooges of the radical Foxite opposition, thus to deny them any sophisticated political awareness or motivation. So (in direct contrast to the genteel profile of Admiral Bucknor at the extreme left, the principal negotiator on behalf of the Admiralty and the Government) the delegates, one of whom is black, are portrayed as stereotypically savage members of the mob: grotesques clearly reminiscent of the caricatures of the Revolutionary *sans-culottes* (for example, Gillray's *Un Petit Souper a la Parisienne*, fig.101). As with Gillray's anti-Jacobin prints, the impact of the image is produced through parodic inversions of conventional pictorial types. In the background, the icon of Britannia is literally overturned, as a commentary on the mutineer's progress. But the composition is itself, once again, an inversion of religious iconographic types, here recalling the format of the Last Supper, or of the Marriage at Cana (suggested particularly by the right-hand figure of Thelwall filling a glass from a grog can). The subliminal message is clear: that the mutiny is a contravention of divine truths and a God-given worldly order. Hidden from Admiral Bucknor, but exposed to the viewer, there lurks beneath the table the unholy, secret (and implicitly illegal) 'combination' of Lauderdale, Horne Tooke, Stanhope, Grey, Fox, and Sheridan, whose conspiratorial and knowledgeable smiles admit 'Aye, Aye, we are at the bottom of it', and contrast sharply with the thuggish grimaces of the delegates above, who,

therefore, assume the character of republican henchmen, and of twelve diabolical apostles. In contrast, a sympathetic treatment of the mutineers (fig.134) shows Richard Parker, the president of the delegates' committee, as superior to Bucknor, and in a pose traditionally reserved for full-length portraits of military officers, connoting values of poise, dignity, strength, nobility and command. The alert expressions of the background figures point up the contrast between Parker's declamatory, almost tragic attitude, and the comparative awkwardness of Bucknor.¹³

The depth and extent of establishment political anxiety emerge clearly from Cruikshank's imagery and its contrast with the heroic pictorialization of the tar. The latter, however, was not completely new. Parker's figure recalls earlier depictions of the naval hero of the American Revolutionary War, Paul Jones (fig.135). What was new was the aesthetic becoming a site of contest implicated in discourses of patriotism, and national and subjective identities, parallel to themes discernible in the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Bowles or Charlotte Smith.¹⁴ Before considering the visual depiction of the sea in the revolutionary period, I want to deal in detail with its importance in contemporary poetry, particularly of Smith.

For Smith the figure of the sea functions at a complex metaphorical or metonymic level, to signify as a site of, variously, poetic consciousness, subjective

¹³ Parker's 'tragic' character may be explained by the fact that the print was published after his court-martial and execution. Chris Jones has noted also the tragic theatrical effect of Parker's 'Dying Declaration' upon his audience, reportedly moving his judges to tears: Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s* (London, 1993), pp.17-18.

¹⁴ For example, Wordsworth's *The Borderers* (discussed below), Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), William Lisle Bowles' *The Spirit of Discovery; Or, The Conquest of Ocean* (1804), or Smith's *The Emigrants* (discussed in detail below).

sensibility, or collective political expression.¹⁵ In her most ambitious and celebrated poem, *The Emigrants*, the descriptive visions of the sea which open both books are contextualized and authenticated with prefatorial details specifying the time and place at which they occurred, like stage directions. So Book I opens ‘SCENE, on the Cliffs to the Eastward of the Town of Brighthelmstone in Sussex. TIME, a Morning in November, 1792’, offering the subsequent poem as an impartial record of a physiological fact.¹⁶ The autoptic authorial presence is embedded, as with Rowlandson’s later personalized view of the Cornish coast (fig.94), in a particular, identified coastal scene. The opening lines then describe the revelation of that scene to the poet’s sight, and metaphorically open the vista of the poem to the reader:

Slow in the Wintry Morn, the struggling light
 Throws a faint gleam upon the troubled waves;

At the outset, therefore, the sight of the sea is established as the site of textuality. That such emphasis should be placed poetically upon vision clearly has important implications for the pictorial image of the sea, to which I shall return.

¹⁵ Smith’s familiarity and involvement with the prevalent literature of nautical disaster was demonstrated in 1796, when she wrote a lengthy shipwreck narrative, citing as her reasons for doing so those of philanthropy and sensibility, to raise funds, through subscription, for one of the victims of the wreck: *A Narrative of the Loss of the Catherine, Venus, and Piedmont Transports, and the Thomas, Grove, and Aeolus Merchant Ships, Near Weymouth, on Wednesday the 18th of November Last. Drawn up from Information taken on the Spot, by Charlotte Smith, And published for the Benefit of an unfortunate Survivor from one of the Wrecks, and her Infant Child* (London, 1796).

¹⁶ *The Emigrants* (1793), in Stuart Curran (ed.), *The Poems of Charlotte Smith* (Oxford and New York, 1993), pp.132-63.

Elsewhere in the poem, the sea serves as the demonstration of God's presence on earth, but also, and less conventionally (and implicitly drawing attention to the idea of moral subjectivity), as the mark of human free will.¹⁷ It is also a ready metaphor for

¹⁷ For example, Book I, lines 19-34:

Yet He, whose Spirit into being call'd
 This wond'rous World of Waters; He who bids
 The wild wind lift them till they dash the clouds,
 And speaks to them in thunder; or whose breath,
 Low murmuring o'er the gently heaving tides,
 When the fair moon, in summer night serene,
 Irradiates with long trembling lines of light
 Their undulating surface; that great Power,
 Who, governing the Planets, also knows
 If but a Sea-Mew falls, whose nest is hid
 In these incumbent cliffs; He surely means
 To us, his reasoning Creatures, whom He bids
 Acknowledge and revere his awful hand,
 Nothing but good: Yet Man, misguided Man,
 Mars the fair work that he was bid enjoy,
 And makes himself the evil he deploras.

This, of course, echoes the moral force of the sea described in anti-slavery literature and painting; and, more specifically, echoes Smith's own earlier sonnet, *The sea view* (in *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*, p.72), which contrasts the magnificent beauty of the sunset over the sea, with the engagement of two war-ships, 'Charged deep with death, upon the waves, far seen'; concluding, 'The mangled dead/ And dying victims then pollute the flood./ Ah! thus man spoils Heaven's glorious works with blood!' Interestingly, in a footnote Smith also refers the subject of the sonnet to her personal recollection 'of having seen, some years since, on a beautiful evening of Summer, an engagement

the author's own troubled existence.¹⁸ Most importantly, the sea serves as the axis of the poem's central theme, a meditation on the state of exile suffered by numerous French men and women who, having fled the Revolution, are encountered by the author on the coast. The sea is for the eponymous emigrants simultaneously the boundary between national belonging and exile, the object of nostalgic longing for return, but also the vehicle of their downfall. The revolutionary populace itself is likened to the vengeful sea-tempest, the harbinger of moral retribution for the venality and corruption of the *Ancien Regime*:

Ye venal, worthless hirelings of a Court!

. . . .

Study a lesson that concerns ye much;

And, trembling, learn, that if oppress'd too long,

The raging multitude, to madness stung,

Will turn on their oppressors; and, no more

between two armed ships, from the high down called the Beacon Hill, near Brighthelmstone.' The appeal to personal sensibility as the basis of an enlightened response to the individual's moral and social circumstances is rooted in the actual eye-witness vision of the sea.

¹⁸ For example, Book I, lines 68-73:

like the fabled Danaids - or the wretch,

Who ceaseless, up the steep acclivity,

Was doom'd to heave the still rebounding rock,

Onward I labour; as the baffled wave,

Which yon rough beach repulses, that returns

With the next breath of wind, to fail again.

By sounding titles and parading forms
 Bound like tame victims, will redress themselves!
 Then swept away by the resistless torrent,
 Not only all your pomp may disappear,
 But, in the tempest lost, fair Order sink
 her decent head, and lawless Anarchy
 O'erturn celestial Freedom's radiant throne;

(Book I, ll.329-42)

The metaphor of shipwreck is again overloaded with heavy ideological significance. But importantly, this is implicated, in Smith's blank verse, in the construction of subjective contemplation. Book II likewise opens with a similar set of specifics as Book I, the time set five months later, the scene again overlooking the sea from the Sussex Downs. It is presented in the form of a recollection of the thoughts provoked by the scene of the previous November, when

Mournful and slow, along the wave-worn cliff,
 Pensive I took my solitary way,
 Lost in despondency, while . . .
 . . . beholding the unhappy lot
 Of the lorn Exiles; who, amid the storms
 Of wild disastrous Anarchy, are thrown,
 Like shipwreck'd sufferers, on England's coast,
 To see, perhaps, no more their native land,
 Where Desolation riots: They, like me,
 From fairer hopes and happier prospects driven,

Shrink from the future, and forget the past.

(Book II, ll.4-16)

The distinct and antithetical constructions of personal history and identity, private and political subjectivity, and collective expression - those of the author, the poem's protagonists, and the implied revolutionary masses - are brought together and resolved aesthetically, in the poetic metaphor of the sea and shipwreck.¹⁹

In contrast, Britain is distinguished from France, as a humane place of asylum, by the overriding native virtue of compassion. The exiles will find their previous political corruption and despotism, which, as we have earlier been told, so contributed to their present state, outweighed among the English by pity for their situation: pity provoked by the demands of sensibility, and the natural social bonds of human sympathy. Smith emphatically includes herself and her own verse as an expression of such sympathy. They will find that

we for them

Feel as our brethren; and that English hearts,
Of just compassion ever own the sway,
As truly as our element, the deep,
Obeys the mild dominion of the Moon.

(Book I, ll.359-63)

¹⁹ The metaphor of the shipwreck subsequently became a commonplace to describe the French Revolution, as G.P Landow has observed, in, for example, Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution: A History*; G.P. Landow, *Images of Crisis: Literary Iconology 1750 to the Present* (Boston and London, 1982), pp.109-21.

British compassion is once more located with the sea, though now beneficently calm. And the linkage of pity with the sea as *our* element might be taken as a refined articulation of the ideology of nationalistic philanthropy which has been analysed in the context of the imagery of the Foundling Hospital and the Marine Society.

The poem constitutes a subtle refinement of poetic convention compared, for example, with Falconer's *The Shipwreck*. Whereas Falconer's epic aesthetic, like the pictorial aesthetic of shipwreck, allows the lower-class seaman to be elevated to an heroic level, on the ideological basis (as Smith puts it) 'That worth alone is true Nobility' (Book I, 1.240); inversely, Smith's emigrants, like so many victims described in shipwreck narratives and pictures, are stripped of their worldly titles and effects, and reduced to an ignoble status no better than that of the English rustic who sees them from the field where he is working.²⁰ The stripping of worldly titles bears, again, more than a passing resemblance to the typologies of the Last Judgement and the Deluge.²¹ The psychological influence of the Deluge seems to have been pervasive. In a nominally Christian country such as Britain the association of maritime catastrophe and divine judgement would, no doubt, have been virtually unavoidable, which

²⁰ For example, Book I, lines 296-300:

Poor wand'ring wretches! whosoe'er ye are,
That hopeless, houseless, friendless, travel wide
O'er these bleak russet downs; where, dimly seen,
The solitary Shepherd shiv'ring tends
His dun discolour'd flock

²¹ It is also noticeable that the description of the horrific effects of the Revolutionary War on the French rural peasantry, which occupies much of Book II, also involves much unmistakably Deluge-like imagery.

consequently gives a corresponding moral charge to nautical triumphs (as I shall discuss below).

Other texts display a similar, or often more overt, conflation of revolutionary mentality, maritime disaster or mutiny, with the Fall or Lucifer's rebellion against heaven. Wordsworth's *The Borderers*, it has been argued, locates these linking tropes firmly in a construction of creative subjectivity by weaving around them a meditation on madness, and suggesting the 'proximity of madness [like the diabolic madness of mutiny] to his [own] poetic imagination'.²² As Sanborn points out, Sir John Barrow's 1831 account, 'the first major study of the *Bounty* affair, . . . makes the Satanic allusion explicit in order to emphasize the deplorable nature of mutiny', by juxtaposing Fletcher Christian's celebrated statement 'I am in hell' with the relevant passage from *Paradise Lost*.²³ The mutiny on the *Bounty* was also perceived in a similar

²² G. Sanborn, 'The Madness of Mutiny: Wordsworth, the *Bounty* and *The Borderers*', *The Wordsworth Circle* 23, 1 (1992), pp.35-42 (quote, p.40)

²³ Sir John Barrow, *The Eventful History of the Mutiny and Piratical Seizure of H.M.S. Bounty, its Causes and Consequences* (1831), cited in Sanborn, *op. cit.*, p.42, n.12. The passage from Milton cited is from Book IV, lines 18-26:

horror and doubt distract
 The Hell within him, for within him Hell
 He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell
 One step, no more than from himself, can fly
 By change of place. Now conscience wakes despair
 That slumbered, wakes the bitter memory
 Of what he was, what is, and what must be
 Worse; of worse deeds worse sufferings must ensue.

metaphysical, as well as political, light by Southey and Coleridge, and has been offered as a substantial source for *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.²⁴

Poems such as Smith's *The Emigrants* offer illuminating parallels for analysing maritime iconography in the field of visual culture. Much imagery in various media increasingly places epic subjects, allegories of metaphysical contest or Biblical iconography, in an environment evocative, directly or allusively, of the sea. The rhetoric of maritime disaster becomes transposed to a higher register, as the appropriate symbolic locus for the depiction of events of national, spiritual or cosmic significance. We have already seen such an aesthetic shift in the context of anti-slavery iconography. But analogous readings could also be offered for quite distinct, non-maritime works such as Fuseli's *Thor Battering the Midgard Serpent* (1790, London, Royal Academy), or Blake's *The Good and Evil Angels Struggling for Possession of a*

Sanborn also sees Wordsworth's connection between madness, mutiny and revolution as the antithesis of the Burkean construct of ordered society, characterized by the evolution of history and tradition:

By figuring madness as an idealist rebellion against the actuality of nature, Wordsworth associates political rebellions like the French Revolution, or the mutiny on the *Bounty*, with forms of madness, in which 'all past experience melts away' and the rebels attempt to fashion the world anew. (p.40)

²⁴ C.S. Wilkinson, *The Wake of the Bounty* (London, 1953); Kenneth Curry (ed.), *New Letters of Robert Southey* 2 vols. (New York and London, 1965), vol.1, p.19. Coleridge's poem is, of course, open to numerous interpretations, and its sources are the subject of dispute: other suggestions include Cook's voyages and the slave trade. See Bernard Smith, 'Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* and Cook's Second Voyage', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 19 (1956), pp.117-54; J.R. Ebbatson, 'Coleridge's Mariner and the Rights of Man', *Studies in Romanticism* 11 (1972), pp.171-206.

Child (1795, London, Tate Gallery), both of which place the central scene of elemental contest against the background of the potent second-order sign of the ocean or shore.

This phenomenon can be identified and analysed more closely in the work of Louthembourg, in particular his illustrations of the 1790s for Macklin's *Bible*, the paintings for which were often exhibited at Macklin's Poets Gallery. Indeed, Louthembourg's work of the 1790s and the early 1800s offers a microcosmic example, a case-study of the aesthetic and ideological inter-relations I have described in relation to the wider sphere of visual and literary culture.

From 1789 he worked continuously on a variety of interconnected projects: on paintings, twenty-two in number, to be used as the basis or engraved illustrations for Macklin's *Bible*, which were also exhibited in the Poets Gallery; on works for Bowyer's Historic Gallery, specifically for the illustrated version of Hume's *History of England*; as well as completing commissioned canvases depicting contemporary - mostly naval - battles of the Revolutionary War.²⁵ The conflation of these various subjects over a specific period in the practice of one artist integrates the primary constituents necessary to create a mythology of national identity. The visualizations of maritime supremacy and of English historical identity emphasize the nation's myth of origin, its identified material historical lineage and sense of tradition. The work done for Macklin, centred on a national literary canon conferred with the divine sanction of the Anglican Bible, likewise constructs the nation as an 'imagined community' sharing a communally distinctive religious and constitutional geography, with a sense of its

²⁵ Rüdiger Joppien, *Philippe Jacques de Louthembourg, R.A. 1740-1812* (exhibition catalogue,

London, Kenwood, 1973), n.p.

moral rightness through its sacred benediction.²⁶ That all these are, in this particular instance (as we shall see), projected onto the visual idea of the sea, is of crucial importance. Loutherboung was not an isolated or necessarily unusual figure in this aspect of visual culture. Bowyer's and Macklin's projects also involved Reynolds, West, Fuseli, Hoppner, Stothard, Hamilton, Wheatley and others, and thus must be seen as part of that wider cultural and pictorial concern with the contested areas of British national identity in the 1790s, further manifested in the complementary projects of Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery and Fuseli's Milton Gallery.²⁷

The artistic inter-relations here are therefore very involved. Even at the simpler level of treating the work of a single artist for a single project, that of Loutherboung's pictures for Macklin's *Bible*, the visual cross-references and intertextuality are complex, resulting in a open pictorial structure for illustrating key episodes of the Bible, in which any sense of fixed meaning for individual pictures is disrupted, and rendered ambiguous. Such correspondences and cross-referencing characterize, to some extent, all of Loutherboung's work. Morton Paley notes the similarity of his

²⁶ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983). Other discussions of nationalism I have found useful in this context are: Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983); A.D. Smith, *National Identity* (Harmondsworth, 1991); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1990); Homi Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London, 1990).

²⁷ Richard D. Altick, *Paintings from Books: Art and Literature in Britain, 1760-1900* (Columbus, Ohio, 1985), chapter 2; T.S.R. Boase, 'Macklin and Bowyer', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 26 (1963), pp.148-77. For Boydell, see particularly Winifred H. Friedman, *Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery* (New York and London, 1976).

scenes of battle to those of other human disasters, and to apocalyptic subjects. Likewise Joppien sees the correspondence between scenes of Biblical disaster and those of shipwreck or other seascapes.²⁸ But the relationships between Loutherbourog's Bible illustrations are, I believe, of a different order.

This is most clearly evident in the way Loutherbourog freely and consciously departs from the Biblical texts of the subjects he illustrates. The most remarkable instance occurs with the frontispiece to the Old Testament (fig.136), where God is strangely amalgamated into Moses, via an unmistakeable reference to Michelangelo's *Moses*. Such an emphasis on Mosaic dispensation in the opening plate of the *Bible* (though one of the last illustrations to be executed) is particularly telling in light of the ideological significance of Moses in the context of the visual construction of Britain's maritime and commercial mythology, established at the Foundling Hospital. This is further enhanced by the resemblance of the rocky shore-like setting of the scene both to contemporary shipwreck scenes (for example, Craig's *The Shipwreck'd Sailor*, fig.130, or Fuseli's *The Negro Revenged*, fig.112), and to Loutherbourog's own version of *The Deluge*, again for Macklin's *Bible* (fig.137). The variety of references made by this single image give it an ideological weight far beyond its status as Bible illustration.

Great licence is taken also in *Ezekiel's Vision* (fig.138). Here Loutherbourog did not show the prophet's 'wheel . . . in the midst of a wheel' ([Ezekiel] x. 10) as Blake did in his contemporary *Night Thoughts* watercolour . . . , but rather another human form among wave-lashed rocks under a stormy sky.²⁹

²⁸ Morton D. Paley, *The Apocalyptic Sublime* (New Haven and London, 1986), p.69; Joppien, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Paley, *op. cit.*, p.56.

Thus this image is again closely related to the many other storm- or sea-centered illustrations: *The Deluge*, *The Destruction of Pharaoh's Host* (engraved Fittler, published 1793), *Christ Appeasing the Storm* (engraved Bromley, published 1792), *Christ Walking on the Sea* (engraved Fittler, published 1795), *The Shipwreck of St. Paul* (engraved Pouncy, published 1794). But in its diagonally-structured composition, orientation of the figure, relation of figure to ground, dramatic *chiaroscuro* and cloud-effects, and ambiguity of pictorial space, *Ezekiel's Vision* is again directly comparable to *The Creation*. The illustration in fact refers to Ezekiel i.1-10. Ezekiel's vision occurs 'as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar' (i.1).³⁰ Louthembourg has not taken the Bible as gospel. There are *no* other captives; Ezekiel's solitariness is emphatic. The *idea* of captivity is neatly and clearly alluded to, by depicting the prophet in the pose of the Dying Gladiator, also more pertinently known as the Dying Slave. The river Chebar appears transformed into the inhospitably rocky, wave-lashed shore of *The Deluge*; while the latter further implicates the idea of seascape in its close resemblance to the emotive pathos of shipwreck scenes, such as Louthembourg's own 1793 *Shipwreck* (fig.96). The most startling similarity here, however, is between the solitary figure of Ezekiel, alone with his private vision of the angel in the clouds, and the similarly-posed figure of Satan in *The Angel Binding Satan* (fig.139). The typological correspondence between Revelation, for which the latter is an illustration, and the Book of Ezekiel, is reiterated in the pictures' common dynamic, centered around a prone figure's relation to a superior angel. Their formal similarities are so close as to be unmistakable, and presumably deliberate.

³⁰ Not, as Paley asserts, to Ezekiel x.10: *ibid.*, p.56.

Nonetheless, the visual dynamic of *The Angel Binding Satan* is not that of the intense, subjective, divine vision of Ezekiel, to which the viewer is given vicariously privileged access through the illustration, but instead offers the viewer a stark aesthetic contrast, between the beautiful Apollonian figure of the angel, and the grotesque, skull-headed hybrid, Satan. In this sense, the image is markedly sublime, not simply in the Burkean sense of being terrific and awful (both in its subject-matter and its descriptive treatment), but at a deeper textual level. Indeed, it stands as a pictorial discursus on sublimity, by offering the blatant contrast between the beauty of the angel, and the hideousness of Satan, which describes in this instance a limit of creative imagination, and thus may be seen as an epitomization of the Kantian sublime. We might see the engraving, in this sense, as meta-sublime (were such a thing theoretically possible): it is clearly placed in that aesthetic tradition, but also comprises a form of commentary upon it. It is part both of a discourse *of* the sublime, and of a discourse *on* the sublime.³¹ However, I want to suggest that, in its subject and form, its textual openness through allusion to other illustrations by Louthembourg for Macklin's *Bible*, as well as to the 'natural' sign of sublimity, the sea, *The Angel Binding Satan* offers a complex and highly-coded instance of the signification of the sea as a site of political and patriotic contestation in 1790s visual culture. This signification is, I shall suggest, inscribed in its, and other engravings', very technique.

Peter De Bolla has noticed the discursive singularity of the concept of the sublime in the mid-eighteenth-century, for it

³¹ Peter De Bolla, *The Discourse of the Sublime: Readings in History, Aesthetics and the Subject* (Oxford, 1989), *passim*.

has, effectively, no boundary. It is a discourse which produces, from within itself, what is habitually termed the category of the sublime and in doing so it becomes a self-transforming discourse. The only way in which it is possible to identify this newly mutated discursive form is via its propensity to produce to excess. This production to excess might be expected as the 'natural' result of a discourse on the sublime: enquiries into the nature and causes of sublime sensation were necessarily led to an investigation of the 'transport' of the sublime experience. The experience was itself defined as one which broke through a boundary, which was, in some sense at least, excessive. . . . There is, then, a natural tendency for the discourse of the sublime to produce the conditions necessary for the construction of the discourse of the sublime, a discourse which produces from within itself sublime experience.³²

This kind of tautological discourse poses particular problems; notably, with regard to its analysis, since its autonomous self-referentiality deflects any external deconstructive inquiry. Since the discourse of the sublime, in this conception, is already predicated on the production of meaning somehow excessive to itself, any analysis must also be discursively internal to it: 'how', continues De Bolla, 'can one control a discourse which sets out to examine the ways and means for controlling an excess, . . . when that excess is visualized by the discourse of analysis as its own product?'³³ The impenetrability of such a self-reinforcing mode of signification is at once impregnable

³² *Ibid.*, p.12.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.14.

but fragile. The discursive location of sublime experience within the individual feeling subject renders it impossibly unstable. In the last resort, an experience can only be termed sublime if the individual says so. And the internalization of the discourse of analysis within the discourse of the sublime is counter-balanced by the irreducibly internalized nature of sublime experience itself.

The difficulty of the sublime as a self-producing excess, internal to the perceiving subject, bears a close structural affinity with the volatility of the discourse of sensibility. Sensibility's political precariousness, already encountered in connection with shipwreck imagery and narratives, was the result of its uncontrollable reliance upon a construction of subjective consciousness. The point at which the proper sensible regard for the interests of one's fellow subjects (which may be loosely located in the tradition of eighteenth-century philanthropy) turned into the excessive obsession of religious enthusiasm or radical democracy was, as Burke so celebratedly made clear in the *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, impossibly elusive.

Within this broad cultural and discursive context, it is possible to see both Louthembourg's illustrations for Macklin's *Bible*, and the wider sphere of 1790s visual culture of which they partook, as being informed by this same instability and elusiveness; an elusiveness which was given both symbolic and material identity in the image of the sea. So, in *The Angel Binding Satan*, the ambiguous ideological value of Satan as the spirit of rebellion (which was, of course, exploited pictorially by Fuseli, Blake and Barry, and in the later instance, discussed above, of Fuseli's *The Negro Revenged* (fig.112), for the radical political purposes of the abolition movement) is increased by his apparent elision into the figure of Ezekiel. For the setting of *The Angel Binding Satan* again resembles a rocky shore, the scene enacted in an unlocatable and

limitless element, where air, fire, rock and water become indissolubly mixed. Satan himself reinforces the sense of the sea, in the way that his serpentine lower body suggests him more as a merman, than the 'dragon, that old serpent' of the text (Revelation, xx.2).³⁴ The struggle takes place on a rock akin to both that on which Ezekiel reclines, and those of *The Deluge*, or *The Creation*. There are marked compositional parallels in the relation of the prophet/Satan to the vision/angel; while the barren rock, set in a sea either of water or fire, assumes the sense of an island, one which in the case of both Ezekiel and Satan is not a fortress haven (such as Gillray, for example, depicts in *Britannia between Scylla and Charybdis*, fig.72), but a prison. And this is directly depicted in the action of *The Angel Binding Satan*, where the angel imprisoned him 'for a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season' (Revelation, 20,ii-iii). Evidently, Louthembourg has been typically cavalier with the text, perhaps making the iconography more explicitly relevant to a contemporary public: as already noted, the sense in the 1790s that the Revolutionary War was the fulfilment of Revelation, and that Satan was indeed at that very moment being 'loosed a little season' to 'deceive the nations', was a common one, and makes the ideological significance of Louthembourg's depiction all the more potent.

³⁴ In this respect, it is also worth noting that the pose of the angel is that of Bacchus, in Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*, reversed. The subtextual reference to the sea, via the idea of the island, is therefore doubly suggested, through the narrative of Ariadne on Naxos, and by referring to the characteristic 'golden age' art of the earlier maritime empire of Venice.

Adapting islands to prisons had been in operation throughout Britain's colonial empire. Australia's first convicts had been delivered in 1788, and the West Indian islands were very much in the public mind as places of incarceration. More generally, the value of the 'island' as an idea had been heightened by Tahiti and the South Seas, in the accounts of the *Bounty* mutiny.³⁵ But the most immediate parallel for the Loutherbourgian island, conflating sublimity, Satanic rebellion of a distinctly Miltonic kind, and the Protestant Bible, is, of course, Britain itself. The representation of Britain as the insular locus of national, elemental and cosmic contests may be seen, in this sense, as a logical continuation of the nation's maritime identity offered by Hanway and others mid-century. And the illustrations to Macklin's *Bible* can be related to the construction of the nation's Mosaic dispensation provided by the Foundling Hospital: not only in *The Creation*, as we have seen, but even more directly in Hamilton's *The Finding of Moses*, which recalls Hayman's version in the Foundling Hospital (fig.140).

Similarly, the visual corollary of Britain as the arena of cosmic events is the depiction, particularly in popular prints, of politicians and figures of state in elemental or transcendental guise; for example, Pitt cast as Apollo in Gillray's *Light dispelling Darkness* (date & details needed). This aesthetic logic culminated in Blake's *The Spiritual Form of Nelson Guiding Leviathan* and *The Spiritual Form of Pitt, Guiding Behemoth* (exhibited 1809). In an interesting ideological and apocalyptic inversion of

³⁵ On Australia, see especially Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (New York, 1988); Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: The Epic of Australia's Founding* (New York, 1987); Alan Frost, *Convicts and Empire: A Naval Question, 1776-1811* (Oxford and New York, 1980). For the *Bounty*, see Wilkinson, *op. cit.*; Greg Denning, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge, 1992).

Hanway's description of *Wisdom and Youth* (fig.60), Blake's *Descriptive Catalogue* describes his vision of Pitt as

that Angel who, pleased to perform the Almighty's orders, rides on the whirlwind, directing the storms of war: He is ordering the Reaper to reap the Vine of the Earth and the Plowman to plow up the Cities and Towers.³⁶

Instead of the sea being the conduit to commercial civilization, by virtue of 'plowing the waves' to reap 'the mingled harvest of mankind', military maritime supremacy produces the apocalyptic image of the Deluge, under the control of Nelson as the angel of Revelation, ploughing up not the waves, but 'the Cities and Towers' of civilized society. The boundary between harmony and chaos in the ideological construction of the sea is again shown to be remarkably tenuous.

The Angel Binding Satan and the other *Bible* illustrations may be understood as a contest between good and evil acted out over England's 'green and pleasant land'; and the iconography of the forces of order chaining the forces of chaos is a commonplace in characterizing the blessed war of Britain against the atheistic tyranny of France.³⁷ Interestingly, this content is embedded in the visual structure of the image as well, in the material fabric, as it were, of the picture surface. In both engraving and

³⁶ William Blake, 'A Descriptive Catalogue of Pictures' (1809), in David V. Erdman (ed.), *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (New York, 1965), p.521.

³⁷ For discussion of Rowlandson's *The Contrast* and related imagery, see above, chapter 6. For popular literature and political propaganda making use of similar rhetoric, see Stella Cottrell, 'The Devil on two sticks: franco-phobia in 1803', in R. Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity* 3 vols. (London and New York, 1989), vol.1, pp.259-74.

original painting the defined, precisely contoured, poised, rectilinear figure of the dominating angel, silhouetted against a blaze of celestial light, is contrasted with Satan, whose ambiguous hybrid form merges into the darkness surrounding him. His figure is characterized by subjection and imbalance; twisting, spiralling curves which extend to become part of the elemental environment in which he lies, and into which he is being pressed by the angel. The contest between order and chaos, therefore, is inscribed formally in the visual rhetoric of the image. If, as De Bolla maintains, the discourse of the sublime is a discourse of excess, the formal contradictions in this and related *Bible* illustrations appear an equivalent visual aesthetic paradigm.

The ambiguity and lack of specificity in Loutherboung's scenes involve a lack of legibility, an inability to distinguish between rock, air, water and fire. The spatial dimensions, both across and within the pictorial field, are likewise left uncertain and unstable. It is into this area of formal indefiniteness that Satan's body appears as almost an agent of representational breakdown, identified with formal irresolution. Secondly, and in consequence, the scale of the figures, and therefore of their battle, is also impossible to determine, and shifts between micro- and macrocosmic poles. This is perhaps most noticeable in the transition of visual scale from the painting to engraved book illustration, a play upon contrasting pictorial and textual registers which is very characteristic of Loutherboung's fellow mystic, Blake.

So far this all fits quite straightforwardly with the pictorial conventions of the sublime. More interesting is the fact that the only points of definition for the image are the two figures, mostly the angel, for otherwise both painting and engraving veer towards a type of non-representational abstraction; in which the represented elements of earth, air, fire and water come close to being indistinguishable as anything at all.

While this sort of aesthetic ‘crisis’ would become a notorious characteristic of Turner’s work, whereby his (highly subjective) representation of an ‘autobiographical’ sea journey in a snowstorm, could be visually reduced to ‘soapsuds and whitewash’, it is also a feature of a large amount of shipwreck imagery from the 1780s on.³⁸ In Gillray’s *The Wreck of the Nancy Packet* (fig.127), and *End of the Irish Invasion; - or - the Destruction of the French Armada* (fig.126), Craig’s *The Shipwreck’d Sailor* (fig.130), or, by way of comparison with Louthembourg’s *Bible* illustrations, *The Deluge* (fig.137), the majority of the picture surface is given over to the depiction of the uncontrolled (and therefore, in De Bolla’s sense, sublime), elemental forces of nature. A focus is brought to bear on the method and means of picturing incommensurability. In *The Shipwreck’d Sailor* the classically-contoured figure clings to a rock, complete with the identifying material detail of seaweed. But the sea itself is displayed as an almost arbitrary mass of dots, squiggles, truncated lines which extend across the surface, disrupting the spatial logic of the picture, and threatening to engulf the sailor’s desperate geometry.

It may be argued that the naturalistic rendition of the sea could hardly be otherwise. Yet the conventions of painting tempests and shipwreck in Dutch and earlier eighteenth-century British art are very different. The Van de Veldes, Monamy or Brooking convey a greater degree of depersonalized objectivity, in the focus upon

³⁸ Turner’s *Snowstorm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour’s Mouth* (London, Tate Gallery) was exhibited in 1842. Details of its reception are given in Martin Butlin and Evelyn Joll, *The Paintings of J.M.W. Turner*, 2 vols. (revised edn., New Haven and London, 1984), cat. no.398. See also Sam Smiles, “‘Splashers”, “Scrawlers” and “Plasterers”: British Landscape Painting and the Language of Criticism, 1800-1840”, *Turner Studies* 10/1 (1990), pp.5-11. On shipwreck imagery, see above, chapter 9.

the vessel rather than the individual as the principal subject of the image; and the scope for the wreck as a site for the expression of subjective sensibility is correspondingly circumscribed. A form of authorial or artistic control is always maintained, which functions analogously to the depicted controlled vessel. For Dutch tempest scenes rarely show the vessel completely beyond the command of crew and captain. Rather the scene offers an exemplary allegorical and admonitory reminder of the need for watchfulness, clear-headedness, and faith, generally, in the storm-tossed passage of life.³⁹ By contrast Smirke's *The Halsewell* (fig.141) treats the vessel only as the arena for human responses to sublime events, and emphasizes that it is already lost: half-submerged, the mast cut away, and the wheel conspicuously abandoned. All hopes of human intervention have likewise been abandoned, and referred instead to God, most obviously in the very Niobe-like group to the right, a figure grouping which Brown would later employ to great effect in his highly sentimental view of *The Final Interview of Louis the Sixteenth* (fig.100). Indeed the whole composition echoes Wilson's *Destruction of Niobe's Children*, in the disposition of the figures across the foreground, the dramatic *chiaroscuro*, and the similarity of the broken mast to the stricken trees of the *Niobe* landscape. It is significant that such representational and formal dissolution should be held to be a realistic depiction of the sea, one which locates its ideological significance within a natural - or naturalized - propensity to induce cognitive breakdown.

The same aesthetic discourse was very much in operation in contemporary maritime culture of the most material character. J.S. Clarke's 1798 publication *Naval*

³⁹ L.O. Goedde, *Tempest and Shipwreck in Dutch and Flemish Art: Convention, Rhetoric, and Interpretation* (University Park, Pennsylvania and London, 1989), pp.1-3.

Sermons, preached on board His Majesty's Ship The Impetueux, in the Western Squadron, during its Services off Brest combines the problematic discourses of sublimity, maritime national identity, individual sensibility and duty, shipwreck and mutiny. This religious text gives a prominent place to the visual aesthetic of the sea, and while not discussing visual art directly, relates to contemporary imagery, particularly in view of the above analysis of Louthembourg's and others' work.

The *Impetueux*, upon which Clarke served as chaplain, was one of the ships involved, albeit in a minor way, in the 1797 mutiny at Spithead.⁴⁰ Clarke's sermons must therefore be considered against the backdrop of the mutiny, in which context they assume an extraordinary ideological weight. Sermon four (out of a total of nine), 'The Necessity and Advantages of Obedience', may be taken as paradigmatic of the extent of the problem posed by the questionable loyalty of the audience to whom it was addressed.

It opens by restating the well-established truism of commercial ideology: that human beings are naturally social, and that the individual receives and communicates strength through her or his participation in society. But the beneficent social state can only be maintained by the individual's strict adherence to the essential laws and principles which govern it. Such a construction of the law may itself be seen as a form of the aesthetic, to the extent that, like the work of art, it is its own justification, revealing itself in its intrinsically beautiful, ordered and moral state only to the sensible

⁴⁰ Dugan, *op. cit.*, pp.89, 94.

bourgeois subject with the proper qualifications of taste and virtue to perceive it.⁴¹ Britain, of course, has the best constituted society, 'where, in every part appears a gradual, regular, wise subordination', quite opposed to the tyrannical social divisions of France.⁴² But, characteristic of the mythology of the maritime nation, the virtue of the British constitution extends as a universal value beyond its physical boundaries, and across time: the cause of war against French despotism is not only a British one

but the cause of every part of the civilized world: Nations, yet unborn, shall hear your noble exertions related with gratitude.⁴³

France is presented as the apocalyptic agent of divine wrath, 'the most bitter and severe scourge, which heaven, in its anger, ever employed to chastise the earth.' And since the war, conducted on such a cosmic scale, has the sea as both its ideological and its actual theatre, the ship itself becomes the paradigm of the ideal social state of Britishness:

A Ship, in which so much of your life is past [*sic*], is a just emblem of the Social State; or in other words, of a political government. Here every one has his appointed station. The various gradations of

⁴¹ Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford, 1990), pp.19-28. For a discussion of how landscape aesthetic was moralized in a similar way, see Nigel Everett, *The Tory View of Landscape* (New Haven and London, 1994).

⁴² James Stanier Clarke, *Naval Sermons, preached on board His Majesty's Ship The Impetueux, in the Western Squadron, during its Services off Brest: to which is added a Thanksgiving Sermon for Naval Victories; preached at Park-Street Chapel, Grosvenor-Square, Dec. 19. M,DCC,XCVII* (London, 1798), p.66.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.68.

command and obedience are clearly marked: and it is a truth, as evident to your understandings, as the meridian sun is to your sight: that by a joint co-operation of all in their respective departments; of those who command, and of those who obey; the vessel is conducted through the waves in safety, appears to defy the tempest; and often returns, rich in victory and in honour.⁴⁴

The necessity for obedience is predicated as a natural fact, as plain as the midday sun. Significant also is the way that such naturalization of social ideology, and the test of the seamen's loyalty, is embedded in the visual. Thus the law of social obedience, exemplified in the social microcosm of the ship, is described by Clarke as an aesthetic one. It is, indeed, sublime: the proving ground for the sailor's loyalty (and, by implication, that of any subject) is the sight of the sublimity of the sea.

This sublime theme is addressed at various points throughout the sermons, but particularly in the second, 'The Knowledge of God derived from the Contemplation of His Works'. The imagination, being the irreducible basis for religious faith, is, Clarke tells us, stimulated to greater devotion by the contemplation of the wonder and variety of nature, especially the vastness and variety of the sea:

No opportunity can be more adapted to enforce the practice of such contemplation; than the immediate moment, when you are dwelling on that ocean, which forms the most stupendous object in creation.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.69, 70-1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.27.

A proper affinity with the sea must confound the campaign of atheism waged by the French, through the inescapable logic of the argument:

Who can observe this abyss of waters, rolling in the greatness of its strength, without experiencing the sublimest sentiments of devotion?⁴⁶

The devotion is primarily to be directed to God, but also, implicitly, to king and nation; and to the social law itself, expressed as the aesthetic of the sublime sea. The sailor's loyalty ought to be unquestionable, confronted as he is by both the sublime, and the beautiful, in the form of the ship made from the native English oak which, 'having towered amid the forest, falls to arise with new glory, the naval bulwark of our country.' And the appeal to the seaman's loyalty is therefore constructed not just in aesthetic terms, but in terms also of nature's representation through art:

Ye, who live amid the vicissitudes of contending elements, whose representation alone fills the common beholder, though in safety, with dismay, pass your lives in a continual survey of the most sublime object of nature, which is the ocean; and in conducting the most wonderful work of art, which is the ship that bears you through it.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.30.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.32-3, 35. A useful and interesting contemporary alternative view of the oak as an ideological symbol, and once again suggesting the instability of symbols of the nation and of loyalty in the 1790s, is Coleridge's poem *The Raven* (1797). For discussion of the poem, see William Ruddick, 'Liberty trees and loyal oaks: emblematic presences in some English poems of the French Revolutionary period', in Yarrington, A. and Everest, K. (eds.), *Reflections of Revolution: Images of Romanticism* (London and New York, 1993), pp.59-67.

As in Smith's *The Emigrants*, individual national identity is constructed in terms of a subjective visual perception of the sea. Conversely, mutiny, like wrecking and smuggling, is presented as a sin against nature and, therefore, God; thus also, against the nation and its pre-ordained maritime destiny. For Clarke, by a heavily overcoded tautology, the sea is the manifest proof of God's existence, with all that implies in terms of the construction of national identity, and the war against French atheism.

Perhaps it is not so surprising, therefore, that Louthembourg's illustrations to Macklin's *Bible* rely so heavily on maritime imagery, either directly or by allusion, and offer the realistic depiction of the ocean as one of sublime incommensurability. The discourse of the sea acts as an analogue to the discourse of the sublime, whereby the paradox of representing the uncontrollable within, *ipso facto*, a controlling aesthetic, is depicted not metaphorically, but metonymically. The controlling aesthetic by which the picture is produced is shown to be on the verge of disintegrating into non-representational formlessness; just as Clarke's appeal to the sea's sublimity as the litmus test of individual patriotism is on the verge of being exploded by the material fact of lower-deck political culture. The danger of investing so much ideological weight in the aesthetic of the sea was that it was bound to clash with the constructed identity of the sailor either as the 'spirit of rebellion' or as the irreligious, brutish unit of labour. The aesthetic, like the discourse of the sublime, and like the myth of the maritime nation, is highly unstable.

There are more direct parallels between the sense of vision presented by Clarke and the visual structures of Louthembourg's illustrations. The representational play between form and formlessness in the images is itself directly engaged in Fittler's engraving of *Ezekiel's Vision*, where the prophet's vision of the angel has also to be

'seen in' by the viewer, as a figure in the clouds. It is as though the viewer's understanding of the figure as an angel, rather than as a simple continuation of the cloud formation, confirms her/him in the act of aesthetic participation, as the privileged witness to a sacred event. The emergence of the figure from the clouds, and its tenuous ambiguity, veering between the shapeless elemental phenomenon and the expression of divine presence, not only emphasizes the value of subjective visuality (is Ezekiel truly seeing God's representation, or merely a shape in the clouds?), and thus is informed by those discourses of subjectivity and sensibility which have been shown also to have informed shipwreck imagery; but it also points up the critical mass, so to speak, of the rest of the engraving, pivoted between representation and ambiguity. The waves crashing on the rock behind Ezekiel's leg, for example, and the prophet's cloak (as it appears) streaming out from behind his shoulder, fuse indissolubly into the very clouds (presumably they are such) out of which the angel emerges.

The same ambiguity is enforced by the graphic interplay between *Ezekiel's Vision* and *The Angel Binding Satan*, which then appear as positive and negative variants on a common visual theme; or the similar correspondences between the compositions and figure-groupings of *The Deluge*, *The Creation*, and *The Giving of the Law* (figs.137, 136). Likewise, the generic imagery of the sea or the Deluge is clearly discernible in many other illustrations; and the nationalistic focus of this maritime/Biblical imagery is confirmed in the extraordinary headpiece to Daniel, which combines the image of a seastorm or Deluge - rather gratuitously, given the book it

accompanies - with that of a winged lion, of a very similar disposition to Louthembourg's vision of the British lion (figs.142, 143).⁴⁸

There is therefore a clear pictorial correspondence in Louthembourg's work between the iconographies of Biblical apocalypse and Deluge, shipwreck, and patriotic polemic. These in turn are represented within a sublime idiom, which draws attention to its own representational and ideological instability, and by which they can be related to other social and political aspects of the culture of the 1790s.

The problem, of course, with Clarke's patriotic invocation of the sublime sea was that it flew in the face of the realities of lower-deck culture (or lack of it). His solipsistic argument leads him to bewilderment:

It is a natural subject of astonishment, that those *who go down to the sea in ships* are ever otherwise than religious and devout characters: as *they see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep*; they could not possibly resist the force of such daily evidence, without the fatal influence of some error, early received, which an heedless inattention augments.

⁴⁸ Not only those with clear maritime-related iconographies, already mentioned, but others of a less obvious subject-matter display clear maritime affinities: especially the tailpiece to Kings I (engraved Landseer, published 1793, in combination with which the complementary headpiece offers a conventional meditation on the building and ruin of empire), the headpiece to Kings II (engraved Landseer, published 1794), the headpiece to Amos (engraved Fittler, published 17 August 1797), the headpiece to Jonah (engraved Landseer, published 14 December 1797), the headpiece to Ezekiel (engraved Landseer, published 1796), the headpiece to Daniel (engraved Landseer, published 25 June 1797), and the tailpiece to Jude (engraved Louthembourg, not dated).

Clarke's difficulties in reconciling this actuality with the ideological requirements of the sailor and the sea, force him, by way of resolution, to project an identity for the seaman which is quite new, and entirely at odds with the recent reality of their mutinous, democratic demands, and with the conventional pejorative characterization of the lower deck.

No class of men, taken as a body, has ever shown a greater respect for religion, when properly presented to their attention; and however the vices of a few individuals may have drawn unjust aspersions on their profession; the religious disposition, and that attention to propriety of demeanour, which of late years has appeared among you, and been so much cherished by your respective commanders; will not fail, if thus continued and supported, to withdraw the only shade, which malice or ignorance has often cast over THE NOBLE CHARACTER OF A BRITISH SEAMAN.⁴⁹

The master narrative through which Clarke appeals to this unlikely residual religious disposition is that of the shipwreck of St. Paul.

Having in previous sermons offered the lives of Columbus and Cook as examples for the seamen to follow, Clarke uses the exemplary narrative of St. Paul to allude directly to the mutiny and its national import. His guiding text, therefore, is Acts 27.xxxi: 'Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved!' This addresses the crucial relevance of the narrative to the mutiny: St. Paul, uniquely informed by God, must assure the crew of the foundering ship that, unless they all remain on board, they

⁴⁹ Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp.36-7.

will all be lost. A reliance on God in this state of extremity is therefore a 'duty', a form of Kantian moral law, beyond the power of mere human reason to understand its necessity.⁵⁰

Through a subjective experience of an aesthetic, sensible kind - in Clarke's terms, it is still the sublime sea which must, ultimately, move the hearts of the seamen - will their loyalty be revealed to them. In practical effect, this will lead them to understand and fully appreciate the necessity of obedience to, and 'a sincere love and respect for', their officers. The specific lesson of the shipwreck of St. Paul thus becomes unmistakably clear, and like the angel in the clouds in *Ezekiel's Vision*, once seen cannot be unseen:

Submission unto our Governors, unto them who are in authority over us, is a doctrine, which the apostle St. Paul, whose conduct you have so much reason to admire, continually inculcates; 'that with well doing, we may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.' In its various forms and effects, it may be justly styled the grand link of Social Life. To obey and command, are the leading features in your profession . . .

You are all immediately the servants of your King and Country: the just performance of your duties, will consequently have a considerable and lasting effect, on the happiness of the community at large. If this important and noble service, should ever appear ungrateful; if a too warm and active imagination should eagerly grasp at some advantage, which promises attainment, in a situation different from that,

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.140. On the nature of the Kantian moral law, and its construction in the form of the sublime, see Eagleton, *op. cit.*, pp.78-86.

where you are at present placed; still have the resolution to abide in the ship! The prospect, which seems so flattering, may be only a snare, to seduce you from Duty. Arise! pursue again with zeal the commands of your Superiors, and the dream will cease.⁵¹

The tone of desperation in the final exhortation matches the fragility of the whole ideological enterprise of constructing national and individual civic identities by recourse to the image of the sea.

It further suggests an urgent cultural significance for the icon and iconography of St. Paul in late eighteenth-century visual culture. And *The Shipwreck of St. Paul* indeed comprises one of the grandest compositions of Louthembourg's series of illustrations for Macklin (fig.144), where the moment depicted corresponds to the crux of Clarke's sermon: the moment of invoking faith and duty beyond reason, to 'abide in the ship', but here displayed as the critical passage between the crew's enactment of faith as they cling to the breaking ship, and their salvation in reaching the shore.

We have seen how the icon of St. Paul's Cathedral was visualized in the middle decades of the century in the context of modernity and the metropolitan advances of London, and, by extension, of the nation at large; and how, by the first decade of the nineteenth century, with Turner's *London* (fig.48), the neat alignments of commercial ideology and civic progress underwent radical questioning and deconstruction. In the 1790s the visual discourse fixed upon St. Paul and St. Paul's, perhaps by virtue of its wider cultural import, provided another focus where the competing values of radicalism, patriotism, mutiny, shipwreck and deluge, could be played out.

⁵¹ Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp.145-7.

The fact that West's *St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck* (fig.145), depicting the moment after St. Paul and the crew of the wrecked vessel taking him prisoner to Rome have been saved, and when Paul remains miraculously unharmed by the snake, casting it into the flames, should become the altarpiece of Greenwich Hospital Chapel on its rebuilding after destruction by fire is therefore of some moment. The paradox of the image of maritime disaster, in its positive value for the maritime nation, was resolved through the example of St. Paul's triumph of faith in adversity. The unmistakably Michelangesque scale and references, particularly to the *Last Judgement*, only emphasize its transcendent significance.

In its placement of a maritime iconography within a sacred space, it sets a precedent for the pictorial conflation of marine and religious themes (of a public character and in a scrupulously heroic style) in the 1790s. Cooke and Maule's 1789 history of the Hospital, published partly to celebrate the splendid new chapel, gives a lengthy description of the recently installed altarpiece. Their *Historical Account* notes that it is arranged in three groups, following the established academic conventions for the hierarchical composition of history paintings: the central, and principal group of figures is that of St. Paul, the Centurion and the Roman soldiers; in the foreground are Marines and other prisoners bringing salvaged supplies ashore from the ship; and above in the background are the islanders, providing fuel and supplies. Each group is properly discrete from the others, like Clarke's description of the proper observance of ranks on board ship. And, in an anticipation of Clarke's construction of the sublime sea as a spur to duty among seamen, the description states the civic value of this scene of sacred shipwreck:

The sea and wrecked ship appear in the background, and combine to exhibit a scene that cannot fail of having a proper effect on the minds of seafaring men, and of impressing them with a due sense of their past preservation and their present comfortable situation and support in this glorious asylum for naval misfortune and naval worth.⁵²

Despite the obvious differences there are many correlations between West's positive treatment of the narrative of St. Paul and Louthembourg's 1790 painting for Macklin, particularly in the pictorial use of the sea in the 1790s. The similarity has been noticed between West's *Moses Shown the Promised Land* (1801, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art) and Louthembourg's *The Creation* (fig.136);⁵³ and there certainly appears to be some reciprocal influence, in terms not only of composition and style but also of the integration and inter-referentiality of individual works within an overall series or programme, between Louthembourg's *Bible* illustrations, and West's projected painterly programmes for the King's Chapel at Windsor and for Beckford's planned Revelation Chamber at Fonthill. West visualizes his apocalyptic scenes in a generalized, sublime, maritime setting of a very similar kind to Louthembourg's. A set of four sketches for Fonthill bear close comparison with Louthembourg's *Bible* designs, particularly *John Called to Write the Revelation* (1797, fig.146), which is compositionally similar to *Ezekiel's Vision*, and evokes again the idea of the island in

⁵² J. Cooke and J. Maule, *An Historical Account of the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich* (London, 1789), p.105. See also H. von Erffa and Allen Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1986), cat. no. 397, pp.384-6.

⁵³ J.D. Meyer, 'Benjamin West's Chapel of Revealed Religion: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Protestant Religious Art', *Art Bulletin* 57 (1975), p.262; von Erffa and Staley, *op. cit.*, cat. no. 269.

its iconography. All four, the others being *A Mighty Angel Standeth upon the Land and upon the Sea*, *The Woman Clothed in the Sun*, and *The Beast Riseth out of the Sea*, have the sea as their binding link. Even *The Woman Clothed in the Sun* is placed over a seascape with a monstrous Leviathan in the lower left foreground. All were exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1798, and appear to have been painted in 1797.⁵⁴ Given these circumstances, it is worth wondering whether the maritime basis of Revelation pictured in this set by West is not prompted in some way by the urgent and desperate significance of the sea at this time. The lion's head in *The Beast Riseth out of the Sea* has been interpreted as a coded reference, along the lines of Richard Brothers' prophetic utterances, to the British empire, with the conclusion that 'it is difficult not to see radical political commentary underlying the religious imagery'; so it would certainly not be beyond credibility to see West's maritime apocalypse as a commentary on Britain's military isolation, threatened with invasion, and compounded by the calamitous implications of the mutinies.⁵⁵ At the very least, West's programmes for Windsor and Fonthill must conform with the aesthetic and artistic preoccupation with national identity, which characterized the contemporary projects of Macklin, Bowyer and Boydell.

But this sanctification of the maritime is achieved not only pictorially through the integration of maritime themes with religious subjects, but also at a more extensive cultural level, in the placement of military or maritime subjects in the hallowed spaces

⁵⁴ von Erffa and Staley, *op. cit.*, cat. nos. 400, 404, 405 and 409.

⁵⁵ Nancy L. Pressly, *Revealed Religion: Benjamin West's Commissions for Windsor Castle and Fonthill Abbey* (exhibition catalogue, San Antonio, 1983), p.64; von Erffa and Staley, *op. cit.*, p.397 (quote).

of St. Paul's Cathedral or Westminster Abbey. And Louthembourg's, West's, and other non-maritime artists' visual interest in the sublime, nationalistic and religious potential of the sea must be part of the same cultural impulse which saw Bacon's, Banks' and Westmacott's monuments to naval heroes set up like secular altars to the nation in Westminster and St. Paul's.⁵⁶

A further variant on this theme centres on the depiction of St. Paul's itself. If the shipwreck of St. Paul could epitomize the anxieties surrounding the nation's ideological relationship with the sea, Marlow's 1797 *capriccio* view of the church of London's patron saint made the point with equal force (fig.41). Instead of the triumphant declaration of London as the new Rome which Joli had conjured up in his *capricci* half a century before, with St. Paul's conventionally land-bound and framed by the ruined but ordered geometry of a classical arch, Marlow conflates the Cathedral no longer with Rome but with Venice's Grand Canal. This may well be an ominous reference to the French capture of Venice that year, making an explicit parallel between the past exemplary Venetian maritime empire, and the modern British one: both being great trading empires with ideal constitutions, whose historic cultures were alike under threat from Napoleon.⁵⁷ But in the present context it also expands upon the ideological relation, in the contested sphere of national identity, between St. Paul and the sea.

⁵⁶ On the monuments to naval heroes, see A.W. Yarrington, *Commemoration of the Hero 1800-1864: Monuments to the British Victors of the Napoleonic Wars* (New York and London, 1988), pp.61-78, 338-46.

⁵⁷ M. Liversidge and J. Farrington (eds.), *Canaletto & England* (exhibition catalogue, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, 1995), pp.146-7.

Similarly, Louthembourg's painting of *The Great Fire of London* (fig.147), done for Bowyer's illustrated edition of Hume's *History of England*, and also of 1797, is a complex amalgam of various significant references. Its format, like Marlow's *Capriccio*, evokes the mid-century celebration of the Thames, this time Canaletto's or Scott's views of the river through an arch of Westminster Bridge (figs.22, 31). But in this respect, it also seems to be something of a *capriccio*, since there is a lack of clarity about the bridge framing the scene of conflagration in the background. Historical accuracy, to which Louthembourg has attended to some extent in the depiction of Old St. Paul's and of period costume, demands that it be Old London Bridge; a specification indeed given in the title of the print made after the painting. Yet this had pointed arches, which the bridge in the painting evidently does not. On the contrary, its fine stone coursing, the appearance of what seems to be a column beyond the opening to the right, and its topographical relation to the Cathedral, all suggest the modern Blackfriars Bridge rather than London Bridge.⁵⁸ There is a suggested juxtaposition, as with Marlow, of the past and the present, the medieval and the modern, as though to offer a lesson, taken from Britain's own history, and more particularly that of St. Paul's, for the nation's contemporary dilemma. But the more general connections between the figure or sign of St. Paul and the sea are discernible here also, reinforcing the exchange between past and present, in the way that Louthembourg consciously treats this crucial episode of British and metropolitan history in precisely the same manner as one of his own scenes of contemporary naval battle (fig.132), or of shipwreck. While the Cathedral appears to float on the horizon, like a ship of the line

⁵⁸ Compare, for example, William Marlow's *Blackfriars Bridge and St. Paul's Cathedral, London*, oil on canvas, c.1788, London, Guildhall Art Gallery.

(perhaps a play on the etymological proximity between 'nave' and 'navy', or on the traditional idea of the 'ship of the church'?), the foreground boats and figures are disposed similarly to the longboats and sailors in the foreground of *The Battle of Camperdown* or in slightly later shipwreck scenes (figs.132, 121, 125). The fire in the distance resembles the sublime effect of an explosion at sea. Thus these paintings of St. Paul's respond to and reinforce the myth of the maritime nation in multivalent ways, not simply reflecting a cultural acceptance of the maritime basis of the nation's identity, but visually articulating it.

Perhaps the most explicit depiction of St. Paul's in this respect is Gillray's *New Morality; - or - The Promised Installment of the High Priest of the Theophilanthropes, with the Homage of Leviathan and his Suite* (published 1 August, 1798, fig.148).⁵⁹ The title pertains to several of the themes already alluded to in this chapter: the Anti-Jacobin anxiety over Revolutionary sensibility, or the 'new morality', of the 'Theophilanthropes', and the admixture of the sea, in the form of Leviathan, with religion. As with other Gillray Anti-Jacobin prints, the vision of revolutionary takeover revolves around the hellish inversion of all accepted codes of order and tradition. The scene is set in St. Paul's, converted to a temple of Reason. The details of the image are too complex to go into here, but what is remarkable in this context is that way that this atheistic conversion results in the sea, just as in Marlow's *Capriccio*, flooding the Cathedral, the water here extending right up to the altar steps, and that the forces of British Republicanism (and therefore, in Gillray's eyes, of treachery and disloyalty) are envisaged as the Biblical sea monster, Leviathan. There is a direct

⁵⁹ BMC 9240.

thematic correlation between this view of the Foxite opposition, and Gillray's coastal scene of them six months earlier as wreckers of the nation (fig.128).

It was common enough in the middle of the decade to portray the Duke of Bedford as a Leviathan. Isaac Cruikshank's *The Modern Leviathan!!*, of 1796,⁶⁰ picking up the theme of *The Contrast* (fig.97), opposes the upright figure of Burke, the figure of erudition seated against an oak tree, with Bedford in the form of a large dolphin-like creature, swimming in the 'Ocean of Royal Bounty', and spouting streams of water inscribed as 'Cromwellism', 'Envy', 'Leveling' [*sic*], 'Orleanism', 'Revolutions', 'Egalité', and 'Democracy'.

These references indicate the very specific meanings of Leviathan in the 1790s. On the one hand, and consistent with the widespread understanding of contemporary political events in an apocalyptic light which we have seen in the work of Louthembourg, West and others, the Biblical account of the monster has a distinct poetic resonance for the cultural concerns of the period:

Out of his mouth go burning lamps,

And sparks of fire leap out.

Out of his nostrils goeth smoke,

As out of a seething pot or caldron.

His breath kindleth coals,

And a flame goeth out of his mouth.

....

He maketh the deep to boil like a pot

....

⁶⁰ Published S.W. Fores, 8 March, 1796. BMC 8788.

Upon earth there is not his like,
 Who is made without fear.
 He beholdeth al high things:
 He is a king over the children of pride.⁶¹

On the other hand, Leviathan's more pointed political significance, which Cruikshank and Gillray directly invoke, is that of Hobbes' notorious political treatise, in which Leviathan is directly identified as a form of commonwealth:

by Art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMON-WEALTH, or STATE (in latine CIVITAS) which is but an Artificiall Man; though of greater stature and strength than the Naturall, for whose protection and defence it was intended.⁶²

Gillray's print, therefore, combines both the Biblical and the political references, suggesting that the idea of the state as expounded by Hobbes is tantamount to a visitation of the Old Testament sea monster, at the same time amalgamating these with contemporary political personages and doctrines. The iconographic complexity of the print fits as part of the nationalistic discourse of the sea, in both its principal guises, in late eighteenth-century Britain: as a site of apocalypse and divine redemption, and as

⁶¹ Job 41, xix-xxxiv.

⁶² Thomas Hobbes, edited by C.B. MacPherson, *Leviathan* (Harmondsworth, 1981), p.81. The eighteenth-century reputation of Hobbes' *Leviathan* is indicated in Thomas Chamber's 1783 engraving after Hayman's *The Bad Man at the Hour of Death* (London, British Museum), where the volume of 'Hobbes Works' is conspicuously placed, along with Mandeville, Toland and Rochester, on the sinner's bookshelf.

the vehicle of pragmatic political commercialism. And it is contextualized within the sacred space of St. Paul's.

The sacralization of the sea involved in all these works, particularly in the implication of the figure or icon of St. Paul, is paralleled by the concomitant aesthetic elevation of the maritime, which is conspicuous in the monuments to naval heroes erected in the Cathedral and Westminster after 1798. For if the military isolation of Britain, combined with the mutiny, both rendered its relation with the sea a suspect one, and also necessitated an upward re-estimation of the tar, this was itself counterbalanced by the naval victories in 1797 and 1798 at Camperdown and the Nile, which appeared to reaffirm the divine mission of the nation. Clarke again, in his sermon of 19 December, 1797, 'to return Public Thanks for the Naval Victories of the Present War', says as much. Victory at Camperdown has come about through national faith in God:

entreating the God of our forefathers, to save us from a storm; which, whilst it has destroyed the fertile plains of other countries, and hurried its miserable inhabitants to into the depths of despair; has yet only thundered at a distance in our horizon, as the AVENGING ANGEL passed, to execute the judgments of God.⁶³

Yet it was also, Clarke emphasizes, brought about by the bravery of ordinary seamen. And once more he is compelled to challenge the conventional view of the common tar, highlighting his heroic instead of his dissolute nature:

⁶³ Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp.211-2. On the thanksgiving for naval victory conducted at St. Paul's see Linda Colley, 'The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820', *Past and Present* 102 (1984), pp.109-10.

Called up repeatedly during the night, when the lowering vapour, and the howling blast, would agitate the most decided resolution; with a presence of mind, that baffles all description, the hardy Mariner points out the track, where preservation may be expected. Feverish and languid from want of rest; from occupation that allows not of the least cessation; surrounded by a treacherous element; amid thirst and hunger! weariness and pain! - the instant that the tumult of battle commences, all is cool, steady resolution: While every sense of danger is lost in a sense of Duty, and the real Horror of the scene is absorbed in the animating hope of National Glory.⁶⁴

Here the tar has been accorded the same virtuous qualities as the hero of the shipwreck narrative, and his elevation, as it were, to the level of national martyr, to be celebrated at the altar of the sea, finds its visual counterpart in monuments such as Bacon's to Captain Edward Cooke, in Westminster Abbey, of 1806 (fig.131), where the figure of the sailor takes on the role of a latter-day St. James receiving the body of Christ from the Cross.⁶⁵ It is also noticeable how Bacon's design, like Banks' monuments to Captain Burgess and Captain Westcott, differs from earlier monuments, not just in the prominent place they give to the lower ranks or common sailor, but in the way the overall design, with its clearly defined and separated registers, echoes the articulation of the Renaissance or Baroque altarpiece. Below the principal scene in Bacon's design is a secondary tier with a roundel relief of the naval action in which Cooke died. This

⁶⁴ Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp.214-5

⁶⁵ The monument is illustrated and discussed in John Physick, *Designs for English Sculpture 1680-1860* (exhibition catalogue, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1969), pp.176-7.

operates in the manner of a descriptive 'predella', offset against the idealized heroic action shown above.

The same mode of idealization of naval action occurs in contemporary painting also, as the sublime, Deluge-like effects of Louthembourg's *Battle of Camperdown* indicate. But it is more noticeable in his later *The cutting out of the French Corvette 'La Chevrette' by English sailors, with portraits of the officers engaged, 21st July 1801* (fig.149).⁶⁶ This was painted for Fittler, who had engraved several of Louthembourg's designs for Macklin's *Bible*, and who also worked as an engraver for the marine artist Nicholas Pocock, thus providing a bridge between the two spheres of artistic activity. But unlike Louthembourg's earlier large-scale canvases of naval battles, there is less reliance here on precise anecdotal, descriptive detail, of rigging, figureheads, or the positions of ships relative to one another, and temporal accuracy. Instead, he

shows here no concern for the battle array of the vessels, but forces a segment of the action into the foreground. The bravery of man-to-man combat supersedes the patriotic conflict of nation versus nation.⁶⁷

The marginalization of the descriptive detail traditional to Dutch-derived marine painting, accentuates the heroic aesthetic language, and grand painterly style which such a subject could now command. The particular is suppressed in favour of the universal, expressed, as Joppien indicates, through the depiction of the battle as a series of man-to-man, gladiatorial contests; whereby, far from superseding the 'conflict of nation versus nation', the individual's struggle, in Clarke's terms, is referred to a

⁶⁶ Joppien, *op. cit.*, cat. no.71.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

higher general plane, in which 'every sense of danger is lost in a sense of Duty, and the real Horror of the scene is absorbed in the animating hope of National Glory'. This sense of the heroic is enforced in the painting by the poses of the principal figures, being clearly taken from classical statuary: the figure in white at the lower centre imitates the Borghese Gladiator, the standing uniformed figure to his left recalls the Horse Tamers, while the two figures at the foot of the bowsprit resemble the Borghese Gladiator (again, though from a different angle), and Laocoon.⁶⁸ Likewise, the disposition of the figures around the bowsprit and figurehead is again suggestive of a Deposition.⁶⁹ Indeed it appears that Louthembourg did not go to Plymouth to study the vessels concerned, where they were subsequently taken; so the composition relies to a greater extent than usual on the imagination, according to the academic prescriptions of history painting. In a sense, Louthembourg has produced an equivalent in battle imagery for the sculptural naval monument, or for West's Greenwich altarpiece.

The problematic identity of the tar has been resolved into the sacralization of the sea, through contemplation of which the self is revealed as a patriotic subject, and thus paradoxically, in one sense, not as a self at all, since the spur to duty connoted by the sublime sea and battle displaces the individual, physical, everyday sufferings of life at sea, in favour of the greater collective ideal of 'national glory'; just as the harmonious, integrated composition of Louthembourg's picture subordinates, through

⁶⁸ For illustrations and discussion of these sculptures, see Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500-1900* (New Haven and London, 1981), pp.136-40, 221-4, 243-7.

⁶⁹ Particularly Rubens' *Descent from the Cross* (1611-14, Antwerp Cathedral).

its aesthetic procedure, each individual element or figure to the formal demands of the overall design.

In this sense, it is not going too far to view Louthembourg's painting as a type of secular altarpiece, a devotional image to the national altar of the sea, such as that depicted in Smirke's and Cleveley's extraordinary, near-contemporary print (fig.74), which like the religious altarpiece offers itself as a vehicle for the revelation and redemption of the subject through the acquisition of faith:

On that Altar, which our forefathers reared to Liberty, the flame of patriotism arises! Around it, let every age and rank assemble: the Nobles, and the Rulers, and the Elders of the People, and take that oath, which the Genius of Britain proffers: - WE SWEAR, THAT WE WILL REMEMBER THE LORD! WE WILL FIGHT FOR OUR BRETHREN, OUR SONS, OUR DAUGHTERS, OUR WIVES, AND OUR HOUSES! AND WILL FIRMLY UNITE, IN THE PRESERVATION AND DEFENCE OF HER, WHO DWELLETH, WITH SO MUCH TERRIBLENESS, IN THE CLEFTS OF THE ROCKS; WHOSE RAMPART, AND WHOSE WALL, - IS FROM THE SEA!⁷⁰

With such intense ideological investment in the idea and value of the sea in Britain around the turn of the century, both militarily and commercially, as well as in terms of the construction of national identity, it becomes clearer, I believe, how its subsequent visual representation, particularly in the work of Turner, could bear such

⁷⁰ Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp.171-2.

multiple, elevated and complex meanings. I have purposely chosen not to discuss Turner's visualization of the sea at any length in this dissertation, since it would clearly require a separate volume. What I have concentrated on, and tried to demonstrate, is the 'thick' cultural history of the image of the sea, entailing the social dichotomies and oppositions surrounding the maritime and the merchant or 'middle' classes, in the second two thirds of the eighteenth century in Britain. Through navigation's central place in the development of commerce and commercial theory, to the theological, moral and imperial implications of shipwreck and related negative characterizations, the visual representation of the sea functioned at a wide variety of explicit and discrete levels to provide a commentary on the nature and significance of empire, and to assert and supplement the articulation of British national identity. The fact that such visual discourses could also be couched within the wider discourse of the objectivity of the map, an apparently unarguable image of British and European geographical expansion, supplemented by the empirically descriptive views of voyages of 'scientific' discovery, makes the subject distinctly problematic in terms of analysis. The sheer apparent obviousness of Britain's natural reliance on the sea deflects the commencement of any sort of analysis at all. What I hope I have shown is that, in the eighteenth century, the relationship of the nation to the sea was not obvious at all, but was the subject of a wide-ranging and contested debate about what the nation comprised, and what it ought to aspire to. The visual representation of the travel and the sea was produced dialectically, therefore, until, by the critical period and events of the 1790s, it was implicated in the ideological construction of subjectivity itself, and provided the means for self-revelation of the subject and the nation alike, and thus critically interleaved with the subsequent formation of the nature of Britishness. The conclusion to be drawn

is that the image of the sea was not merely secondary to, or passively illustrative of, the developing articulation of Britishness in the eighteenth century, but was actively central to it. To the extent that it may be claimed that, by the first decade of the nineteenth century, the image of the sea was at the heart of the nation.

Appendix

“All Ocean is her own’: the image of the sea and the identity of the maritime nation in
eighteenth-century British art’

published in

Geoffrey Cubitt (ed.), *Imagining Nations* (Manchester University Press, 1998)

Geoff Quilley

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Benedict Anderson’s proposed definition of the nation as ‘an imagined political community’ admits a potential for the functioning of non-verbal and non-literary signs and discourses in the construction of the idea of “nation”. The conclusion that the nation must be at some level imagined begs the question of what media and cultural channels provide the means for such an imagining to take hold. Bernard Smith’s book *Imagining the Pacific* plays on the linguistic proximity of the words ‘imagine’ and ‘image’ to suggest that eighteenth-century western imagery of geographical discovery in the Pacific operated at the centre of an hermeneutic circle in which the imagery was informed by pre-existing values of western cultural *imagination about* the Pacific, but served to provide a detached “scientific” appraisal, an apparently objective *image*, of the newly-discovered regions, upon which the imagination could feed. It is the premise of this paper that the pictorial image of navigation and the sea functioned similarly in imagining the nation in eighteenth-century Britain, giving visual form to a growing sense of political, economic and cultural community, but simultaneously stimulating its growth.¹

The connection between the rise of English art and the emergence of a coherent national identity in the second half of the century was taken as virtually

axiomatic by critics from the late eighteenth century on. From early in the century it was commonplace to associate the ambitions of the unified and prospering nation with the virtuous examples of classical Greece and Rome, asserting British claims as the true and uncorrupted heir of classical civilization, as well as establishing the norm in British commentary on art of using the arts of the nation as an index of its constitutional health. Writers from Richardson to Blake, but perhaps most influentially Winckelmann, stressed that the political perfection of the classical republic had produced the most perfect art known to the world, because it was created under conditions of individual political freedom.² The progress of the arts in Britain would reciprocally improve and secure the well-being of the nation, in two main ways. The adherence, in painterly practice, to classical principles of art, through the form of history painting and sculpture, would provide models of virtue for the edification of the governing members of society, which would constitute ‘the tests by which the national character will be tried in after ages, and by which it has been, and is now, tried by the natives of other countries.’³ Equally importantly, the development of a national school of art would contribute to the country’s commercial prosperity in real terms, the rise of commerce and entrepreneurialism itself being taken as a mark of the liberty of the “free-born Englishman”.⁴ The result of the impact of constitutional freedom upon commercial and artistic progress would be a day when ‘commerce round the world/ Has winged unnumbered sails and from each land/ Materials heaped that, well employed, with Rome/ Might vie our grandeur, and with Greece our art!’⁵ In 1762, at the apogee of British military conquest, and colonial and commercial expansion, that day appeared to have dawned:

whatever has been the complaint formerly, we have ground to hope that a new era is receiving its date. Genius is countenanced and emulation will follow. Nor is it a bad indication of the flourishing state of a country, that it daily makes improvements in arts and sciences. They may be attended by luxury, but they certainly are produced by wealth and happiness . . . At this epoch of common sense, one may reasonably expect to see the arts flourish to as proud a height as they attained at Athens, Rome, or Florence. . . . Our eloquence and the glory of our arms have been carried to the highest pitch. The more peaceful arts have in other countries generally attended national glory. If there are any talents among us, this seems the crisis for their appearance.⁶

The character of the connection between English art and national development has in recent years been the subject of much critical and historical scrutiny. The development from the first half of the century of a critical theorization of aesthetics and aesthetic sensibility has itself been taken as a paradigm of the bourgeois subject's civic participation in an 'imagined political community', whereby subjectivity is defined according to the individual's membership of a 'republic of taste':

Like the work of art as defined by the discourse of aesthetics, the bourgeois subject is autonomous and self-determining, acknowledges no merely extrinsic law but instead, in some mysterious fashion, gives the law to itself. In doing so, the law becomes the form which shapes into harmonious unity the turbulent content of the subject's appetites and inclinations. The compulsion of autocratic power is replaced by the more gratifying compulsion of the subject's self identity.⁷

In this critique aesthetic sensibility may be taken as a measure of, or even as synonymous with, social harmony, as conceived by bourgeois ethics. But the 'aesthetic law' was not wholly self-determining. It corresponded to universal values of good and evil, beauty and ugliness, virtue and vice. In this connection Eagleton cites Adam Smith's visualization of human society as 'like a great, immense machine, whose regular and harmonious movements produce a thousand agreeable effects', and in which 'whatever tended to render its movements more smooth and easy would derive a beauty from this effect, and, on the contrary, whatever tended to obstruct them would displease'.⁸ In its implication that there can be no such thing as a neutral social position, that the individual either contributes to the greater social good, or, in Smith's term, 'obstructs' it, this vision of society corresponds to the classical aesthetic doctrine that whatever does not add to the work of art, detracts from it. As Eagleton comments,

The whole of social life is aestheticized; and what this signifies is a social order so spontaneously cohesive that its members no longer need to think about it. Virtue, the easy habit of goodness, is like art beyond all mere calculation.⁹

If we accept this diagnosis of the imagining of the nation as fundamentally an aesthetic construction, it assumes an extremely complex function for the pictorial image both in it and of it. This is not the place to enter into detailed analysis of this proposition. But methodologically it presents two immediate advantages. First, the connection between aestheticization and nation offers a parity between political and economic factors and other less statistically tangible but no less influential practices in the arts or social sciences as ingredients in the construction of national consciousness.

Second, it facilitates an understanding of the nation as a discourse, rather than as a fixed and objective presence. Thus both eighteenth-century aesthetics, with its own internal discourse of, for example, the beautiful and the sublime, and the discourse of the nation as a political or socio-economic community may be seen to operate within an overarching 'discursive network' of the nation, within which each is inflected by and interacts with the other.¹⁰ This allows discussion of the nation to some extent to preempt the difficult problems of causation and development, which so often determine the analysis of nationalism. While, for example, E.J. Hobsbawm rightly disavows the view of the nation as a 'primary' or 'unchanging social identity' but with Gellner stresses 'the element of artefact, invention and social engineering which enters into the making of nations', he then goes on to assert that 'for the purposes of analysis nationalism comes before nations'; and adopts Hroch's 'division of the history of national movements' into three phases, from a minority and 'purely cultural' phenomenon to a mass political ideology.¹¹ Such a developmental approach to the nation, even for the purposes of analytical convenience, is highly problematic. Firstly, it gives undue priority to the identity of the nation in its purely political character, marginalizing other salient factors. Second, one might sensibly ask how nationalism could in any meaningful way precede nations. It might be equally productive to treat them as complementary discourses, whereby 'More than a style and doctrine of politics, nationalism is a *form of culture* - an ideology, a language, mythology, symbolism and consciousness - that has achieved global resonance, and the nation is a type of identity whose meaning and priority is presupposed by this form of culture.'¹² Third, and perhaps most importantly for the purposes of this essay, such an approach restricts the variety of ways by which a nation may be defined, especially *vis a vis*

citizens' defining criteria of their own national affiliation. One of the principal contentions of this essay will be that mass support for a national ideal might not be expressed solely, or even principally, in political terms. In eighteenth-century Britain, an ideology of mythic origin, of religious destiny, and geographical identity functioned to endow a disparate and fluctuating political community with a quasi-coherent sense of nationhood, often cutting across class and other distinctions.¹³

This paper offers a case study of the connection between the aesthetic and the nation, by considering some of the ways in which pictorial imagery reiterated and reinforced the long-standing nationalistic idea of the island of Britain being defined by its providential affinity with the sea. At one level this concern permeated imagery very discreetly and extensively. John Runciman's painting of *King Lear in the Storm*, of the 1760s, for instance, removes the scene from the theatrically proper heath to a painterly, imaginative, cliff-top from which Lear looks out over a raging sea and shipwreck, as though into a mirror of his own psychological and constitutional turmoil.¹⁴ But the specific genre of marine painting was also openly connected with national glory and the rise of a distinctive English art. As one contemporary commentator put it:

Marine painting in Vandervelt's taste is a branch of the art in which one need not be afraid to affirm that the English excel. And yet we must not imagine that there are a great number of artists in this, any more than in other branches. But when one or two hands become as eminent, as those who are now distinguished for marine pictures in England, are they not capable of giving a character of superiority to their country?

Every thing that relates to navigation, is so well known in England, and so interesting to that nation, that it is not at all surprizing to see them greatly pleased with marine pictures.¹⁵

This paper will propose that the explicit subjects of the sea and of navigation recur in images of the period more consistently and more significantly than has generally been supposed, that it can be closely related to ideologies of commerce and patriotism, and that it figured importantly in the construction of a multifaceted and complex, but homogeneous, idea of nation. I shall conclude by remarking an instance in painting and poetry of the early years of the nineteenth century in which the image of the sea becomes a transparent sign for patriotic identification with the nation.

At the same time as witnessing the rise of urbanized institutions, the 'revolution in communications', the increasing homogenization of language, the geographical integration of the country through surveys and road-building, and the fact of continuous warfare - some of the features by which Linda Colley characterizes the emerging sense of British nationhood - the eighteenth century saw a systematic theorization of the benefits of commerce for the prosperity and power of the country at every level.¹⁶ While political unity had been encouraged by the 1707 Act of Union and the defeat of the Jacobite threat in 1745, the ideology of commerce presented a structure by which society could be organized vertically through different classes. It predicated a social structure in which everyone found their proper place according to their merits, and formed connections based upon mutual help and dependence. In the commercial society, it was held, self-interest was inseparable from the interest of others, and thereby of the public nation at large, or even of the world. As a treatise of 1728 put it:

[commerce and navigation] enlarge our Knowledge of Persons and Things, relieve our Wants, and give us the Advantage and Benefit of every Climate. They join the most distant Regions, to their mutual Profit: they make even our Antipodes to be our Neighbours . . . we have the Advantage of Inventions and Improvements of every Nation: And every Man is enabled, according to his Ingenuity, to do something for his own Benefit; and to assist his Neighbour in doing what may make his Life more happy and easy.¹⁷

The character of the emerging nation was therefore a commercial one, by which it would be aggrandized, and its unique constitution and freedom preserved. Through the association of the fundamental principles of the state with an ideology of commerce, the national identity implicitly acquired a global and maritime dimension. Despite being tainted, in the civic humanist tradition, with ideas of luxury, corruption and civic debilitation,¹⁸ commerce's increasing ideological sway as the century progressed could thus be easily grafted onto the pre-existing mythology of the country as the 'sceptr'd isle', a state providentially defined by its natural geography. To advocate a policy of commerce was simply to submit to the scheme of nature. Bolingbroke put it succinctly:

The situation of Great Britain, the character of her people, and the nature of her government, fit her for trade and commerce. Her climate and her soil make them necessary to her well being. By trade and commerce we grow a rich and powerful nation, and by their decay we are growing poor and impotent. As trade and commerce enrich, so they fortify our country.

The sea is our barrier, ships are our fortresses, and the mariners, which trade and commerce alone can furnish, are the garrisons to defend them.¹⁹

Such rhetoric of patriotism received reciprocal popular support in prints such as *St. George for England* of 1781 after an original picture exhibited in the 1762 Society of Sign Painters exhibition, where it was one of seven depictions of titular saints of European nations, *The Renowned Seven Champions of Christendom, from an entire New Design (fig. 1)*. It was the only one which refrained from indulging in pejorative national stereotyping. In the opinion of a contemporary reviewer, the whole series was

A Capital Piece.- . . . St. George is an English Sailor, mounted on a Lion, with a Spit [by Way of Lance] bearing a Sirloin of Beef in one Hand, and a full Pot of Porter, marked *Only Threepence a QUART*, in the other. By the Lion's Foot are two Scrolls, like Ballads, the one inscribed, O the Roast Beef of Old England; the other, Hearts of Oak are our Men.

By contrast, among the other saints,

St. David is a Taff, mounted on a Goat brandishing Leek in one Hand, and bearing a Cheese, by Way of Target, in the other.

But the greatest satire is of course reserved for the French:

St. Dennis is a Frenchman, mounted on a Deer, a timorous swift-footed Animal, with a small Sword, in one Hand, on which a Frog appears to be spitted, and a Dish of Soup Maigne in the other.²⁰

The context for such imagery was an exhibition which, whatever its satirical intent, was obviously staunchly lower-middle-class and artisanal in character, and

patriotic in ideology. Its unequivocal espousal of popular patriotism is exemplified by *St. George for England*, where the traditional chivalric (land-based) martial knight is transformed into one of Bolingbroke's 'garrisons', an ordinary Jack Tar mounted on the British lion, and armed not with a lance but with a pot of porter and the Roast Beef of England. It is a remarkably open identification of popular patriotism with the figure of the mariner and the sea, as well as a surprising inversion of the usual aesthetic identification of the hero by aristocratic or classical attributes. Similar confluences of the aristocratic and the vulgar, contingent upon the maritime national identity, occur elsewhere in the visual expression of popular patriotism. Gillray's 1793 engraving *The French Invasion; or John Bull, bombarding the Bum-Boats* (fig. 2) develops a complex compound image in which the map of England and Wales (though interestingly not of Scotland or Ireland) is anthropomorphosed into John Bull, who is in turn given the regal features of George III, the figure engaged in the far from delicate and refined act of repelling the republican invasion by shitting on it. But beneath the scatological surface of the joke lies an involved pictorial construction of national character and definition, which purports to be all-inclusive, both socially by integrating the king with the commoner, John Bull, and geographically by identifying this compound figure with the topographical limits of the kingdom. By exaggerating the disposition of the map for naturalizing the idea of nationhood, Gillray turns it into a rhetorical public address on a patriotic level. The synthesis of both the figural symbol and head of state with the popular typification of the ordinary Englishman, and then of these two with the map of England and Wales addresses both a larger corporate public but also the individual within it, and thus invokes the viewer's patriotic affiliations as such a figure within the nation. The important point here for the identity of the nation

is that its symbolic or imagined character is held to be coterminous with its physical topography, as defined by the sea, over which the exaggeratedly uninhibited physicality of the English character has dominion.

When coupled with the ideology of commerce, such a construction of national identity became inevitably endowed with a global dimension. The national character depended upon 'the conquest of Ocean'. And this was both a commercial and military necessity. The colonial and maritime triumphs of the Seven Years War were celebrated in numerous images, such as Hayman's *Triumph of Britannia* (fig. 3), which shows a common typology of Britannia as the consort of Neptune. The chariot is flanked by Nereids holding up roundel-portraits of the naval commanders of the war. This rhetorical structure even gained legal guise. Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* pronounces that 'the main or high seas are part of the realm of England, for thereon our Courts of Admiralty have jurisdiction.'²¹

A less belligerent and more consistent expression of the global aspect of the nation is provided by the image of the Thames, in which emphasis was generally placed on the river below London Bridge as both the starting and the finishing point of maritime commerce. The interest in the Thames as a literary topos, throughout the eighteenth century and beyond, in forms ranging from Augustan epic to topographical description, testifies to its cultural significance. It is consistently seen both as the embodiment of British liberty, and as the umbilical link between the territorial island and commercial globalism. Verse and prose accounts from early in the century onwards stress the seamlessness between the river's source in the heart of England, and its expansive entrance into the oceans of the world. The grand modernity of the commercial metropolis is exemplified by the Pool of London, typically populated with

forests of masts, 'On whose each tide, glad with returning sails, Flows in the mingled harvest of mankind', as Thomson writes. At the same time as it brings in the 'harvest of mankind', it exports British commercial and constitutional liberty. 'The day shall come' writes Pope in *Windsor Forest*, 'when, free as seas or wind, Unbounded Thames shall flow for all mankind', a sentiment echoed almost a century later in Thomas Love Peacock's *The Genius of the Thames*.²² For Peacock, the Thames is the national identity, flowing 'in freedom's sacred light'. It is the witness not just to the topography through which it passes, but to the temporal sequence of events which have made the land Britain. It is the memorial repository of every act of every 'peasant, warrior, prince, and sage' who 'Upheld their ancient heritage'. And British identity will cease only with the death of the river

Still shall thy power its course pursue,
Nor sink, but with the world's decay.
Long as the cliff that girds thy isle
The bursting surf of ocean stems,
Shall commerce, wealth and plenty smile
Along the silver-eddying Thames.²³

From about 1740 the mythical identity of the Thames became entwined with commercial theory, presenting the poetic ideal as a realizable social policy. Visual imagery was vital in forming this new image. Not only did the Pool of London and the docks become increasingly acceptable painterly subjects, but by dwelling on the bridge-building projects between the 1740s and 1760s at Westminster, London Bridge and Blackfriars (*fig. 4*), or on riverside commercial developments such as the Adelphi, painters confirmed the Thames as a paradigm of modernity. Marlow's painting of *The*

Adelphi, London, under construction (fig. 5) places the processes of building directly in the foreground, denoting the river as the economic and material provider of magnificence. Simultaneously, a mass of literature treated the Thames in a prosaic register, subjecting it to analytical and statistical description, legislative proposals and topographical recording, whereby its symbolic identity was overlaid with discourses of political economy, social improvement, and what David Solkin has termed ‘commercial humanism’.²⁴ Images commonly present the combined identity by showing the commercial activity of the river below the nationalistic icons of St. Paul’s or Westminster, naturalizing the river’s association with national commercial progress. Marlow’s *Blackfriars Bridge and St. Paul’s Cathedral, London* (fig. 4) is typical in providing a compositional continuity between the classical structures of the cathedral and the bridge, eliding both foreground and background into a harmonious whole, within which the church provides the national moral context for the modernity of the bridge, and vice versa. In this sense the very structure of the imagery can be directly related to the discursive structure of commercial theory.

We can demonstrate, for example, how the iconography of Scott’s *The Building of Westminster Bridge* of 1747 (fig. 6) conforms to the essays on commerce, taste and other social themes which were being published in contemporary journals. In an essay entitled *The Benefits of Human Society*, Johnson puts forward a vision of a society made harmonious by what might be termed a ‘division of consumption’. It is exemplified by London:

Not only by . . . popular and modish trifles, but by a thousand unheeded and evanescent kinds of business, are the multitudes of this city preserved from idleness, and consequently from want. In the endless

variety of tastes and circumstances that diversify mankind, nothing is so superfluous but that someone desires it; or so common but that someone is compelled to buy it. As nothing is useless but because it is in improper hands, what is thrown away by one is gathered up by another; and the refuse of part of mankind furnishes a subordinate class with the materials necessary to their support.²⁵

It is commerce, the Thames, which is the agent of this “trickle-down” effect where by every commodity and everybody finds their natural and proper place in a hierarchy of consumerism.

The ‘mingled harvest of mankind’. is stowed in the metropolitan ‘shops and warehouses,.. immense stores of every kind of merchandise piled up for sale, [containing] all the manufactures of art and products of nature . . .’ Johnson contrasts the lot of even the most prospering North American savage, in unsocial isolation, with ‘the conveniences which are enjoyed by the vagrant beggar of a civilized country’:

To receive and communicate assistance constitutes the happiness of human life: man may indeed preserve his existence in solitude, but can enjoy it only in society: the greatest understanding of an individual doomed to procure food and clothing for himself will barely supply him with expedients to keep off death from day to day; but as one of a large community performing only his share of the common business, he gains leisure for intellectual pleasures, and enjoys the happiness of reason and reflection.²⁶

The performance of each individual's share of the ‘common business’ cumulatively creates a common good which is, ingeniously, not commercial at all, but

consists of the leisure for reflection and reason, presumably to contemplate the merits of human society under a system of commerce.

Likewise, Scott's image has a discernibly similar structure serving similar ideological ends.

The viewer is placed at river level, and enters the picture by following it upstream from the bottom right corner. At the right edge are a group of lightermen and a barge laden with cargo. The principal foreground focus, however, is at the centre left, where a supply of timber has arrived at one of the many timber yards on the south bank. The stark tonal contrast and repoussoir of the crane and its hook act as a pictorial "hook" to catch the eye, as well as providing, in the narrow horizontal composition, a balance to the dominating structure of the sunlit Abbey, which is itself thrown into an almost equal tonal contrast by a bank of stormy clouds behind it. But these two visual centres are connected compositionally by the arches of Westminster Bridge under construction, providing a very effective device for uniting the two halves of the image. It takes the viewer by progression from the timber yard across to the Houses of Parliament and Westminster. The act of viewing over the picture surface is synonymous with traversing the river, a move enabled by the new bridge in both cases. Moreover, the structure of the image, as a continuous linear movement along a chain of different represented elements on the picture surface and into the pictorial space, invites an analogous thematic or narrative interpretation. The huge raw timbers turn into the masses of the timber crane. An association is then invited between this frame and the juxtaposed wooden scaffolding supports of the stone arches of the bridge. The linkage by material may be pursued from the stone bridge to the great stone structures of Westminster. Just as the bridge when complete will unite the political and

constitutional centre of the nation, sited on the north bank, with the commercial wharves and yards of the south (as well as with the naval centres further east at Deptford and Greenwich), so it also unites the mechanical activity of the boatmen in the foreground with the virtuous ideal of the “commonweal” connoted by the Abbey beyond. Indeed the inference is, that without the provision of timber from the lightermen and the merchants accomplishing their ‘share of the common business’ the bridge could not be built at all. The ideological structure of the image, as with Johnson’s essay, is one which completes a seamless shift from the particular to the general, the material to the abstract, the mechanical to the philosophical and political, from private commercial interest to publicly virtuous impartiality; a transition which, in the Scott, is identified with the Thames.

The river workers, engrossed in the task at hand, do not see the result of their labour (which, as the right-hand group shows, is not excessively intensive, and allows scope for leisure, as well as the consumption of luxury commodities produced in the colonies, in this case, tobacco). And the structure connecting the low labour of the timber yard with the elevated political and patriotic significance of Westminster is tellingly similar to that by which Johnson moves from a base culture of ‘popular and modish trifles’ and ‘a thousand unheeded and evanescent kinds of business’ to the ‘happiness of reason and reflection’. So in Scott’s painting the construction of the bridge, the material symbol of modern life realised by commerce, affiliates the private industry of the yard to the political public of Parliament. The bridge may be seen as a symbol of enfranchisement, similar to the natural meritocracy supplied by Johnson’s vision of commercial society. Such a connection is explicitly made in another essay,

this time by Hume, of 1752. *Of Refinement in the Arts* is particularly concerned to dissociate the refinement of the arts with a pernicious sense of luxury. He writes

where luxury nourishes commerce and industry, the peasants, by a proper cultivation of the land, become rich and independent; while the tradesmen and merchants acquire a share of the property, and draw authority and consideration to that middling rank of men, who are the best and firmest base of public liberty... They covet equal laws, which may secure their property, and preserve them from monarchical, as well as aristocratical tyranny.

The lower house is the support of our popular government; and all the world acknowledges, that it owed its chief influence and consideration to the increase of commerce, which threw such a balance of property into the hands of the Commons. How inconsistent, then, is it to blame so violently a refinement in the arts, and to represent it as the bane of liberty and public spirit!²⁷

Not only is the connection between mechanical industry and political liberty made explicit, but it is effected by refinement in the arts, of which Westminster Bridge was a celebrated example. Furthermore, the image which depicts it in such a discursive manner may itself be thereby taken as promoting 'liberty and public spirit'.

The appeal to an ideal of 'popular government', which is matched by the structure of Scott's image, as being directly proportionate to the effects of commerce on the independence of the middle and lower orders of society, perhaps gives a clue to the conspicuous contrast in the painting between the bank of lowering cloud and the radiant sunlight which appears to dispel it. The date of the picture, 1747, is only a little

later than the decisive repulsion of the Jacobite claim to the throne, a claim which was popularly identified with absolutism and arbitrary power. The emergence of a shining Westminster and calm river from a storm perhaps invites an analogy with the preservation from 'monarchical, as well as aristocratical tyranny' brought by commerce allowing the 'Commons' political representation through their acquisition of property and independence.

Clearly the characterization of commerce that I have given has been of its positive side. The building of Westminster Bridge, for instance, was politically contentious.²⁸ But I am concerned to concentrate specifically on its meaning for the formation of a national identity. Of course neither commerce nor patriotism were universally accepted or uniformly fixed values, but were widely and vigorously contested. The complexities of the discourse of patriotism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries cannot be dealt with here. Suffice it to say, that the triumphalist linkage of patriotism and commerce, exemplified by images such as Hayman's, was subjected to the social and ideological disruptions of the late 1760s and 1770s. When Wilkes and the reforming 'mob' could proclaim their cause under the names 'True Briton' and 'Patriot', and the American War introduced a fundamental division of patriotic loyalty, the sense of patriotism as a single value with straightforward correlations to the constitution and global commerce became untenable. As the *London Evening Post* put it in 1778, 'Merchants and genuine patriots are *not* synonymous terms.'²⁹

Yet while the discourse of patriotism could become appropriated by a radical agenda, in which its Roman republican derivation was brought to the fore, and therefore by the 1790s could paradoxically be held to indicate sympathy for the

regicide and democratic reform of the French Revolution, I want to end by suggesting that the sense of loyalty to the nation, so frequently invoked in loyalist propaganda of the 1790s and 1800s, was in part expressed by by-passing the question of the propriety of the term 'patriotism' (even though the term continued to be used by both loyalists and radicals), entrenching instead a cultural naturalization of the national identity, in which art and aesthetics, and particularly the image of the sea, played a crucial role, and which transformed the national identity from an area of political contest to a cultural fact.

Likewise, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the image of the sea became largely detached from the radical connotations of patriotism. If the discourse of patriotism had taken on a threatening meaning, then the highly politicized naval mutinies of the 1790s, particularly those of 1797, rendered the patriotic associations of the sea even more unstable.³⁰ Instead, the sea, divested of a specific political character, was transformed into a *natural* demonstration of the maritime basis of national identity, by which its providential and traditional character could become a subject of the perceptual study of nature within the terms of high art and aesthetics. Prints such as Gillray's *Britannia between Scylla and Charybdis* of 1793 (*fig. 7*) maintained the emphasis on the indivisibility of the maritime character and national security and liberty, above all when Pitt the Younger was at the helm of the ship of state, to steer Britannia between the rock of Democracy, to the port side, and the whirlpool of Arbitrary Power, to the starboard. But the increasing interest in the sea in the realm of high art provided a subject not only suitable for the expression of a naturally and quintessentially English art, but appropriate also to an individual sympathy with the nation 'imagined' by it.

Turner's painting *The Sun Rising through Vapour* of c.1809 (fig. 8) shows an almost supernaturally tranquil scene of a shore populated with local fishermen and women laying out their catch. In the distance is a man-of-war, its sails struck, emerging, like the sun, out of the dissolving mist. It appears to be a scene of security, plenty and optimism on the natural frontier of the nation, a sense encouraged by the fact that it was bought as the pendant to an earlier, explicitly patriotic image by Turner of *The Victory returning from Trafalgar*.³¹ Significantly the premise of the image is visual revelation. The scene is in the process of emerging to the viewer's sight.

Similarly, William Lisle Bowles in a poem of 1803, a few years before Peacock's *Genius of the Thames*, presents the marine view, like Turner's to the east, this time from Stoke's Bay, in the same metaphorical guise, but with an undisguisedly patriotic interpretation. And I suggest that the two share the same idea of nationalistic involvement in the image of the sea. Bowles, like Turner, also describes the undisturbed calm on the shore. His personal cares are dispelled like the mist:

every cross

Of upland life, and every heartfelt loss
 No more the mind with dark suffusion blot,
 But, like the clouds of the aerial haze,
 Silent and soft, and fading as we gaze,
 Stray o'er the spirit, and disturb it not!
 So, scarcely felt, the cares of life subside!
 But prouder feelings swell the PATRIOT's heart,
 When, stately o'er the morning tide,
 He sees the tall ships in their glory ride!

Each partial thought, e'en like the passing wind,
 Is gone - new triumphs flash upon his mind -
 Whilst to each meaner object senseless grown,
 He for HIS COUNTRY breathes, and lives, and feels, alone.

Just as Bowles' particular thoughts dissipate like mist to reveal the existential truth of the nation in the vision of the sea and ships, so in Turner's the ships emerge in the distance to form the central focus of the composition, around which the 'particular' foreground activities of industry and business revolve like satellites. Patriotic sympathy is not simply a revelation of a natural form, but resides in the visual - or, we might say, imaginative - faculty of the beholder, and perhaps more importantly, via the sense of sight, into the moral sensibility of the loyal individual. Turner around this time began to see his own act of painting as a form of navigation and voyage, investing the idea of the sea with his own personal aesthetic sentiment.³² And aesthetic expression is for both Bowles and Turner the realization of civic and patriotic sympathy. The 'compulsion of the subject's self identity', in which 'The whole of social life is aestheticized' and 'Virtue . . . is like art beyond all mere calculation', is united in this case with the self identity of the nation, defined by the sea. National identity and the individual's membership of the nation is here less of a political definition than an aesthetic one. On the contrary, the construct of the sea offered by Bowles and Turner, as a litmus test of patriotic sentiment, marginalizes the political, in favour of an appeal to the universal and universalizing moral forces of nature and, by implication, of God.³³ Loyalty to the nation is an act of sentiment and faith, indeed of revelation, and the expression of the identity of the maritime nation has changed, to become ineffably naturalized in the sea. No longer is the sea just a metaphor or vehicle for the

commercial and global destiny of the nation. It is the verifiable fact of the national character. For every loyal citizen the sea is the demonstration of their civic existence. And for every individual their own national identity is not simply the sea, but (forgive the pun) the way s/he sees it.

Captions/list of illustrations

1. Anon., *Saint George for England*, engraving, publ. 2 Jan. 1781, 22.0 x 23.3 cm., BMC 5942.
2. James Gillray, *The French Invasion -;- or - John Bull, Bombarding the Bum-Boats*, engraving, publ. 5 Nov. 1793, 32.2 x 24.5 cm., BMC 8346.
3. S.F. Ravenet after Francis Hayman, *The Triumph of Britannia*, etching and engraving, publ. 1765, 38.0 x 51.8 cm.
4. William Marlow, *Blackfriars Bridge and St. Paul's Cathedral, London*, oil on canvas, c.1788, 106.8 x 167.7 cm., The Corporation of London, Guildhall Art Gallery.
5. William Marlow, *The Adelphi, London, under construction, with York Water Tower and the River Thames towards Westminster*, oil on canvas, signed, 1771-2, 135.3 x 190 cm., The Museum of London.
6. Samuel Scott, *The building of Westminster Bridge*, oil on canvas, signed, 1747, 61.0 x 112.7 cm., New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.
7. James Gillray, *Britannia between Scylla and Charybdis*, engraving, publ. 8 April 1793, 27.4 x 34.7 cm. BMC 8320.
8. J.M.W. Turner, *The Sun Rising through Vapour*, oil on canvas, exh. 1809?, 69.0 x 102 cm., Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts.

¹ Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (rev. ed., Verso, London and New York, 1991), p. 6. Smith, B., *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992), p. The terms 'image' and 'imagine' signify, of course, within a deep history of aesthetic and philosophical thought in Western culture, discussion of which is beyond the scope of this paper, although it is highly relevant to understanding the ideological basis of global exploration and visual classification in the

Enlightenment. See Mitchell, W.J.T., *Iconology: image, text, ideology* (University of Chicago Press, 1986)

²The prime text is Winckelmann's *History of the Art of Antiquity* (Dresden, 1764): see Potts, A., *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1994), pp.54-60 *et passim*. For sources, see Draper, J., *Eighteenth-Century English Aesthetics* (New York, 1968); a useful selection is contained in Copley, S. (ed.), *Literature and the Social Order in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, Sydney, Dover, New Hampshire, 1984). For a comprehensive discussion of art's theoretical relation to civic society in eighteenth-century Britain, see Barrell, J., *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: the body of the public* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1986), pp.10-64 *et passim*.

³ Barry, J., cited in Smith, A.D., *National Identity* (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1991), p.86.

⁴ This, for example, was the main line of argument of John Boydell's 1793 speech to the Guildhall, proposing the pictorial programme for the Egyptian Hall. John Pye, in his retrospective survey of British art in the eighteenth century, also considers the integration of the practices of art and commerce to be undeniably the main motive behind the creation of a thriving British school: *Patronage of British Art, An Historical Sketch* (London, 1845. Facsimile reprint, London, Cornmarket Press, 1970).

⁵ Thomson, J., *Liberty* (London, 1738), Book V, ll.570-3.

⁶ Walpole, H., *Anecdotes of Painting* (3 vols., London, 1888), preface (1762), pp. xi-xii, xiii.

⁷ Eagleton, T., *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1990), p.23.

⁸ Smith, A., *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* ()

⁹ Eagleton, *op. cit.*, p.37.

¹⁰ This is, of course, a schematized application of some of the methods adopted by Peter De Bolla's *The Discourse of the Sublime* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp.4-27.

¹¹ Hobsbawm, E.J., citing Gellner, E., *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983) and Hroch, M., *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe* (Cambridge, 1985), in *Nations and nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality* (2nd ed. Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 10, 12.

¹² Smith, *op. cit.* pp.91-2.

¹³ See particularly Colley, L., *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (Yale University Press, 1992); Newman, G., *The Rise of English Nationalism, A Cultural History 1740-1830* (London, 1987). Of relevance here also, especially to the function of class mythology and ideology in 'imagining' the nation, is Wahrman, D., *Imagining the Middle Class: the political representation of class in Britain, c.1780-1840* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁴ Merchant, W. M., 'John Runciman's "King Lear in the Storm"', *Warburg and Courtauld Institute Journal* 17 (1954), pp.385-7

¹⁵ Rouquet, M., *The Present State of the Arts in England* (London 1755. Facsimile reprint, London, 1970.), pp.60-1.

¹⁶ Colley, *op. cit.*, pp.1-85

¹⁷ *Some Thoughts Concerning Government in General: And our Present Circumstances in Great Britain and Ireland* (Dublin, 1728), quoted in Wiles, R.C., 'Mercantilism and the Idea of Progress', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 8, 1 (1974-5), p.69.

¹⁸ See particularly the discussions in Pocock, J.G.A., *Virtue, Commerce and History: essays on political thought and history, chiefly in the eighteenth century* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.37-50, 103-23; *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition* (Princeton University Press, 1975), pp.462-505; on luxury, see Sekora, J., *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett* (Baltimore, Maryland, 1977)

¹⁹ Henry St. John, Viscount Lord Bolingbroke, *The Idea of a Patriot King*, in *The Works of Lord Bolingbroke, in Four Volumes* (London, 1st ed. 1844, reprinted 1967), vol. 2, p.414.

²⁰ *St. James's Chronicle*, Thurs., April 29 - Sat., May 1, 1762, p.3.

²¹ Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 4 vols. (Oxford 1765, facsimile ed. London 1966), vol.1, p.107.

²² James Thomson, *Liberty*, V, ll.58-9; Alexander Pope, *Windsor-Forest* (1713), ll.397-8; Thomas Love Peacock, *The Genius of the Thames: A Lyrical Poem in Two Parts* (London, 1810).

²³ *The Genius of the Thames*, p.111.

²⁴ Among the most important mid-century descriptions and analyses of London and the Thames were those by Strype (1755), Maitland (1756), Entick (1766). Besides paintings, there was a wealth of

related printed imagery, by Bowles and Boydell among others, as well as maps, the most illustrious being John Rocque's 1746 map of London. See also Phillips, H., *The Thames around 1750* (London, 1951). On 'commercial humanism', see Solkin, D., *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven & London, 1993), p.19 *et passim*.

²⁵ Johnson, S., 'The Benefits of Human Society', *The Adventurer*, No. 67, Tuesday, June 26, 1753, in Greene, D. (ed.), *The Oxford Authors, Samuel Johnson* (OUP, 1984), p.262.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.264-5

²⁷ Hume, D., 'Of Refinement in the Arts', in *Of The Standard of Taste and Other Essays* (Lenz, J.W., ed., Indianapolis & New York, 1965), pp.48-59 (quote p.57); see also Norton, D. F. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hume* (CUP, 1993), pp. 230-8.

²⁸ See Phillips, *op. cit.*; Hallett, M., 'Framing the Modern City: Canaletto's Images of London', in Liversidge, M. & Farrington, J. (eds.), *Canaletto & England* (exhibition catalogue, Birmingham Gas Hall Exhibition Gallery, 1993-4), p.47.

²⁹ The literature on this subject is vast. Among the discussions I have found most useful are those in Brewer, J. *The Common People and Politics 1750-1790s* (ser. *The English Satirical Print 1600-1832*, Chadwick-Healey, Cambridge, 1986); *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge University Press, 1976); Rogers, N., *Whigs and Cities: Popular Politics in the Age of Walpole and Pitt* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989); Colley, *Britons*, pp.80-5, 105-45, 178-81; 'Whose nation? Class and national consciousness in Britain 1750-1830', *Past and Present* 113 (1986), pp.97-117; 'Radical patriotism in eighteenth-century England' in Samuel, R. (ed.), *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity: Vol.1: History and Politics* (London & New York, 1989), pp.169-87 (quote, p.182); Cunningham, H., 'The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914', *History Workshop Journal* 12 (1981), pp.8-33.

³⁰ Dugan, J., *The Great Mutiny* (London, 1965); Royle, E. & Walvin, J., *English Radicals and Reformers 1760-1848* (Brighton, 1982), pp.80-92. For a revealing analysis of mutiny as cultural discourse, see Denning, G., *Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and the Theatre of the Bounty* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

³¹ Exhibited 1806?, oil on canvas, 67 x 100.3 cm., Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection; Butlin, M. & Joll, E., *The Paintings of J.M.W. Turner* (rev. ed. New Haven & London, 1984), cat. no. 59, pp.46-7. The setting (so to speak) of *The Sun Rising through Vapour* is not an identifiable one, but a pencil study of 1807 exists in the 'Spithead' sketchbook (see Butlin & Joll, cat. no., 95, pp.68-9), although the painting's view towards the rising sun suggests an east coast scene. Equally, the view of the ship from the shore recalls Turner's contemporary views of Sheerness, for example, *Sheerness as seen from the Nore* (exh. 1808, oil on canvas, 105.4 x 149.8 cm., Loyd Collection: Butlin & Joll, cat. no. 76).

³² Venning, B., 'A macabre connoisseurship: Turner, Byron and the apprehension of shipwreck subjects in early nineteenth-century England', *Art History* 8, 3 (September, 1985), pp.304-6.

³³ The idea of the sanctity of the sea is implicit in the formation of the maritime character of the nation, but is more openly expressed during the wars with France, particularly related to apocalyptic imagery. See Cottrell, S., 'The Devil on two sticks: franco-phobia in 1803', in Samuel (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp.259-74. Important relevant contemporary texts are Clarke, J.S., *The Progress of Maritime Discovery, from the Earliest Period to the Close of the Eighteenth Century*. Vol. 1 [no more published] (London, 1803); and, most revealingly in the contexts of loyalty and mutiny, *Naval Sermons preached on board His Majesty's Ship The Impetueux, in the Western Squadron, during its services off Brest* (London, 1798).

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Abbreviations:

HS - The Hakluyt Society

JWCI - Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes

NMM - National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

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