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Falsehood Flies:

Debunking the Myth of John Boydell's Printmaking

Falsehood Flies: Debunking the myth of John Boydell's printmaking

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Cover Image: Valentine Green after Josiah Boydell. *John Boydell, Engraver*, mezzotint, 1772. Trustees of the British Museum.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	
Introduction	1
Chapter One: Boydell's Beginnings:	
1.1 - Apprenticeship: Industry and Idleness in the Firm of William Henry Toms	6
1.2 - Academy and Autodidactism: Saint Martin and Telemachus	12
1.3 - Autonomy: Boydell as an Independent Engraver, and the London Print Market	16
Chapter Two: Boydell's <i>Collection of One Hundred Views in England and Wales</i> :	
2.1 - The Commercial Framework	21
2.2 - Topography as Tourism: Boydell's Suburban Vistas of London	25
2.3 - The Nascent Cult of the Picturesque: Boydell and the Welsh Mountains	31
Chapter Three: Debunking the Myth:	
3.1 - Contemporary Reception: Reviews of Boydell's Engraving	36
3.2 - Posthumous Appraisal: Coriolanus and the Spectre of Shakespeare	40
3.3 - Challenging the Prevalent Perception of Boydell	43
Conclusions	47
Notes	50
A Select Appendix of Artists and Engravers	58
List of Illustrations	61
Bibliography	62
Abstract	69

Introduction

“Falsehood flies, and truth comes limping after it; so that when men come to be undeceived, it is too late; the jest is over, and the tale has had its effect.” - Jonathan Swift, *The Examiner*, Issue 14.¹

Upon the opening of Boydell’s Shakespeare Gallery in 1789, an anonymous writer from the *Morning Post* claimed that the ‘enterprising Proprietor of these admirable works has done much for the Arts, and they in return (...) will keep his name in perpetual remembrance and regard’.² This statement became somewhat prophetic.

James Northcote wrote that his late patron ‘did more for the advancement of the arts in England than the whole mass of nobility together’, whilst the Prince of Wales, delivering a toast to Boydell authored by Edmund Burke, estimated his patronage to be greater than that of the ‘Grand Monarque of France’.³ Broadside publications ranked the ‘name of Boydell with the Medici’, whereas contemporary poetry framed him in the Colbertian mould, and idolised his efforts to reclaim some English pride amongst the ‘eternal reign (of) mawkish portraiture’.⁴ Further tributes invoked both Biblical and classical allusions. Boydell was labelled ‘the Great Leviathan’ and the ‘first English Olympiad’.⁵ He was titled ‘the commercial Maecenas’ in reference to the Roman statesman and patron of Horace and Virgil, whilst John Landseer’s *Lectures on the Art of Engraving* alluded to a comparison between Boydell and Mummius; the second-century praetor who filled Rome with the purloined treasures of Corinth.⁶

Certain conclusions may be inferred from these accounts. Whilst they are laudatory in their nature - and form a compelling testament to Boydell’s achievements - these statements veer towards the hyperbolic. Satirists of the time were quick to parody this, and in James Gillray’s *Shakespeare Sacrificed;-or-The Offering to Avarice*, the caricaturist submits additional examples of personification.⁷ In his etching (Fig. 1), the figure of Fame, balanced upon a monopteros, announces Boydell’s similarity to ‘Leo! Alexander! (and the) Psha!’ via the fanfare of a trumpet. By subverting the exaggerative quality of Boydell’s praise, Gillray’s print illustrates how such acclaim could prove detrimental. Yet as barbed as this attack may have been, the perpetuation of Boydell’s legend has arguably proven far more ruinous to aspects of his reputation. Amongst this degree of eulogy, the true figure of Boydell is in danger of being ensconced within the myth generated for him.

Boydell has become a victim of his own lionisation. Not only has this persona endured for centuries, but it has been codified by the ‘great man syndrome’ which still characterises studies of eighteenth-century English art.⁸ These accounts demonstrate that the contexts in which he is extolled pertain to aspects of Boydell’s publishing and patronage. Academia concerning Boydell essentially sustains these panegyrics, and focus upon his role in the formation of an export trade for British engraving, or his attempts to elevate an indigenous school of history painting through ventures such as the Shakespeare Gallery. Though this is relative, and research naturally follows the peaks in the vicissitudes of one’s career, the example of Boydell is rather exceptional, for such is the surfeit of his acclaim; it has had a directly adverse effect upon other facets of Boydell’s legacy. Summaries of him incline towards reductionism and make for a remarkably inconsistent read.⁹ Whilst some aspects have been scrutinised, others remain obscure, and the brief allusions to them often derive from sources whose very validity must be called into question.



Fig. 1. James Gillray, *Shakespeare Sacrificed;-or-The Offering to Avarice*

This concern has been voiced by Winifred H. Friedman and Sven Bruntjen, Boydell's principal biographers. Friedman exhorts that a closer examination of his profiles 'reveals an element of mythmaking at work', whilst Bruntjen concedes that sketches of Boydell contained within eighteenth-century periodicals are largely 'unreliable and depend heavily on anecdote'.¹⁰ A number of these narratives, casual and erroneous in their

nature, have subsisted. They are born from entertaining though inaccurate testimony, and were imitated by numerous other accounts of the time. In their propagation these stories are accepted as fact.

As a result, Boydell's legacy appears to have been subjected to two different strands of myth. The first results from the idealised conception of his figure following this later success, whilst the second stems from a series of false anecdotes featured within a number of his biographies. Although prescient in their prediction of Boydell's ensuing fame, the reviewer from the *Morning Post* could not possibly have accounted for the negative effect that such acclaim could cause, nor the level of falsehood that has likewise perpetuated. These factors may explain why a study of Boydell's printmaking has never been attempted. This constitutes a conspicuous absence in Boydell's scholarship, and is an issue which my work attempts to redress.

The engravings of John Boydell have yet to be examined in any depth. References to his art are often cursory, and function as terse sentences in biographical prologues. Once his character has been sufficiently fleshed out, the narrative shifts to endeavours for which he is traditionally famed. In the longer accounts which do exist, fiction and incongruity abound. An ironic dynamic is presented whereby the notion of myth and embellishment colour both the nature of his praise, and the cursory statements of his early career which result from their proliferation. His engraving is dismissed as maladroit and provincial, yet acted to raise the considerable capital with which Boydell began his career in speculative publishing. His work is frequently invoked as mediocre, but it is an opinion arguably formed by an over-reliance on anecdote, an over-zealous interpretation of Boydell's ambiguous and paradoxical tone, and a reductive analysis of contemporary sources relating to his art. Thus, the central purpose of this work is to debunk the myth surrounding the supposed ineptitude of John Boydell's engraving.

This work does not aim to heap unnecessary praise upon an already eulogised figure. The purpose is not to elevate Boydell's engraving to the level of practitioners operating at the height of the eighteenth-century canon, and any attempt to do so would be credulous. Boydell was far from the finest printmaker of his time, but his skill was greater than posterity dictates, and whether through coincidence or a startling alacrity, his work was at the forefront of several important developments which were emerging in British engraving. I will attempt to problematise the conventional view of Boydell, and to construct an alternative narrative concerning the historical significance of his art. In order to do this, I shall propose three approaches, loosely interwoven within a chronology spanning the central decades of the eighteenth-century.

The first section, situated in the 1740's, will investigate the beginnings of Boydell's profession as a printmaker. This represents an area of his biography especially disposed to conjecture and fancy. I will utilise Boydell's autobiographical notes, and substantiate them with contemporary sources to unveil the air of mystery which surrounds his introduction into the London art community, and the skills he accrued which enabled him to flourish within it. I shall begin by attempting to re-construct the figure of William Henry Toms, an individual likewise shrouded in obscurity, and elucidate Boydell's period of apprenticeship within his firm. To complement his training, Boydell also enrolled in the St. Martin's Lane Academy. My argument will portray the school as a nexus of creative development in England, and the vehicle through which Boydell established connections with the most ambitious artists of his generation.

In addition to his formal schooling, this chapter will explore Boydell's auto-didacticism, and assert that he adopted certain strategies of self-teaching which raised him above various contemporaries. Furthermore, I shall examine his establishment as an independent engraver, and outline the combative nature of the London print market for a fledgling printmaker. I will then conclude by assessing his initial publications, and by contrasting Boydell's aspiration to the identity of a liberal, creative artist amongst the persistent and constricting characterisation of the engraver as a skilled copyist.

The second chapter shall be devoted to a visual analysis and historical contextualisation of Boydell's most significant work: his *Collection of One Hundred Views in England and Wales*, c. 1755. Owing to the titular breadth of this series, I will employ a selection of Boydell's engravings in order to hone and nuance the inquiry. The discussion will largely be limited to Boydell's first four views of the Welsh mountains, and a range of his suburban vistas of London. Three theoretical paradigms shall then be applied in order to analyse these examples.

Rosie Dias notes that the framework of commerce is often applied to scrutinise aspects of Boydell's career, and statements relating to this series are of no exception.¹¹ The concept of finance as an analytical model is not only a little sparse, but it is sweepingly employed. In consequence, whenever the success of Boydell's engraving is acknowledged, it is tempered by reports which claim the cheapness of his work as the sole factor. This stance appears to be somewhat rudimentary, especially given that his printmaking emerged in tandem with the broader historical processes through which the arts were commercialised. In light of this, the first section of this chapter shall be consigned to expanding the scope of this commercial framework, whilst destabilising the opinion that his success was solely dependent upon the supposedly tawdry nature and pricing of his engraving. I will then attempt to reinterpret Boydell's views by exploring them via the concepts of tourism, and the nascent cult of the picturesque which was growing in mid-century Britain. This methodology may be more pertinent in explaining the success of his series, and will act to place it at a critical juncture of British printmaking.

Having suggested reasons for the popularity of Boydell's *Collection*, my final chapter shall explore factors relating to the critical reception of his engraving, and the perception of Boydell as a printmaker. I will begin by gleaning the native response to Boydell's work from an assembly of British biographies and sketches. The focus shall then switch to his continental recognition. This predilection for foreign commentary may seem odd, but during a period in which British collectors so seldom recorded their opinions of particular prints, the reviews of foreign periodicals and dictionaries form a vital and fascinating overview of Boydell's oeuvre. Mainland accounts also provide a source truly unimpeded by the anecdote circulated in domestic publications.

From his contemporary reception, I will proceed to analyse Boydell's posthumous appraisal. Many theorists draw a parallel between the growth of Boydell's publishing business and the decline in his activity as an engraver. They maintain that he had all but abandoned printmaking by 1760, but discrepancies arise. Contrary to popular discourse, I shall argue that reports of his retirement not only jar with evidence of his engraving after these dates, but that they conflict with the figure that Boydell actively promulgated through portraiture and the press, and the artistic identity which he seems to have coveted.

This work shall pool the conclusions from these sections, before analysing them in relation to my central research questions. The first line of inquiry will focus on the critical and commercial importance of Boydell's

engraving and attempt to ascertain why his views enjoyed such success. I shall determine Boydell's significance within the school of English landscape, and question the influence that he held upon later artists of the genre. The second strand will then consider aspects relating to the broader historicisation of Boydell's figure. Does such evidence corroborate the hypothesis that an element of myth and falsehood surrounds his engraving? Assuming this to be the case, I will then question if such facts are enough to support a revised interpretation of Boydell's career and character, or whether Swift's epigram has been realised, and the tale has had its effect.

Chapter One - Boydell's Beginnings

Apprenticeship: Industry and Idleness in the Firm of William Henry Toms

“Thus many Senseless flogging Fools,
Are Teachers of our Modern Schooles;
Tho' void of Learning, Wit or Parts,
Presume to teach the Lib'ral Arts”.¹²

Whilst John Boydell adorns the pages of most eighteenth-century artistic accounts, almost nothing is known of William Henry Toms. In contrast to Boydell, his hindrance is not misrepresentation, but representation itself, and he often exists as a mere adjunct in pithy remarks concerning Boydell's printmaking. Although once united as master and apprentice, they now represent antithetical poles in Georgian art history.

In order to illuminate a crucial period of Boydell's beginnings, the identity of Toms must be developed. Fractured evidence survives, but has yet to be collated. From these fragments I aim to offer an interpretation of Toms' character, as well as inferring the conditions of his firm which he implicitly harboured. This will then be supplemented by an overview of Boydell's fellow apprentices. Such factors will clarify the significance of Boydell's period of apprenticeship, and expound its subsequent influence upon his career as a printmaker. The need for an exploration of Boydell's beginnings is self-explanatory. Nothing of this sort exists, and his engraving must have been shaped by external stimuli. His apprenticeship thus constitutes the first strand of this investigation.

John Boydell was born in Dorrington, a village on the periphery of Shropshire, on the 10th January, 1719. The young Boydell was schooled in Stanton, but moved to Flintshire at the age of twelve where his father, a land surveyor, had established himself on the estate of Sir John Glynne.¹³ It was here that he was first exposed to prints, and Boydell's autobiographical notes state that he would often view the common sheet prints distributed by the Overton dynasty.¹⁴ This is also the time in which he first nurtured his artistic style. Boydell made pen and ink drawings of birds and beasts from books, and he speaks with modest pride of how he found 'constant employment' in giving his sketches to admirers from his neighbourhood.¹⁵ In 1740, a decisive moment took place which determined Boydell's career in printmaking. Upon discovering a print of Hawarden Castle by William Henry Toms, he was so struck by admiration for the work that he wrote to the artist. Toms subsequently offered to take Boydell on trial, and he was bound apprentice for a period of seven years soon after.

Little is known of Boydell's apprenticeship. Manuals concerning the education of young engravers maintain that they were persistently employed in drawing, so as not to neglect the practice, and Boydell's notes testify that he made drawings after Claude and Poussin.¹⁶ His first attempt at printmaking was an etching after David Teniers now in the British Museum.¹⁷ Although Boydell's autobiography omits any further mention of his own works, it provides an insight into the conduct of his colleagues. This testimony presents an invaluable source to elucidate the climate of Toms' firm, and the figure who presided over it.

William Henry Toms published a diverse range of works from his Union Court address. His principal output was military and naval plans, but he also engraved county seats, cartographical schemes and caricatures after Egbert van Heemskerck.¹⁸ Whilst examples of his printmaking have endured, the biography of Toms is difficult to construct, for few contemporary sources allude to his character. As a result, an interpretation must be offered through snippets which pertain to his lifestyle and professionalism. Toms' correspondence with the Reverend Francis Blomefield offers just such a reserve, and establishes a rare glimpse into his working habits. Blomefield was the historian of Norfolk, and commissioned Toms to reproduce a number of engravings in order to illustrate a chronicle of the county.¹⁹ The ensuing dialogue between historian and engraver illuminates certain aspects of the latter.

Their communication begins in April, 1735, with an order for a plate of the monument to Edmund Hobart in Norwich Cathedral. Blomefield then submitted three letters, progressively sterner in tone, enquiring about its progress. These were ignored, but Toms delivered a proof in August of the same year. Evidently pleased with his efforts, Blomefield commissioned a second plate of the Robert du Bois memorial in Fersfield Church. Once more, this was subject to delay, and his subsequent letters attempting to harry Toms were again unanswered. The finished work was supplied on January 3rd, 1736, but was accompanied by a vastly inflated invoice and a somewhat blasé statement of his continuing availability. Blomefield responded by drafting a letter of dismissal, and requesting reimbursement. He then had Francis Hoffman engrave the remaining plates.²⁰

This exchange presents Toms as an unprofessional character. His skill supposedly pleased Blomefield, but his unpunctuality incited admonishment. The pretext of a heavy workload, which may have redeemed Toms, is invalidated by a brief survey of his works from the period. He engraved the frontispiece to John Barrow's *Dictionarium Polygraphicum*, 1735, and the head and tailpieces to John Theobald's translation of *The Aeneid*, published between 1736 – 9.²¹ Throughout the same years he released a series of views after Robert West which depicted the ancient churches of London and its parishes, but this appears to have been a venture initiated by Toms after his contract was terminated with Blomefield.²²

Samuel Redgrave suggested his death to have occurred in 1750, but this date must be questioned.²³ According to Horace Walpole, the brother of Toms was an admiral, and William inherited a fortune from him in March, 1763.²⁴ Irrefutable evidence is then provided by an issue of the *Lloyd's Evening Post*, September 11th, 1765, in which Toms features within the list of obituaries. There is a sizeable gap between Redgrave's estimation and the actual date of Toms' death. This disparity arguably results from the fact that Toms had all but withdrawn from engraving, and Timothy Clayton offers a theory to account for such a sudden wane.²⁵ In 1748, Toms moved to an address at The Golden Head in the Old Bailey. Clayton attributes this relocation to his escalating alcoholism, and the plethora of shady inns and gin shops which defined that region of London.²⁶ Problems with intemperance could certainly provide an explanation for Toms' diminished activity, and this premise is substantiated by Boydell's autobiographical notes. Boydell writes that he was 'subject to be in Liquor, and very Outrageous'. He would strike his servants, and beat the wainscot with his fist. At such times Boydell 'kept out of his way, well knowing that arguing with a man of that kind would be to no purpose.'²⁷ His tone is apprehensive and irreverent, and the relationship between them does not seem to echo the conventional dynamic of master and pupil.

Though they are but fragments, Toms is represented as a volatile drunkard who was gifted but indolent, and sporadically employed. In view of this, he looks to have been an injurious role model, and his *Satire on School-masters* after Egbert van Heemskerck takes on a level of ironic pertinence (Fig. 2). Like the verse which letters the plate, and the epigram which precedes this section, Toms appears as a ‘Senseless flogging Fool’, and his workshop; a scene of farce. This view is supported by investigating the apprentices that Toms hired, and the conditions of his firm which he tacitly sanctioned.²⁸

The first of these apprentices was Jean-Baptiste Claude Chatelain. Chatelain had worked with Toms to produce engravings after William Bellers. He collaborated with James Mason on his *View of the Head of Ulswater*, and was employed as an intermediary draughtsman upon the Buck prospects of Westminster and London.²⁹ Arthur Pond also contracted Chatelain to execute a plate for his *Italian Landscapes* in 1740. However, Pond’s journal of expenses reveals that the work was unfinished, and that Francis Vivares was paid an additional fifteen shillings for completing the commission.³⁰

The Pond example is perhaps symptomatic of his working habits, for Chatelain only appears to have been active when necessity forced his hand. This is revealed by the infrequency of his output, which is in part clarified by an anecdote related by his biographer, Joseph Strutt. Chatelain lived in an old house near Chelsea. It was said to have belonged to Oliver Cromwell, ‘which he took in consequence of having dreamed that he should find a treasure there.’ Possessed by this idea, he was believed to have spent entire days, prone upon his face, listening if the shaking occasioned by the carriages would reveal the jingling of coins. ‘Sometimes he would work in pulling up the floors, searching behind the wainscot, and removing walls, in quest of this hidden treasure, till he so blistered and bruised his hand, he could not work for a considerable time.’³¹

Stutt’s account of the artist juxtaposes virtuosity with degeneracy.³² Boydell adopts a similar stance, and though he identifies Chatelain as a ‘very ingenious man’, he then reproaches the elements of vice in his behaviour.³³ Having completed his training, Chatelain received one shilling an hour from Toms for his work.³⁴ However, Boydell states that he ‘would often come for half an hour, receive sixpence, (and) go and spend it amongst bad women in Chick Lane and Black-boy Alley.’³⁵ Strutt also observes the artist’s profligate nature, and remarks that his appetite extended to more traditional forms. He writes that ‘Chatelain was so great an epicure, that if by accident he earned a guinea, he would immediately go to a tavern, and lay, at least, half of it out on a dinner.’³⁶ Epicureanism is perhaps a polite euphemism for his lifestyle, and proved to be the cause of his death. In his memoir, John Thomas Smith recalls the extravagant circumstances of the event. Renowned for his self-indulgence, Chatelain is thought to have collapsed at the White Bear Inn at Piccadilly after a characteristic bout of gluttony.³⁷

Chatelain’s example seemed endemic within the firm. Boydell recalls an anonymous apprentice, bereft of both identity and breeches, who came to work in a ‘plod Gown’. He likewise spent his money as he received it, and was last seen by Boydell in ‘a shed in Clerkenwell Church Yard’ having drowned in the New River.³⁸ Peter Toms, son of William Henry, was also subject to certain ‘extravagancies of manner’, and although he pursued a career in painting, he often frequented his father’s workshop. Joseph Farington relays that ‘at times he would strip himself & rub his body furiously from a notion that the circulation of the blood was stopping: at other times would lay in bed many days together believing himself to be much disordered.’³⁹ If not indolent, nor the

product of his environment, his actions were somewhat neurotic and would hardly have inspired the fledgling figure of Boydell.⁴⁰



Fig. 2. W. H. Toms after Egbert van Heemskerck, *A Satire on School-masters and School-mistresses*

Finally, Boydell examines the snuff addiction of Louis Philippe Boitard, who assumed the capacity of a journeyman in W.H. Toms' firm. He states that Boitard's snuffbox 'always lay by him' and was utilised every

ten or twelve minutes. He then estimates that ‘one quarter of his time was wasted’ with this practise.⁴¹ In spite of this indulgence, Boitard looks to have led a productive, diverse, and reputable career. Early works attributed to him include several sets of hunting scenes, and ambassadorial portraits of Mehemet Effendy Tefterdar and Said Pacha Beglierbey de Roumely.⁴² He worked on the Knapton edition of Bernhard Siegfried Albinus’ *Tabulae Sceleti et Musculorum Corporis Humani*, and was employed by Dr. James Douglas and Dr. John Woodward on similar anatomical projects. He was actively involved in the book trade, and produced engravings for numerous mid-century publications.⁴³ Robert Sayer’s 1766 catalogue also contains a list of sixty-one *Designs in Miniature for Watchcases* by the artist. These include watch-papers illustrating John Beard and Charlotte Brent in the characters of *Thomas and Sally*, as well a minute version of Sir Joshua Reynolds’ portrait of Miss Nelly O’Brien.

The form of dependency that Boitard exhibited does not appear to have blemished his reputation, and in 1748, a correspondent from *The Universal Magazine* listed him as one of the few ‘excellent hands’ working in the city.⁴⁴ One questions if the tobacco habit was beneficial to his output; or the degree to which his distinction may have risen were he freed from it. One also speculates if the addiction was adopted, or merely nurtured, in the lax environment of Toms’ workshop.⁴⁵

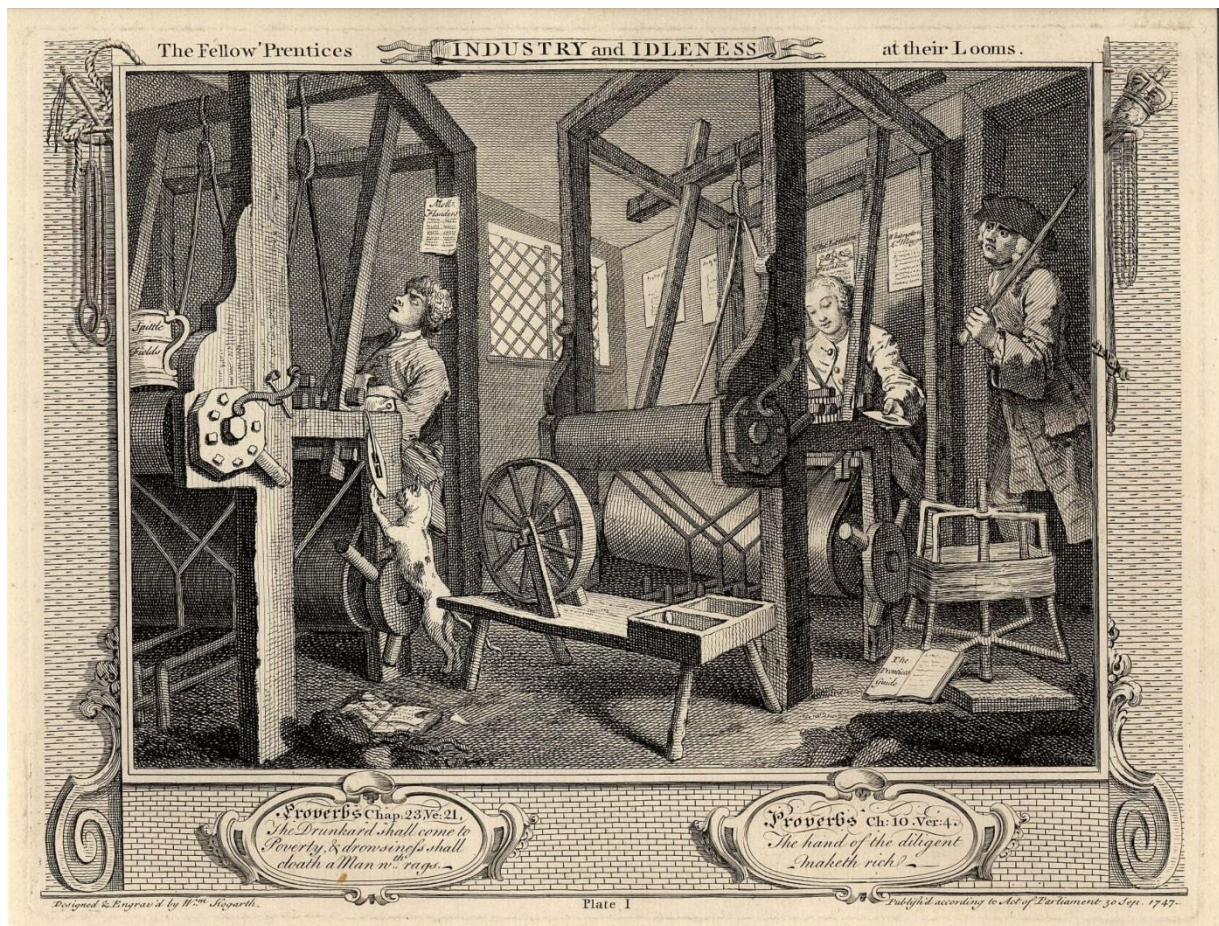


Fig. 3. William Hogarth, *The Fellow Prentices at their Looms*

The respective success of Boitard and Boydell seems to have been rather exceptional in a setting which appeared more conducive to depravity. Reference can be made to William Hogarth’s *Industry and Idleness*, as

the series provides an accurate model for the contrasting projections of certain careers. Several commentators have recognised a comparison between Boydell and Hogarth's character of Francis Goodchild, yet the accusation of indolence and disarray has not been levelled towards his co-workers, nor his master, even though several candidates for the position of Thomas Idle emerge.⁴⁶ Like the proverbs which accompany *The Fellow 'Prentices at their Looms* (Fig. 3), the 'hand of the diligent' was indeed rendered rich, whilst the drunk and the drowsy were eventually clothed in rags.

Academy and Autodidacticism: Saint Martin and Telemachus

If the significance of John Boydell's apprenticeship is to be belittled, then his subsequent rise cannot be explained by diligence alone. An investigation is required into the other methods of formal schooling that he turned to, and the strategies of autodidacticism which he adopted in order to aid his rise within the community. The most important vehicle for Boydell's artistic advancement was provided by The St. Martin's Lane Academy. In this respect he is unequivocal, and writes in his autobiography that the Academy tended 'more to (his) improvement than any other method'.⁴⁷ For an annual subscription of two guineas the Academy was operational for five nights of the week.⁴⁸ The unremitting industry of Boydell was apparent, and upon finishing his daily shift with W. H. Toms, he attended every class offered.

As with most material relating to Boydell's beginnings, elements of conjecture and falsehood impinge upon the accounts. Information regarding the St. Martin's Lane Academy is no different, and proves to be somewhat obscure. Although William T. Whitely observed that the Academy's documentation was still circulating in 1813, it has since been lost.⁴⁹ Martin Postle also convincingly argues that a painting purchased by the Royal Academy in 1885, long assumed to have been by William Hogarth and depicting the drawing room of St. Martin's Lane, is in fact a nineteenth-century pastiche.⁵⁰ Therefore, opinions generated from this work should be disregarded. In view of this, the general structure and influence of the institution must be construed from more reliable sources.

The notebooks of George Vertue refer to the creation of an 'Accademy for Life sett up in St. Martin's Lane' in the winter of 1735.⁵¹ The school supplanted a similar venture founded in 1711 by Sir James Thornhill, and the more provincial drawing classes which were directed by John Vanderbank and Louis Chéron in 1720. Neither project endured. Whilst the subscription money for Thornhill's academy was embezzled by the treasurer, Vanderbank fled to France in order to abscond from his own creditors.⁵² Though the St. Martin's Lane Academy was established under the aegis of Hogarth, it bore reference to its precursors. Thornhill was Hogarth's father-in-law, and bequeathed a variety of drawing equipment to him upon his death in 1734. The Academy was also believed to have been held in the same site as Vanderbank's earlier scheme; a converted Presbyterian chapel on Peter Court.⁵³

Although the exact organisation of the school is indistinct, Boydell submits an indication of its format through his writings. In contrast to continental academies, both male and female models were employed throughout the season. The man posed for three of these evenings; the woman two.⁵⁴ Life drawing was of axiomatic importance to numerous genres of art. The lessons granted Boydell an opportunity to hone his abilities so that the figures which inhabit his scenes could be accurately represented. Artists worked in 'black and white Chalk upon silk stained Paper' and formed concentric circles around the nude figure. The seating arrangement was determined by chance, not by some prearranged criterion, as students drew numbers from a box, and then occupied the corresponding position.⁵⁵ Egalitarianism and informality appeared to be the hallmarks of the institution, and were dynamics which encouraged communality. Martin Myrone alludes to the significance of the school when he asserts that it not only granted 'essential facilities for practical training' but offered 'opportunities for social cohesion within the nascent art community'.⁵⁶

In his account of the Academy, Hogarth vilified the notions of superior and inferior amongst the subscribers, whereas Jean André Rouquet invoked an ideal of English libertarianism, and stated that ‘each (man) was his own master; there was no dependence’.⁵⁷ The impartial nature of the establishment is also echoed in modern academia. Iain Pears remarks that a ‘determined democracy’ pervaded the Academy, whilst David Solkin declares that the school extolled ‘a club-like ethos’ amidst a self-regulating community of equals.⁵⁸ This testimony presents an environment in which established professionals mixed with students. Free from hierarchical stricture, the democratic organisational model afforded an invaluable network for the young Boydell. It provided a setting through which Boydell could interact with the most skilled artists and engravers of his generation, and he soon perceived ‘by the experience of some who had been abroad and by others who had much practise here, that much was to be learned from their discourse’.⁵⁹

The members of the Academy formed a microcosm; a critical mass which enabled artistic developments to have a direct and widespread impact upon the circle of peers within the society. Boydell alludes to this dynamic, and wrote that certain conversations he held in the Academy convinced him of avenues to pursue which led to his advantage.⁶⁰ Though he attests to the influence of others, Boydell does not identify them by name, but insinuates that their dialogue inspired the views of London which he began soon after his separation from Toms in 1746. Interestingly, Boydell was not alone in treating the subject. Ilaria Bignamini has amassed a comprehensive index of the Academicians, and from this inventory, a number of engravers emerge who soon engaged in concurrent projects.⁶¹ Although it should not be overstated, one can speculate that as a social vehicle, the Academy exerted a profound influence upon Boydell’s printmaking. For its convivial atmosphere and artistic interchange, the setting was unique. Sheila O’Connell demonstrates that it was through the Academy that the Rococo style was introduced to Britain, and by the same logic, the school was arguably the epicentre for the glut of London views which dominated the print market of mid-century England.⁶²

When Boydell remarked that the St. Martin’s Lane Academy tended ‘more to (his) improvement than any other method’, it seems rife with understatement.⁶³ The institution looks to have provided Boydell with an immediate stimulus for his printmaking, and cultivated working relationships which would come to define his career. An examination of the Academy demonstrates the importance of formal schooling for Boydell. However, his ascendancy within the artistic community was a result of both collective and individual powers, and one discovers that certain strategies of informal learning proved similarly profitable.

In his autobiography, Boydell reveals the key components of his self-instruction. The first relates to perspectival drawing, as Boydell exhorts:

‘(I) was desirous to draw views of various places myself and to Engrave them; I was sensible that I could not do it without having a knowledge of Perspective and I was resolved to learn the rudiments of that Art’.⁶⁴

Whilst he is not explicit, it is plausible that Boydell was taught the ‘rudiments’ of perspective at an early age. He affectionately recalls how he used to carry one end of his father’s surveyors chain, and of the ‘various Schools and Employments’ he attended in order to aid his improvement in the profession.⁶⁵ An education in mathematics and conveyancing had primed Boydell to follow in his father’s vocation. Though this would not materialise, the training granted to prospective surveyors and engravers shared certain commonalities. Benjamin

Donn, the director of a contemporary mathematical academy in Bristol, lists an example of the curriculum that Boydell likely undertook. In addition to subjects such as altimetry and hydrostatics, students were taught optics, mensuration, geometry and perspective.⁶⁶ Boydell could also have gleaned a basic knowledge of proportion from the canonical surveying textbooks of the eighteenth-century.⁶⁷

Boydell's early schooling proved to be a useful foundation for his later landscapes, though it required augmentation.⁶⁸ Joshua Kirby delivered lectures on perspective at the St. Martin's Lane Academy in the 1750's, but by this point, Boydell was already commercially established. Whilst many of his topographical contemporaries appear on the subscription list for Kirby's *Dr. Brooke Taylor's Method of Perspective Made Easy*, 1754, Boydell's name is absent, for such knowledge was probably deemed to have been superfluous to him. In one of the chief methods of his self-teaching, Boydell asserts that he had begun 'studying Books of Perspective' during the preceding decade.⁶⁹ Once again, he does not distinguish these works by title, but a number of texts were available to the willing reader. Andrea Pozzo's *Perspectiva Pictorum et Architectorum* was translated into English by John James in 1707; so too was Bernard Lamy's *Traité de Perspective* in 1710. Humphrey Ditton published a demonstrative and practical treatise on perspective in 1712, whilst the 'Jesuit Perspective' of Jean Dubreuil was widely circulated, and still employed in the lectures of J. M. W. Turner at the Royal Academy in the 1820's.⁷⁰

Although the translations of Lamy and Dubreuil littered the London market, Boydell could have read the works in their original form, as he complemented his knowledge of perspective by schooling himself in French. After concluding his training at the Academy, he returned home each evening at half past nine and studied the language for a number of hours.⁷¹ His primary tool in this undertaking was an edition of François Fénelon's *Les aventures de Télémaque*. He enlisted the support of a French grammar and dictionary, and by the conclusion of Fénelon's text, Boydell 'understood a great deal'.⁷² In regard to pronunciation, Boydell discovered a sermon preached in French at a foreign chapel in St. James. Repeated visits gradually perfected his elocution.

His routine was unflagging and exhaustive, but proved invaluable. French was the international language during the central decades of the eighteenth-century. The Latin titles that engravings displayed were slowly supplanted, and by 1730, most of the prints circulated in Europe contained French inscriptions. Those who were fluent were placed at a considerable advantage to their peers, for only a scarce number of English printsellers or engravers could speak French.

Contemporary anecdotes show that an ignorance of this language could cause both humiliation and financial loss.⁷³ However, the importance of Boydell's bilingualism far outweighs these pitfalls. Timothy Clayton recognises this, and writes that 'the rise of John Boydell was due in no small measure to his appreciation of the commercial value of mastering French'.⁷⁴ His linguistic proficiency enabled him to establish connections with the continental market. It also granted him the means for direct importation; a channel which was inaccessible to many of his indigenous competitors. Boydell speaks of the 'great service' that his correspondence with foreigners provided, and scholars such as Anthony Griffiths have demonstrated the significance of his collaboration with the Parisian printseller Pierre-François Basan.⁷⁵

Cognisant and industrious, Boydell appears to have stolen a march on his competitors through his methods of self-instruction. In terms of perspective, he had not only grasped the rules which enabled him to draw from nature, but had done so before a treatise such as Kirby's had been standardised, and assimilated into formal scholastic programs.⁷⁶ His knowledge of French proved similarly advantageous. Existing academia seems to limit the practicalities of Boydell's bilingualism to his publishing, but there are grounds to suggest that it was beneficial to his printmaking as well. This claim is lent credence by the fact that French inscriptions adorn a large quantity of his views. Such lettering not only infers that he planned to export his prints, but it arguably functioned as a marketing tool for domestic consumption. The concept of mutualism which the Academy tendered was offset by methods of autodidacticism which raised Boydell above various contemporaries. Such strategy was necessary if Boydell was to prosper amidst the combative nature of the London print market.

Autonomy: Boydell as an Independent Engraver, and the London Print Market

Like François Fénelon's *Telemachus*, in which the slender plot fills a gap in *The Odyssey*, this section will recount the initial publications of Boydell; likewise absent from his greater narrative. It shall examine his establishment as an independent engraver, and the historical context which surrounded his initiation within the densely populated constellation of artists, publishers and printsellers in London. Furthermore, I aim to outline the combative and hazardous nature of this environment, and conclude by contrasting Boydell's aspiration to the identity of an engraver-entrepreneur amongst the perennial and constricting characterisation of the printmaker as a subordinate craftsman.

Joseph Farington writes that after steadily pursuing his apprenticeship for six years, 'and finding himself a better artist than his teacher, he bought from Mr. Toms the last year of his apprenticeship, and became his own master.'⁷⁷ In 1746, he took lodging at the house of Mr. Wroughton; a stationer situated near Durham Yard in the Strand.⁷⁸ Boydell then began a wealth of reproductive printmaking, as if to examine the range of his expertise. These early works have yet to be compiled, though they heavily attest to the influence of Dutch art.

He engraved 'an excellent representation of *The Misers*' after Quentin Matsys; *A Country Wake* after Adriaen van Ostade, and a portrait of Reinier Anslou, the Anabaptist preacher, after Rembrandt.⁷⁹ Boydell copied a winter scene after Adriaan van Drever, *The Dutch Chymist* by Jan Steen, and *A Set of Sheep* after Nicolaes Berchem - presumably replicating the eight etchings which Berchem created for the *Animalia ad Vivum Delineata* (Fig. 4).⁸⁰ The manuscripts of James Hughes Anderdon also record that Boydell engraved a work after Edmé Bouchardon's sculpture of *David Killing the Bear*.⁸¹

Boydell counterbalanced these reproductions with original compositions of his own. His resolve to grasp perspective had paid dividends, and his catalogue raisonné testifies to four large plates 'Drawn after nature' in 1746.⁸² This date also marks the first major series of works that Boydell published after his own inventions. The collection was entitled *The Bridge Book*; owing to the fact that this structure was a repeated motif in his topographical works. It was comprised of six small etchings, and valued at sixpence.⁸³ In *Nollekens and his Times*, John Thomas Smith relays a conversation he held with Boydell. He confirms these details, and outlines Boydell's initial method of distribution. Smith states that he first circulated this series by consigning it on a sale or return basis to toyshops and silversmiths. His most successful outlet was a purveyor at the sign of the cricket-bat, in Duke's Court, St. Martin's Lane, and Smith reveals that within a week, Boydell had 'sold as many as come to five shillings and sixpence'⁸⁴

John Pye, a fellow landscape engraver, wrote that 'the encouragement bestowed on these works by the public induced Boydell to extend his plan'.⁸⁵ Profits amassed from *The Bridge Book* enabled Boydell to buy larger copper plates, and to dramatically widen the scope of his next publication. He capitalised upon his honeymoon to Oswestry by undertaking an extensive sketching tour across the central band of the United Kingdom. Boydell took 'several Views of Chester Castle and Town, Carnarvon, Conway and Mountainous Views near Snowdon'. He made drawings in the peaks of Matlock, Crumford, and Dove Dale, and then depicted the panoramas of

Oxford and Blenheim upon his return to London.⁸⁶ These designs formed the crux of Boydell's *Collection of One Hundred Views in England and Wales*.



Fig. 4. John Boydell, Title page to *A Set of Sheep after Berchem*

In 1751, and owing to the strength of his rising affluence, he moved to a larger property at the Sign of the Unicorn, in Cheapside.⁸⁷ This address not only presented Boydell with improved facilities to engrave his works, but offered a commercial outlet through which he could sell them. He was a self-contained artist who formed a riposte to the notion of the engraver as an accomplished, but compliant copyist. Boydell was skilled in graphic translation, though his models were not the works of Old Masters or the collections of connoisseurs, but his own creations.

The rise of engraver-entrepreneurs such as Boydell was stimulated by an era in which numerous developments were made to regularise intellectual property. This was particularly marked in the bookselling industry. Whilst the Statute of Anne (enacted in 1710) set in motion a process of copyright 'under the rubric of property rather than regulation', the *Tonson v. Collins* debate (1762) clarified this idea, and cemented the laws of literary ownership.⁸⁸ Similar legislation was vested in printmaking after a petition was presented to the House of Commons in 1735. This lobbying was done by a small faction of engravers who submitted a pamphlet, anonymously penned, entitled *The Case of Designers*. The printselling trade, as this group argued, was controlled by a cartel of 'shopkeepers' whose piracies restricted business, and punished artistic ambition.⁸⁹ Such allegations were soon verified by the Commons Committee. They thus ratified the bill, and bestowed a fourteen year term-of-protection upon the individual inventions of printmakers.

Whilst the direct consequence of the Copyright Protection Act was to make the plagiarism of engraving a legal offence, Mark Hallett writes that its ‘underlying effect was to codify a notion of graphic property that complemented the ideals of individual invention and entrepreneurialism.’⁹⁰ Engravers could now extricate themselves from the blueprint traditionally espoused by the trade. By working from addresses which blurred the boundary between workroom and shop, they challenged their commercial subordination, and excluded publishers from the distribution of their printmaking. When Boydell began his career, the statute had been in effect for a decade. It was the cause of a rapid expansion in print culture, and provided the impetus for a host of independent artistic producers.⁹¹

The enactment, however, presented a double-edged sword. Colloquially referred to as ‘Hogarth’s Bill’, the law inspired original graphic schemes and self-governed production - but in doing so - unwittingly encouraged the piracy it aimed to nullify. Numerous spates of plagiarism followed the Act, and Timothy Clayton argues that they were, in essence, retaliatory.⁹² It is something of a paradox, but piracy could be said to have truly ensued as a retort to the aggressive salesmanship of engravers who had been encouraged by the promise of legal protection. When denied the opportunity to sell original works, major publishing firms appeared to respond by finding the means to circulate further copies. Their command of provincial distribution provided one such avenue. Whilst most engravers struggled to market their works outside of the capital, the clout of the larger printsellers meant that ‘piratical tactics were particularly effective in the country,’ and went unpunished by legislation.⁹³ This is an example of the many loopholes which were seized upon by unscrupulous publishers.⁹⁴ Sven Bruntjen states that adequate protection was never fully afforded, and further amendments were made to the charter in 1766 and 1777 in an attempt to strengthen the law.⁹⁵

John Gregory Crace reveals that Boydell himself was a victim of plagiarism. He demonstrates that a version of Boydell’s *View of Westminster Bridge* (Fig. 5), bereft of lettering or attribution, comprised the fifth plate in John Bowles’s series entitled *Perspective views in and about London*, 1753 (Fig. 6). The series purported to reproduce the drawing of Gravelot, Rigaud, Heckell and Maurier, but evidently appropriated one of Boydell’s schemas.⁹⁶

Bootlegging was but one of the hazards which Boydell was forced to contend with, as the position of an independent engraver was far from secure. Irrespective of their violation of copyright, the Bowles and Overton families presented formidable competition.⁹⁷ It was their publications which first piqued Boydell’s interest in printmaking, and they remained the hegemonic powers when he later joined the profession. Their enterprises held a virtual monopoly over the commercial print publishing market. They consistently responded to the vicissitudes of urban taste, and the movements of their rivals.⁹⁸ A further element of competition was provided by localised clusters of French and Dutch immigrants. They formed an identifiable sub-group within the London book trade, and specialised in the importation of high-quality engravings from Paris, Amsterdam and Rome. Katherine Swift’s study shows that continental booksellers inhabited areas of the Strand, and established communities in the districts of St. Martin’s Lane and Leicester Square; the areas where Boydell first disseminated his works.⁹⁹



Fig. 5, John Boydell, *A View of Westminster Bridge*



Fig. 6, Anonymous, *Westminster Bridge, from Bowles' Perspective views in and about London*

John Boydell prospered in what was a highly difficult and competitive market. Barthélemy Jobert stipulates that he was only the third Englishman of his time to instigate a career as a 'graveur-éditeur', and reproduce a collection entirely from his own designs. In doing so, Boydell followed the example of John Smith and William Hogarth, whilst narrowly preceding Thomas Major's *Recueil d'Estampes* of 1754.¹⁰⁰ The fact that he established

a profitable business, without yielding to the more powerful institutions of the trade, must attest the strength of his printmaking. The feat becomes all the more remarkable after considering the indifferent foundation which Boydell was granted. This section begins to reveal the influence of market factors, and they comprise a large part of my first theoretical framework for analysing the success of Boydell's *Collection of One Hundred Views in England and Wales*.

Chapter Two - Boydell's Collection of One Hundred Views in England and Wales

The Commercial Framework

The consideration of money is often used to scrutinise aspects of John Boydell's career. Lauded as the commercial Maecenas, he has been hounded by this framework and is habitually cast as an artisan who turned a quick profit, or a publisher wholly bent on mercantile gain. Statements relating to his *Collection of One Hundred Views in England and Wales* are of no exception. The majority of prints contained within this series were priced at one shilling, and as a result, whenever the success of the *Collection* is conceded, it is qualified by reports citing the cheapness of his work as the lone rationale. Praise of his printmaking is never exempt from this mollification; nor is it free from the implication that this supposed 'cheapness' was tantamount to artlessness.¹⁰¹

The further one delves, the further it becomes clear that the existing perception of 'cheap' printmaking is wholly inadequate. This defect is at the centre of Boydell's treatment, and arguably stems from omissions within eighteenth-century research. In its very simplicity, the case against Boydell reflects the broader hesitancy to delve into the economics of British art.¹⁰² His handling is also symptomatic of the narrow social scope contained within key works on British printmaking. Most studies focus upon engraved images at the peak of connoisseurship and do not provide a true demographic of printerly consumption. Boydell's works were modest in comparison. His views may not have lined the walls of cognoscenti, but various tiers of printsellers existed below him in terms of both quality and worth. The purveyors of pocketbooks and broadside woodcuts are routinely overlooked, and the financial parameters are not altered accordingly.

With this in mind, my first section of this chapter shall be devoted to expanding the scope of this commercial methodology. In matters concerning this scope, Timothy Clayton is particularly culpable, and the major failing of *The English Print* lies in its refusal to explore the relationship between graphic expansion and the rise of a consumer society. This is a development he instead links to a loaded form of cultural imperialism.¹⁰³ In opposition to Clayton's stance, I will use Boydell as a figurehead, and demonstrate that his engraving emerged in tandem with a vast upheaval in the sociology and economics of British art. I shall argue that such a dynamic problematises this notion of cheapness, and aim to subvert the belief that Boydell's achievements were solely dependent upon the pricing of his views.

In order to examine the nature of Boydell's production, one must first look to patterns of contemporary consumption. During the central decades of the Georgian era, a consumer revolution swept through Britain.¹⁰⁴ Reasons for the growth of this commercial society are complex and manifold, though obvious stimuli include the adjustment of social and intellectual boundaries, as well as the realignment of the economy, which triggered a rise in expendable income.¹⁰⁵ Such aspects strengthened both the desire to consume, and the ability to do so, and in John Brewer's *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, he suggests that the country was bifurcated into broad pools of consumers and entrepreneurs.¹⁰⁶ Commentary from the period appears to sustain this view. Georg Christoph Lichtenberg observed that the luxury and extravagance of the English middling classes 'had risen to

such a pitch as never before seen in the world', whilst Adam Smith alluded to the necessary analogue of supply when he labelled England a 'nation of shopkeepers.'¹⁰⁷

Printmaking represented the 'progeny of art and commerce', and engendered this process of commercialisation.¹⁰⁸ It was crucial in the formation and education of larger audiences, and played a key part in the democratisation of the cultural realm. Although the exclusivity of graphic art forms had been diminishing for years, this process was accelerated as the appetite for printerly consumption grew. Only the highest echelons of printmaking had remained the sole domain of courts and cognoscenti, but they too suddenly fell within the purview of common people. Old masters were now being consumed by young professionals. Prints of this ilk became the property of what Jürgen Habermas titles the 'public sphere'; an entity which appeared dramatically, escalated rapidly, and whose polymorphic movements were near impossible to categorise.¹⁰⁹ The 'ubiquity of books', and the omnipresence of print shops also suggested a stark rise in literacy amongst the nation; be it in both traditional and visual terms.¹¹⁰ A growing corpus of dictionaries and catalogues then reflected this presence, and made the reader aware of the engravings that they should own. This public was a growing body with serious ambitions for self-improvement and social mobility, and these aspirations could be entertained through the buying of prints.

Such interest in engraving reflected the wider commercialisation of visual and material culture in the Georgian era.¹¹¹ The role of the middling-ranks as patrons of the arts was firmly established by the foundation of the Royal Society in 1754, as the organisation represented a voluntary body based upon public subscription. The London building trade was also subjected to a socially widened clientele for architectural projects during this period.¹¹² Boydell catered to an increasingly commercialised market, just as William Chambers, or the Adam Brothers would proceed to do in the context of architecture. And just as they were later chastised by Sir John Soane for 'prostituting the credit of their profession'; so too Boydell is criticised by posthumous commentary.¹¹³

When David Alexander writes that Boydell's views were bought by 'urban tradespeople of limited means', his tone is deprecatory, but his criticism is misguided and reflects the shortcomings of British historiography.¹¹⁴ Alexander airs the theory that Boydell was alone in targeting buyers of a middling class, yet this was the type of patron which a number of printmakers seemed to foster. In her case study of Arthur Pond, Louise Lippincott employs the artist's journal and estate papers to demonstrate the growing social span of his customers for engraving. As the century progressed, Pond's earlier benefactors - antiquarians and members of the landed aristocracy - gave way to a more varied group of calico printers, school masters and physicians.¹¹⁵ William Hogarth was also exposed to the same development, and his business records attest to the fact that merchants and their apprentices were the foremost consumers for his *Industry and Idleness* series.¹¹⁶

The dealings of Pond and Hogarth show that such an audience could be cultivated without compromising the artistic integrity of one's work, and it is not imprudent to see Boydell in terms of this model. Though his logbooks from this period are unlocated, and his catalogues were not published with regularity until 1764, other documents emerge which support this claim.¹¹⁷ One such source is provided by his correspondence with Matthew Boulton. A large cross-section of their letters to one another are kept by the Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, and reveal that Boulton purchased a number of views from Boydell's *Collection*.¹¹⁸ As a

rising toy manufacturer in the 1750's, Boulton was a typical case of new money, and his proven endorsement of Boydell's printmaking hints at the socially mobile audience that likely constituted Boydell's chief purchasers.

Printmaking not only played an important role in shaping public taste, but was correspondingly reshaped by the growth of this phenomenon. A string of printerly entrepreneurialism during this time signalled an entirely new breed of artistic consumer. This was at its most apparent in the targeting of female buyers, and as printsellers sought to capitalise upon the economic independence of women, engraving took on a host of novel functions within the decorative arts.¹¹⁹ Whilst the pool of patrons became all the more heterogeneous, so too did the retail strategy of printmakers, for the period was marked by the prolificacy of broadsheet advertisements and publicised subscription lists. However, the most candid means for attracting customers was triggered by a sweeping reduction in costs. At the point of Boydell's commercial inception, the arts were repriced and repackaged so as to appeal to this expanding demographic of buyers. Boydell evidently conformed to this trend. He is often castigated for his series of shilling views, but such criticism is unfounded, and ignorant of socio-economic factors. In fact, a passing glance at corresponding prints shows that some of the finest topographical printmakers of Boydell's generation made similar, if not more drastic allowances to meet the new structure of demand.



Fig. 7. John Boydell, *View of London Bridge, Taken near St. Olave's Stairs*

As an architectural draughtsman, it is only natural that Thomas Major should appear amongst this list. In his *Catalogue of Prints Engraved from the Finest Paintings*, Major listed his *View at Hammersmith* after John Fayram for one shilling, whilst his *Six Views of the River Thames* dipped below Boydell's lowermost rate, and were priced at four shillings for the set.¹²⁰ Louis Philippe Boitard's etching of London Bridge was valued at sixpence, yet Boydell's view of the scene, taken near St. Olave's Stairs, levied twice this amount (Fig. 7).¹²¹ An

announcement from the *General Advertiser* also reveals that Robert Sayer charged a shilling for engravings after Canaletto's *Fourteen Select Views in and about London*.¹²² Edward Rooker and Johann Sebastian Müller reproduced these drawings, and it is worthy of note that Boydell's pricing matched one of the most coveted collections of the time.¹²³

With the onset of the consumer revolution, many socio-economic factors were thrown into flux, yet such issues are absent from the commercial template used against Boydell. The limitations of this framework have inspired ridicule against his printmaking, but when one attempts to develop this paradigm, it becomes clear just how inadequate the theory has been. The inexpensiveness of Boydell's engraving should not be interpreted as an admission of artistic weakness - but as a symptom of his times - and the commercialisation of visual culture that accompanied his rise as a printmaker. Boydell's pricing strategy did not exist *sui generis*, and he featured as one of the many entrepreneurs who made such concessions in order to entice a burgeoning market, mostly untapped by the larger firms. Further conclusions may be drawn from these findings. The investigation into mid-century newspapers and catalogues not only dispels the notion that Boydell undercut his rivals, but demonstrates that he was able to promote his *Collection* in direct contest with market leaders, and still achieve a 'resounding commercial success'.¹²⁴

The Nascent Cult of the Picturesque: Boydell and the Welsh Mountains

If British topography exhibited a certain uniformity of pricing during the 1750's, then other methods may better account for Boydell's success in the market. With the first of two alternative frameworks, I will attempt to interpret Boydell's success via the concept of the picturesque. So as to sanction such an approach, this investigation must first relocate the advent of this aesthetic ideal to the second quarter of the eighteenth-century. It would be gullible to claim that the British picturesque was in full bloom during these decades, but equally so to state its complete absence. To define the development as nascent is to establish a more reasonable middle ground.

In order to hone this enquiry, I shall largely focus on Boydell's depiction of the Welsh mountains. During a period in which North Wales was labelled the 'the Fag End of Creation', I intend to argue that Boydell was alive to changing aesthetic agendas, and anticipated an upsurge in the pictorial worth of such terrain.¹²⁵ This section will demonstrate the significance of his prints when perceived through the metaphorical gaze of a Claude glass. I not only aim to interpret Boydell's views via the picturesque, but will also examine the subsequent effect of his *Collection* upon the artists who would come to define the genre.

A century prior to the point that Boydell scratched his first plate; the picturesque was being established by the landscapes of Italian and Dutch painters. The genre was then filtered into the cultural mentality of Britain during the onset of the Georgian period. Whilst the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury was vocal in his praise for these masters, this interest was made manifest in landscape gardening, and announced by John Vanbrugh in his plea to save Woodstock Manor.¹²⁶ Reproductive printmaking then played an important role in cementing the picturesque as an artistic category. A spate of foreign imports meant that the engravings of Claude and Poussin were popularly collected by English buyers. Such taste would also remain consistent amidst the growth of indigenous printmakers, for figures such as Hamlet Winstanley and Joseph Goupy found success with landscapes after Salvator Rosa.¹²⁷ Views of this kind were widespread, and further enabled the public to grasp the pictorial allusions that garden designers strove for. That is not to say that printmakers were alone in developing the picturesque, but their contribution to its growth is worthy of note, and offered both a complementary and distinct route into the genre.

Boydell himself seems to represent this thought. Although he was well aware of Vanbrugh's Blenheim, for several plates of the gardens were included within the *Collection*, his appreciation for the picturesque was in all likelihood gleaned from an erstwhile knowledge of printmaking.¹²⁸ A pair of clues informs this assumption. To begin with, and in the same year that he published his views of Blenheim, Boydell purchased Goupy's plates after Rosa.¹²⁹ Be it on account of artistic regard, or a belief in the saleability of such designs, this act was telling. An even greater indication as to the origins of Boydell's taste however occurred a decade earlier, and stemmed from his interest in Dutch and Flemish printmaking. Following on from a series of 'landskips' that he engraved after David Teniers and Nicolaes Berchem, a contemporary drawing of Boydell's - entitled *English Landscape with Ruined Castle* - demonstrates that he was experimenting with similarly picturesque forms in his native environment.¹³⁰ The drawing bears the date of 1745, and shortly after its execution, Boydell belonged to a small

number of engravers who infused the largely undocumented beauties of England and Wales with the lofty ideals of the picturesque mode.¹³¹

Timothy Clayton writes that if proper weight is granted to these views, then ‘prints emerge as one of the earliest manifestations of the vogue for romantic scenery’.¹³² Those who trace the cult of the picturesque to the 1760’s are compelled by the rise of literary works, but during a period in which the public sphere was omnipresent, one should not discount the role of printmaking within this discussion. If one pursues this line of thought, then engraving which could be identified as ‘picturesque’ near exclusively antedates writings which may be grouped into a similar category.¹³³ Thomas Smith’s vertiginous views of Derbyshire, published in 1743, preceded Wharton’s *Enthusiast*; the *Five Pastoral Eclogues* of his younger brother, as well as Thomas Gray’s *The Bard. A Pindaric Ode*.¹³⁴ In 1748, when William Gilpin had famously praised the beauty of ‘ragged Ruin (and) venerable old Oak’ in his *Dialogue upon the Gardens (...) at Stow*, such motifs had already been limned by a number of engravers.¹³⁵ This wealth of topographers took to depicting cliffs and cataracts long before they had been absorbed by the framework of the picturesque. Such examples display all the hallmarks of the form, but elude the accreditation; in spite of the fact that the terms ‘romantic’ and ‘picturesque’ adorn the titles to many of their prints.¹³⁶ Francis Vivares, John Tinney and William Oram proved notable adherents to this, yet it was Boydell who would emerge as the most ground-breaking.

Boydell was amongst the first to illustrate the limestone ravines of Dove Dale, but it was his *Four Mountainous Views in North Wales* - ranging from the peaks of Snowdon to the crags of Caernarfonshire - which were truly without precedent.¹³⁷ Boydell’s series was individually issued in 1750, and subsequently republished as part of his *Collection*.¹³⁸ Susan Sloman states that these prints must have been the earliest depiction of this landscape, whilst Clayton echoes her argument, and exhorts that the works constituted the first ever views of the Welsh mountains.¹³⁹ If indeed such scenes had never been committed to copper plate, then earlier accounts may be used to justify such absence. In his *Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1725), Daniel Defoe wrote that the names of the ‘Welch’ landscape were as ‘barbarous (...) as the hills themselves,’ whilst William Camden called the area of Snowdonia as ‘steep and inaccessible as the Alps’ in his *Britannia Abridg'd* (1701).¹⁴⁰ Acting in his position as the Bishop of Bangor, Thomas Herring extended this alpine dialogue by comparing the valleys of Snowdon to Savoy upon his diocesan journey of 1738.¹⁴¹ He also associated the landscape of this region with one of Poussin’s engravings, and in doing so; Herring’s letters paved the way for Boydell’s picturesque rendering.¹⁴²

This terrain was no less forbidding in Boydell’s time, and his engravings refer to the remoteness of these sites. Whilst Boydell’s view of Snowdon shows the precipitous path in the vale of Llanberis (Fig. 8), his print of *Penmaenmawr* (Fig. 9) demonstrates the danger in negotiating coastal headland, as an overturned coach perilously balances on the rock face. Footmen race to counterpoise this teetering vehicle, whilst gawkers gesture from boats below. At the point that John Byng commenced his *Tour to North Wales* in 1784, the pass had been made considerably more secure. His text is steeped in picturesque sentiment, and as Byng wistfully longs for the period in which ‘no carriages could pass, (and) no wall above the sea was built,’ he virtually narrates the details of Boydell’s scene.¹⁴³ In spite of the anachronism, such a statement tacitly unites this print with picturesque mentality; albeit the jagged, debris-strewn version favoured by Uvedale Price.



Fig. 8, John Boydell, *Snowden, in the Vale of Llan Beris*

Boydell not only captured his prints near the height of their inaccessibility, but at the very cusp of aesthetic appreciation. To begin with, the evident danger of travelling through these mountains suggests the further viability of reading his scenes in terms of the sublime. Whilst Boydell's views bring to mind the Tours of John Dennis and Joseph Addison, their publication narrowly anticipated Edmund Burke's systematic address of the subject in 1757, and no doubt profited from the text's ensuing popularity. Although sublime in character, the setting for these prints was also as significant as their philosophical purport, for the 1750's saw the outbreak of an intellectual rediscovery, often titled The Celtic revival. Amidst this onset, the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion was established in London, and devoted itself to both the conservation of Welsh language, and the promotion of Bardic literature. Major documents of Welsh tourism also began to abound; as encompassed by George Lyttleton's *Account of a Journey into Wales*, 1755.

Boydell's views granted a pictorial form to this impulse which soon resonated with painters and printmakers. Sloman demonstrates this effect upon Robert Price, whose 'excursion into Wales in search of landscape scenery' was solely indebted to these works.¹⁴⁴ Boydell's prints thus formed the genesis for a proliferation of Welsh scenes in the second half of the century, and as the specifics of Celticism were lost within the larger realm of Romantic sensibility, Boydell's views would come to constitute such a key strand of the picturesque. Furthermore - and in addition to its content - there are grounds to suppose that formalistic features of Boydell's *Collection* directly influenced the very artists who would later embody the genre.



Fig. 9, John Boydell, *Penmaen Mawr, in Caernarvonshire*

Of all these artists, Richard Wilson was perhaps the foremost exponent of the picturesque. Though he often transposed the mannerisms of Claude or Gaspard Dughet into his work, it is the tradition of native topography which Solkin identifies in Wilson's painting of *Pembroke Town and Castle* (Fig. 10). This presents itself in the compositional system of two adjacent triangles, linked by a collective diagonal line. For his source, Solkin argues that Wilson 'looked to the works of John Boydell, whose views display this format' time and again.¹⁴⁵ Such an arrangement can usually be seen in Boydell's Thames-side vistas, and is markedly employed in his engraving of *Sunbury Looking up the River* (Fig. 11). Owing to the widespread dissemination of Boydell's *Collection*, this borrowing offered Wilson the means through which he could balance the picturesque tenor of his canvas with a heightened degree of topographical credibility.¹⁴⁶ Boydell's prints thus proved an important conduit for guiding Wilson's vision.

The landscapes of Thomas Gainsborough are also a well-known example for the English picturesque, and John Hayes accordingly argues that his art exhibits a debt to Boydell's printmaking. He speculates that the pair may have collaborated at an early juncture of their careers, and believes Gainsborough's development to have been 'strongly influenced by Boydell.'¹⁴⁷ Once again, this is at its most discernible 'in his layout of composition', and Hayes insists that Gainsborough's facile design; his use of perspectival recession and staffage are 'strikingly close' to the schemes of Boydell's *Collection*.¹⁴⁸



Fig. 10, Richard Wilson, *Pembroke Town and Castle*.

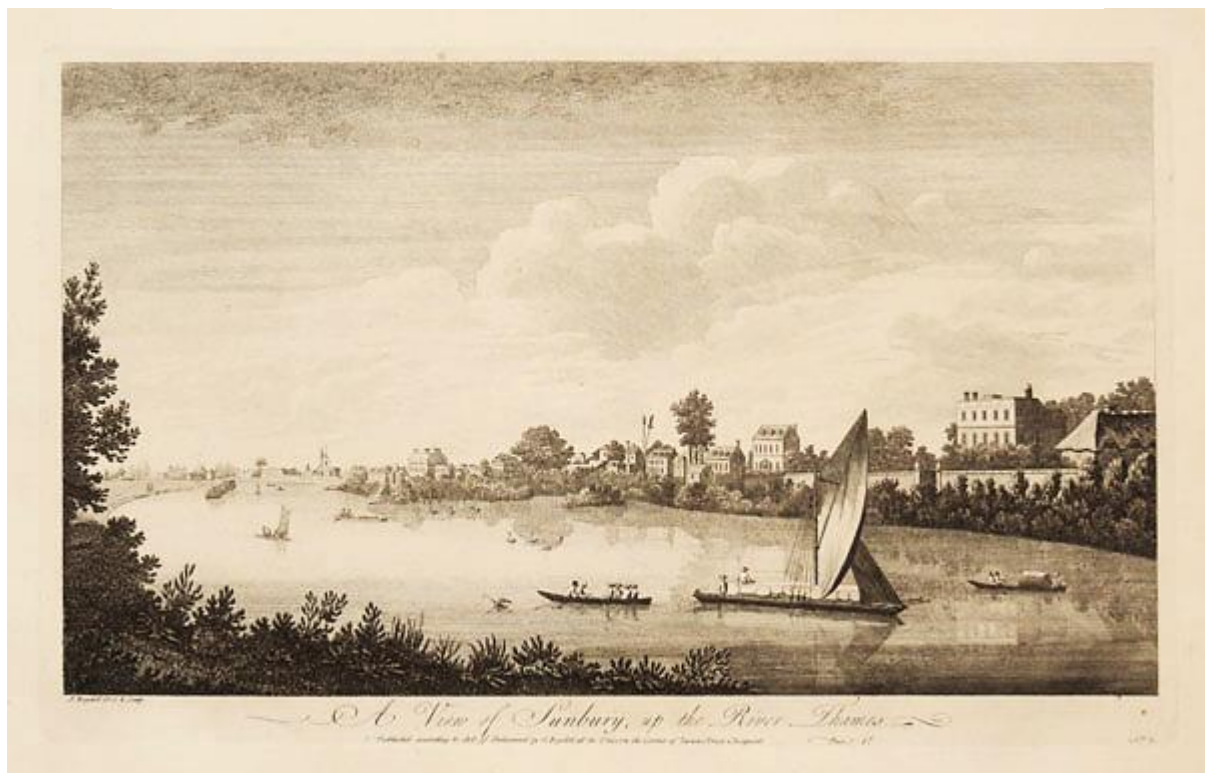


Fig. 11, John Boydell, *A View of Sunbury Looking up the River Thames*.

In conclusion, such testimony suggests that Boydell's views were in part collected by his artistic contemporaries. Distinguished names headed the subscription list for Boydell's *Collection (...) after the Most Capital Paintings in England*, and whilst his earlier patrons can only be surmised, it seems safe to assume that fellow artists featured heavily.¹⁴⁹ The ramifications of this section also depend upon the weight that one is

willing to ascribe to the picturesque during these decades. Whilst there is an argument for stating that Boydell's views promoted a form of this aesthetic, the *Collection* also provided an oblique template through which artists could shape their own interpretations of the picturesque. Be it via explicit or circuitous means; there are considerable grounds for citing Boydell's influence in the development of such taste.

Topography as Tourism: Boydell's Suburban Vistas of London

Although Malcom Andrews states that Boydell's views of Wales did not yet 'persuade the tourist to travel in search of their originals', the same may not be said for other scenes from his *Collection*.¹⁵⁰ In this, my final section of this chapter, I aim to shed some light upon the complex and multifaceted relationship which entwined topography and tourism.

Lest this analysis be overburdened by the framework, I will focus upon Boydell's suburban views of London. I shall begin by investigating the significance of Boydell's inscription spaces, and argue that he utilised existing tour guides in the creation of his works. I will then locate his prints within a debate concerning the shifting ideologies of topography, and their effects upon travel. As if to mimic the itinerary of a tourist, I will conclude by returning to my starting point, and assert that Boydell's engraving inspired later travel accounts and histories. This discussion will incorporate both native and international configurations of tourism; though it is with the former that I shall begin.

By mid-century, the prevailing taste for Greco-Roman antiquity was challenged by the resurgence of English medievalism; the call for an internal analysis of British landscape, and the embryonic growth of picturesque taste.¹⁵¹ Although the vogue for the Grand Tour was far from its decline, and the English 'army of peregrine martyrs' - as Laurence Sterne termed them - still descended upon Italy in their streams, domestic travel was now being seen in earnest as an alternative educational experience.¹⁵² The Grand Touring establishment was thus faced with the 'humble peregrinations of men who were content to begin - and even end - with the study of (...) their own country.'¹⁵³ Decades before Matthew Darly mocked the figure of the macaroni in popular caricatures; a host of commentators subverted the importance of European travel, and heralded a trip around the United Kingdom as a comparable rite of passage.¹⁵⁴ Antiquarians were particularly vocal in this debate. John Warburton declared that a tour of Britain should always precede a tour of the continent, whilst William Borlase criticised the zeal with which Englishmen journeyed to other countries 'before they knew sufficiently what their own contained'.¹⁵⁵

Such attitudes were reflected in the topographical print, for the era was defined by a glut of works which stressed the importance of British sights and monuments. This growth was largely brought into being through the enterprise of several printsellers. In a notice from the *General Advertiser*, 1751, Henry Overton revealed that he would centre his stock around indigenous views, which were 'equal, if not superior, to any Foreign ones of the size and price, ever Published in England.'¹⁵⁶ John Tinney displayed a similar position, and abandoned a number of projects in order to focus his energies upon publishing William Woollett's etchings of Oxford.¹⁵⁷ A wealth of proprietors and printmakers soon followed suit, leading to a vast number of plates in which Britain was depicted as a place of unique beauty, Georgian industry, and cultural distinction.

The domestic tour and the engraved prospect enjoyed a symbiotic bond. An interest in native landscape introduced a new market for printery landscape, whilst such works struck a chord with the home-grown consumer, and roused them to journey in search of the physical scene. This was a feature not only aided by the rise in insular taste, but by the emergence of recreational travel amongst the middle classes.

This relationship was made manifest in Boydell's *Collection*, as he employed Daniel Defoe's *Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* 'as a primary source for the captions to many of his prints'.¹⁵⁸ Of all eighteenth-century guidebooks, Defoe's *Tour* enjoyed the most popularity, and David Solkin writes that Boydell's engravings, 'with their sheer wealth of information, were suited to satisfy the same kind of demand.'¹⁵⁹ He suggests that the literal nature of Defoe's words, much like the factual accuracy of Boydell's scenes, served a common audience. Such accord was then further complemented by the quotations in Boydell's inscription space. Solkin's conclusion is logical, though somewhat simplistic. His argument also fails to recognise that the influence of Defoe was more candid, for such was Boydell's adherence to his text, some of his engravings could function as illustrations to the *Tour*.¹⁶⁰ Whether or not they satisfied the same kind of demand is irrelevant, as this offers an explicit line between domestic travel and Boydell's *Collection*. Such a link begins to validate the application of this framework, but contemporary patterns of tourism were far more convoluted.

The spectacularised image of the scepter'd isle, as represented in topographical prints, also inspired European fancy and encouraged an upsurge in foreign visitors to British shores. This meant that the period was marked by both internal and external formations of tourism. Only the shrewdest of printsellers were able to target these factions simultaneously, and Boydell's use of the French language placed him firmly within this group. Once again, his inscriptions play an important role, for the majority of Boydell's plates contain bilingual captions which describe his images in both English and French verse (See Fig. 12.)¹⁶¹ These title-lines are frequently cited as indicators of his prints exportation, but this premise comes under scrutiny, for it was years before British engraving was consistently valued on the international market. Moreover, if one looks at Joseph Smith's *Nouveau Théâtre de la Grande Bretagne* (1724), a topographical collection very much packaged for continental distribution, it becomes clear that the character of Boydell's *Collection* is quite different.¹⁶²



Fig. 12, John Boydell, A View near Twickenham / *Vüe dessinée près du Twickenham*

In light of this, it may be more convincing to propose that the purpose of his inscriptions - as well as the success of the prints that they embellish - was the result of tourism. Sheila O'Connell supports this opinion, and asserts that whilst Boydell's bilingualism enticed foreign buyers, it was also utilised as a key marketing tool for attracting an aspiring, domestic audience.¹⁶³ Whilst the impact of Francophone customers should not be discounted, one might take this argument further by stating that Boydell's inscriptions appealed to both continental visitors, and conditioned domestic buyers to view the country from a similarly externalised position. During this time, French was both the international language, and one which was rife with fashionable denotation. With this in mind, it is not imprudent to suggest that Boydell's prints of a native subject matter were ingrained with a residual element of style and erudition, so as the local audience collected such images, they defined themselves in relation to a pervading 'cosmopolitan index of pictorial and linguistic refinement'.¹⁶⁴ When Boydell's *View of Westminster Bridge* became the *Vüe du Pont de Westminster* (Fig. 5), it was arguably bestowed with a venerable, albeit sophistic mark of elegance. Subsequently, these popular sites were reformulated into touristic scenes. Boydell's captions therefore meant, at least to a certain extent, that a native market consumed his portrayals of Britain through the 'perspective of a tourist.'¹⁶⁵

It is a speculative argument, but becomes stronger when supported by a discussion of the shifting ideological agendas which were addressed in my section on commerce. As a result of these developments, there are grounds to suggest that the topographical view, in its very essence, embodied a theoretical form of tourism. Throughout this period, various factors effectuated a change within the function of topographical works. These included the commodification of the arts; the formation of new consumers for printmaking, and the growth in commercialised leisure as encompassed by the rise of pleasure gardens. Amongst such influence, traditional modes of aesthetic appreciation came under scrutiny. Orthodox avenues of tourism were likewise altered, and in consequence, simple engravings gathered a more complex identity.

This was essentially a dual process. Whilst the rise of a consumer society broke down the cultural independence of printmaking as an art form, a new framework for aesthetic and theatrical pleasure reformatted its role. These were dynamics which would truly come to a head with the popularity of the zogroscope, and the proliferation of *vue d'optiques*. As topography was consumed alongside these illusory commodities, the traditional exchange between viewer and print was being redefined. Landscape engraving moved beyond its function as a mere site of scenic representation, and became enmeshed within an extended transference of semiology and theatricality. John Brewer acknowledges such a dynamic, and states that for every sightseer, there now existed a far larger public that approximated their experience of travel 'through the simulacrum of print'.¹⁶⁶

Mark Hallett uses the term 'pictorial tourism' to describe this construct, and argues that the succession of engravings found in works such as Boydell's *Collection* 'mimicked the itinerary and pleasures of the coach trips' across the country.¹⁶⁷ Volumes of topography were thus charged with an imitative faculty. Contemporary testimony corroborates this view, and the diary of Sophie von La Roche, for example, establishes that her stage-coach circuit of London closely resembled the selection and arrangement of Boydell's sites.¹⁶⁸ It may be claimed therefore that his *One Hundred Views* enacted a form of 'graphic transport', and guided the contemporary spectator through an effegial journey of Britain.¹⁶⁹ Whilst von La Roche paid fifteen shillings for her outing, one could, by this logic, subscribe to a similar experience for considerably less at Boydell's shop in Cheapside.¹⁷⁰

In order to root this argument in concrete terms, I shall now demonstrate that Boydell's 'tour' enjoyed a more corporeal incarnation, as his vistas of London inspired later travel histories. Of all the works to emerge during this time, it was prints of the capital which entertained the greatest rise in sales and status. London was the touristic hub of Britain. Radial roads into the city were vastly improved due to advances in the turnpike system, and the formation of the Bow Street Runners assured a safer experience for outsiders. Scores of metropolitan scenes showed fashionable citizens and phaetons scuttling under the shadows of civic and ecclesiastical landmarks. In one regard, Boydell's *Collection* represents this dynamic in microcosm, for over a third of the plates in his series depict views of the capital. Yet in another, the volume was nonconformist, as his prints deviated from the motifs of central London which had been 'sufficiently limned' by Overton, Bowles and Sayer.¹⁷¹

Boydell obeyed enough convention to cultivate touristic interest, but he also digressed from traditional sites of representation in favour of outlying vicinities. In lieu of Saint Paul's Cathedral, he included St. Martin's in the Fields. In place of Bedlam, he depicted Greenwich Hospital and its surrounding borough (Fig. 13). As opposed to Vauxhall Gardens, Hyde Park, or the Serpentine, Boydell represented the Newcomen engine at Chelsea Waterworks, Barnaby Backwell's estate in Twickenham, and the newly founded Battersea Enamel factory. In doing so, he arguably set a precedent for later guides; be they written or pictorial. Bernard Adams reveals that publications such as Walter Harrison's *History of London* and William Thornton's folio of the same name soon 'took their cue from Boydell', and his inclusion of suburban sights (Fig. 14),¹⁷² whilst Jean Baptiste Claude Chatelain also incorporated similar scenes into his *Views in the Vicinity of London*, published shortly afterwards.¹⁷³ As a result, Boydell could be seen to have popularised alternative regions of London before they had been standardised and subsumed by touristic rhetoric.



Fig. 13, John Boydell, *A View of Greenwich Hospital*.



Fig. 14, John Royce after J. Oliphant, *View of Greenwich from Deptford*.

The frameworks of tourism, commerce, and the picturesque not only reveal the discernment of Boydell's printmaking, but demonstrate that his *Collection* courted popularity on a number of grounds. This chapter has begun to exculpate Boydell's engraving from the charges commonly levelled against him. It is now the role of the following section to expand upon this, and absolve Boydell from the equally disparaging historicisation of his figure.

Chapter Three - Debunking the Myth

Contemporary Reception: Reviews of Boydell's Engraving

“So our virtues
Lie in the interpretation of the time”
– *Coriolanus*, act IV, Scene VII.

The aim of this chapter is to further debunk the myth that surrounds both Boydell's printmaking and his character. In this discourse, three commonly held beliefs stand above all others. These concern the notion that Boydell's printmaking was pedestrian; that he denounced his own work, and that he quit engraving the moment his career in publishing had commenced. Such postulations motivate the line of thought that his printmaking was a means to an end; a life choice motivated by *lucri causa*, and disregarded once sufficient profit had been accrued.

Building upon the preceding analysis of his *Collection of One Hundred Views in England and Wales*, I shall continue to challenge the opinion that Boydell's labours were insipid and artless. With regard to this goal, I have collated the reviews of some significant eighteenth-century commentators. It is a candid, perhaps even uncouth means of debunking myth, but necessary if Boydell's name is to be absolved from the charges levelled at him. This section shall attempt to demonstrate that when one looks beyond the falsehood concerning Boydell, a number of figures arise who extolled his artwork. Thus, deviation and divergence provide a useful indication of veracity - or at least autonomy.

In John Lemprière's *Universal Biography*, the renowned scholar and lexicographer states that Boydell was an 'eminent artist' whose *Collection of One Hundred Views in England and Wales* 'proved the source of profit, as well as celebrity'.¹⁷⁴ John Pye complements this stance, and writes of the 'perfect success (which) attended this undertaking'.¹⁷⁵ The 'spirit and patriotism' of the series was extolled by Joseph Farington, whilst the first volume of Rudolf Ackermann's *Microcosm of London*, issued in 1808, contains an encomium dedicated to Boydell, and his views of London which had preceded Ackermann's publication.¹⁷⁶

Further testaments to his printmaking materialise. In an enlarged edition of the *British Public Characters of 1798*, Boydell's name appears next to luminaries such as Lord Nelson, Dr. Joseph Priestly, and Isaac D'Israeli. The entry contextualises Boydell's output against the 'inferior ebb' of English engraving, and exhorts that his views 'displayed uncommon industry; and the manner in which many of them are executed, evince talents, that practise, and his constitutional perseverance, rendered highly respectable'.¹⁷⁷ Additional panegyrics can be found in a 'Sketch of the life and character of Alderman Boydell', published in *The European Magazine*, 1792. According to the anonymous author, Boydell's *Collection* is 'not only an object of real curiosity, but sufficient to excite astonishment when it is considered as the labour of one man (...) and at a period so unfavourable to genius'. The record continues to state that 'if he had been young in these days of encouragement: if, in short, such a man as himself had lived before him, than he would have ranked very high amongst the Engravers of this country.'¹⁷⁸

The temporal shift and hypotheticality of this final utterance is telling. Such factors expose a shortcoming which mitigates the strength of the statements. Although these accounts form a compelling counterargument to the charge of Boydell's supposed inadequacy, they are retrospective. They constitute *ex post facto* analyses, whereby the writers were endowed with the luxury of afterthought, and biased by the flattering register applied to biography. Contemporary reviews are harder to locate. This does not reflect attitudes towards Boydell's printmaking, but is indicative of the period in which English collectors and commentators so seldom recorded their opinions of particular engravings.¹⁷⁹

In essence, the only British source for the contemporary critique of mid-century printmaking was provided by George Vertue's 'History of Engraving'. From the analysis of Simon de Passe; the first 'Ingenious Burinator in London', up until William Hogarth; 'a young man of facil & ready invention', the history passes judgement on a number of printmakers.¹⁸⁰ Vertue also lists a chronological series of what he perceived to be the most sagacious prints published during his lifetime. He writes that his selection puts forward 'originals of taste (...) which at present & in Time to come would be very entertaining to the curious'.¹⁸¹ Below Hubert François Gravelot's *Kirkstall Abbey*, the *Prodigy at the Gate of Calais* by Hogarth, and a 'Pousin storm engraved by Varris', Vertue lists 'Some views in Wales &c by Boydell'.¹⁸²

It is significant that Boydell's views of Welsh mountains should appear in what is the sole record of British printmaking at this time. The genesis of Vertue's work stemmed from his observation that 'no account' of 'Picture Graveing' existed before his own - and aside from Horace Walpole's bastardisation of his notes - no attempt was subsequently forthcoming.¹⁸³ Although this leaves a considerable gap in primary material, it is remunerated by foreign periodicals and dictionaries, for their reports of British printmaking supply a fruitful resource for the reception of Boydell's work. Examples of these publications include Matthieu Maty's *Journal Britannique*, as well as the weekly gazettes which were issued by the now defunct *Academia Imperialis Franciscanus*.¹⁸⁴ Even though these sources both prove informative, it is the *Neue Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften und der freyen Künste* which offers the greatest reserve of useful evidence.

The famed collector Carl Ludwig Junker referred to this journal as 'mein Lieblingsbuch', whilst Luigi de Angelis, editor of Giovanni Gori Gandellini's *Notizie istoriche degli intagliatori*, also regarded it as a precious source.¹⁸⁵ The content and quality of significant printmaking initiatives became its most distinctive feature, and a serialised review of Boydell's *Sculptura Britannica* was included within several editions of the magazine. In the 1766 publication, Georg Friedrich Brandes evaluates Boydell's engraving of *The Finding of Cyrus* after Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione (Fig. 15). He states that the posture, expression and application of light are masterly executed, and that Castiglione's art of pastoral setting is perfectly rendered. Brandes continues to write that one can truly regard it as one of the best pieces of the collection.¹⁸⁶ Praise indeed considering that by the seventh instalment, some of the finest English printmakers had already featured as key contributors.¹⁸⁷

Georg Friedrich Brandes was actively involved with a number of key publications. He was employed as a correspondent for the *Göttingische scholars ads*, and also assisted Karl Heinrich von Heineken in his *Dictionnaire des Artistes dont nous avons des Estampes*.¹⁸⁸ The *Dictionnaire* stands as one of the most ambitious eighteenth-century catalogues, and an enthusiastic appraisal of Boydell's printmaking is contained within the third volume. Although this volume was not published until 1789, it is suitable for this discussion as

the content is based upon observations from Heineken's *Nachrichten von Künstlern und Kunst-Sachen* (1769), and the *Idée Générale d'une Collection Complete d'estampes* (1771), in which Boydell features amongst the 'Premier Classe des Recueils'.¹⁸⁹ In his *Dictionnaire*, Heineken refers to Boydell as a 'Célèbre Dessinateur (et) Graveur', and whilst this may be seen as a platitude, other lines are far more emboldening. Heineken states, for instance, that there was little discrepancy between the plates that Boydell acquired from the most prominent artists of his time, and those that he engraved himself.¹⁹⁰



Fig. 15, John Boydell after Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, *The Finding of Cyrus*

Such plates appear to have been widely strewn across Germany. Whilst the reviews of Brandes and Heineken show that Boydell's work could be found in Göttingen and Dresden, its appearance in further areas may also be proposed. An engraving after Boydell's *View of London Bridge taken near St. Olave's Stairs*, complete with German inscription and a Nuremberg publication line, serves to illustrate this point (Fig. 16).¹⁹¹ This print was engraved by Georg Daniel Heumann; a talented draughtsman, and an academician at the Nuremberg school of fine art. Heumann had never travelled to England, so the reproduction of this print not only attests to the circulation of the *Collection* within this region, but insinuates the popularity for Boydell's views amongst such an audience.



Fig. 16, Georg Daniel Heumann after John Boydell, *View of London Bridge, Taken near St. Olave's Stairs*

An awareness of Boydell's printmaking extended beyond a German readership, for his name also adorns the pages of Pierre-François Basan's *Dictionnaire des Graveurs Anciens et Modernes*, 1767. In the section devoted to him, Boydell is represented as an engraver of some esteem, and though the pair enjoyed a commercial rapport, it would be cynical to interpret his inclusion as an act of cronyism.¹⁹² Boydell's landscapes after Nicolaes Berchem are deemed to be his 'principales estampes', and Basan remarks on the strength and subtlety of the delineation of water which enriches the scene.¹⁹³

This section clearly demonstrates that Boydell was recognised as a printmaker of considerable repute. His work was celebrated in British biographies, and praised by foreign periodicals and dictionaries. The latter provides a particularly important overview as it functions on both a quantitative and qualitative level. The excerpts of foreign commentary not only offer a solution to omissions within the British critical canon, but the figures that make such statements are endowed with considerable authority. Georg Friedrich Brandes was the keeper of the print collection at the Georg-August-University in Göttingen.¹⁹⁴ Karl Heinrich von Heineken presided over the Dresden *Kupferstichkabinett* - a collection which derived from the Electorates of Saxony - whilst Pierre-François Basan was a Parisian printseller who was dubbed 'le maréchal de Saxe de la curiosité'.¹⁹⁵ Such figures constitute significant and trustworthy spokesmen in the discussion. More decisively still, their accounts provide a source truly unimpeded by the anecdote circulated in English publications; a dynamic which will be clarified in the following section.

Posthumous Appraisal: Coriolanus and the Spectre of Shakespeare

Having explored the reception of his engraving, I will now investigate the perception of Boydell, and his embodiment as an artist. The previous section is significant, as it appears to confirm that the notion of Boydell's artistic mediocrity is a posthumous construct. This will be my foundation as I examine the assumption that he abandoned engraving the moment his career in publishing had commenced. A line is traditionally traced between the growth of Boydell's publishing business and the decline in his activity as a printmaker. Various commentators maintain that he had all but relinquished the etching needle by 1760, but evidence of Boydell's later artistic activity demonstrates that he was still practicing beyond the deadline ascribed to him. I shall scrutinise this key example of myth in Boydell's biographies, and investigate the omnipresent and injurious role of Shakespeare in post-obit accounts of his printmaking.

In this respect, Boydell functions as a microcosm. The 'cult of the Bard' had reached unparalleled heights by late eighteenth-century Britain, and had led writers such as Arthur Murphy to declare that 'With us Islanders, Shakespeare is a kind of established religion in poetry.'¹⁹⁶ This interest only intensified following John Bell's popular theatrical illustrations, but it was Boydell who became the main advocate for an epoch in which Shakespeare was, in cultural terms, ubiquitous. However, this championing of the playwright came with certain consequences. James Gillray's *Shakespeare Sacrificed; -or- The Offering to Avarice* (Fig. 1) provides a useful point of departure to demonstrate this. In his etching, an infant resting upon the shoulders of Avarice blows the bubble of 'Immortality' from a tobacco-pipe. Boydell, portrayed in his furred Alderman's robe, looks fixedly towards the character bedecked in peacock feathers. Although no doubt intended to show the transience and vanity of Boydell's venture, the scene becomes ironically prognostic, for ever since the inception of the Shakespeare Gallery, the essence of Boydell's fame has revolved around this project.

The figure of Shakespeare plays an important role in Boydell's posthumous reception. They are as if conjoined; and it is rare, if not unprecedented, that Boydell is mentioned without reference to his Gallery. A contemporary poem found amongst the Whitley Papers speaks of how the pair was 'grafted' onto one another, and this relationship has been further compounded by academic writing.¹⁹⁷ It becomes clear that the surfeit of acclaim directed towards the Gallery has had a detrimental effect upon the investigation of Boydell's printmaking. However, what is less clear, or at least what is yet to be recognised, is that over three decades before the formation of the Gallery, a work engraved after a Shakespearean play triggered equally harmful consequences.

This dynamic stems from an anecdote in William Granger's *The Remarkable Life and Character of Alderman Boydell*, published in 1805.¹⁹⁸ Granger's biography extols Boydell's 'facility of execution', and states that 'had he devoted all his time to engraving, he would have ranked high in the profession'.¹⁹⁹ Though largely fulsome, a frivolous comment contained within the text inadvertently set in motion a harmful charge against Boydell's art. Granger writes that during 1760, and 'having passed several months in copying an historical picture of Coriolanus by Sebastian Concha, he so much disliked his own engraving, that he cut the plate to pieces'.²⁰⁰ This was the act which supposedly triggered Boydell's withdrawal from printmaking. Since he had already amassed the funds to initiate a career in speculative publishing, Granger's anecdote fuels the notion that Boydell's renunciation of engraving was elective and inconsequential. The danger of this tale is obvious, and given the

parasitic character of the early nineteenth-century press, it was also widely disseminated.²⁰¹ The story appeared in Theophilus Quin's *The Biographical Exemplar*, Alexander Chalmers's *General Biographical Dictionary*, and the Reverend Abraham Rees's *Cyclopædia*.²⁰² This is but a cross section of a far larger body of writing in which the anecdote appears. It has been parroted by recent academics and lent further credence by its appearance in authoritative texts.²⁰³ In spite of this impact, Granger's sketch is misrepresentative.

Evidence exists which debunks his tale, as a number of English newspaper reviews allude to Boydell's engraving, and subsequent publication of the Coriolanus plate. Volume XXVII of the *Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* and issue XIX of the *Scot's Magazine*, both published in 1757, display adverts for the work, therefore render a story of the plate's destruction entirely fictitious.²⁰⁴ This is a key example of perpetuating falsehood in Boydell's biography, and one which is derailed by a collation of new factual knowledge. It was a throwaway remark which has escalated. In its sheer proliferation, it is perceived as legitimate. An over-reliance on anecdote sustains the myth; an attempt to look beyond it demystifies such inventions.

Adherents to Granger's tale endorse the theory that by 1760, Boydell had renounced his own printmaking. However, they appear to disregard an incongruity which arises. If Boydell was meant to have abdicated from engraving once his publishing projects yielded results, then why was he still active after the commercial phenomenon of *Niobe*, or his distribution of Richard Wilson's *Phaeton* in 1763? A variety of sources emerge which undermine such hypotheses. Johann Willhelm von Archenholz, a German historian who visited London in 1763, recalled that both Hogarth and Boydell sold prints in the capacity of artists, not art dealers.²⁰⁵ Archenholz also stipulates that during this period, Boydell was still registered in the 'Buergerlisten' as an engraver.²⁰⁶ The records of the Stationers' Company corroborate this claim, though it is the evidence of Boydell's later activities which truly provide an unequivocal rebuke to the allegation of his artistic retirement.²⁰⁷

The reviews of Georg Friedrich Brandes and Pierre-François Basan show that Boydell was still practicing beyond the deadline ascribed to him. In truth, this went beyond practice, for Boydell was experimenting with subjects and styles which transcended his traditional corpus. His reproduction of *The Finding of Cyrus* was published on January 1st, 1767, whilst his pastoral landscape after Nicolaes Berchem was believed to have been released the following year. All of these works were included in his *Collection of Prints, Engraved after the Most Capital Paintings in England*, and though it is assumed that Boydell merely oversaw this project, Maria Ordeanu states that he was actively involved in the etching of plates throughout the entire series.²⁰⁸ She suggests that he assumed the role of an intermediary draughtsman, and assisted in the works of numerous fledgling printmakers who were enlisted. Since Ordeanu's theory is based on formal features, it is somewhat speculative, but it is a claim of some gravity given that the volumes were issued in parts between the years of 1763 – 1786. Ordeanu's premise is also supported by the testimony of George Martin Richter. The latter speculates that Boydell was responsible for an engraving of a lying Venus after Titian in 1781. Though it is more cautious to state that Georg Siegmund Facius engraved the work, there is every possibility that Boydell once again acted as an intermediary for the translation of the painting, now lost, which was in the possession of Philip Metcalfe.²⁰⁹

Beyond this date, sources are admittedly thinner. Clara Eskine Clement notes that Boydell made a watercolour sketch of *The Shakespeare Gallery* upon its completion, though a more significant discovery relating to the Bard

rests within a manuscript folio in the Victoria and Albert Museum.²¹⁰ This volume is entitled *Autograph Letters of Eminent British Artists*, and contains a print executed by Boydell after George Romney's *Shakespeare Nursed by Tragedy and Comedy*.²¹¹ The inscription states that the work was engraved in 1803; a year before Boydell's death.

It is a remarkable feat considering that his life encompassed over sixty years of printmaking, and though Boydell's output waned amidst his growing reputation as a publishing mogul, it was far from the point of expiry. So often hailed for his formation of the Shakespeare Gallery, it is also ironic that the effect of *Coriolanus* upon Boydell's career has yet to be recognised. A further irony is presented by the fact that it takes a later plate after a Shakespearean subject to truly debunk the charge of his abdication. It would be credulous to state that Boydell continued printmaking in the same propensity as his earlier years, but equally so to claim that he had given up. This section shows that the framework of *lucri causa* - frequently applied to Boydell's printmaking - becomes increasingly inapt. The construction of *artis causa* is perhaps more suitable, but it is an abstract concept so difficult to quantify, thus endemically ignored by historical scholarship.²¹² Boydell's love of his art, and the wish to be identified as a printmaker, constitutes the subject of my final section.

Challenging the Prevalent Perception of Boydell

The third falsehood often levelled towards Boydell concerns his status as an artist, and the personal opinion of his printmaking. Such myth states that he shed the identity of an engraver at the first opportunity, and renounced any inherent value within his work. Commentators who subscribe to this view promulgate a damaging, but predominant notion. They implicitly maintain that if Boydell was to belittle his own engraving, it is not the place of academia to claim otherwise. However, if this allegation can be proven false, then by the same logic, a revaluation of his character is validated. I have already demonstrated that Boydell's abdication from engraving clearly jars with false accounts which have been circulated. I shall now argue that the representational figure of Boydell - more specifically, his embodiment of the printmaker - likewise continued far beyond 1760.

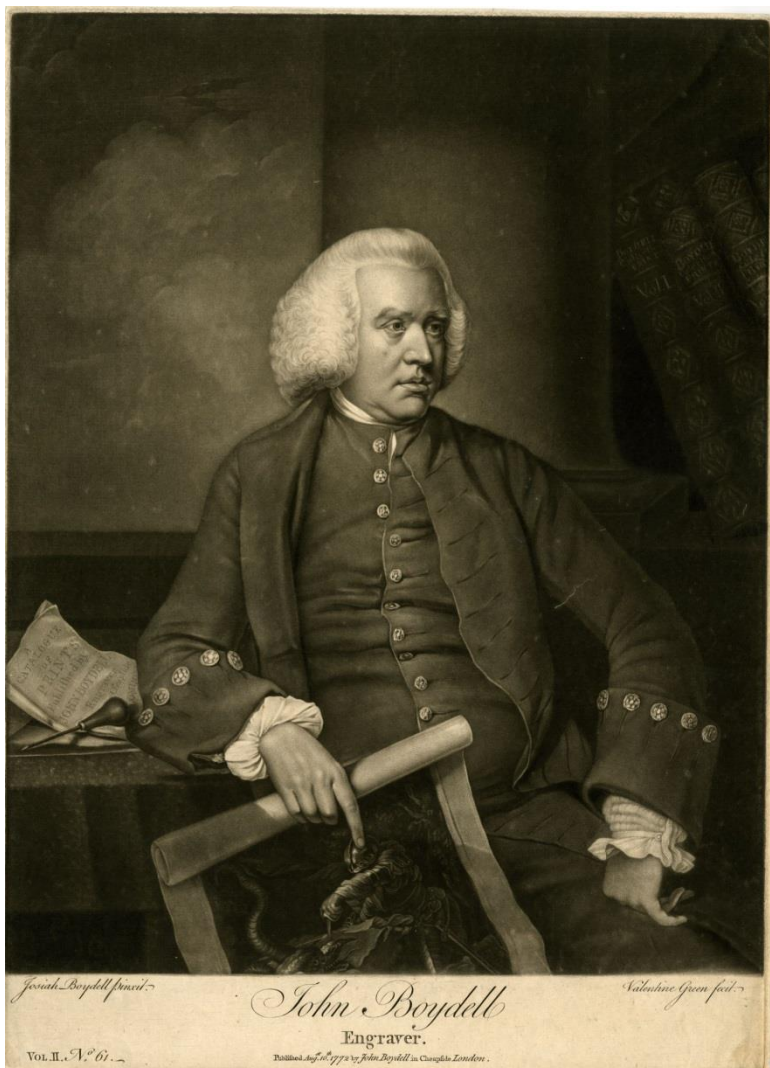


Fig. 17, Valentine Green after Josiah Boydell. *John Boydell, Engraver*

Since Boydell appears to have coveted this artistic identity, his famous portrait, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1772, seems a rational place to begin this discussion. The work was painted by his nephew, Josiah, and though some may cite a nepotistic bias, the relationship likely provided a far clearer dialogue for the means of representation. The canvas depicts Boydell in a ruminative pose, and garnished in the apparel of a prosperous tradesman. His left hand rests on his thigh; whilst the right grips an unfurled engraving. The image was granted greater currency through Valentine Green's mezzotint of the same year (Fig. 17), and it is from this work that several theories have been proposed. Sven Bruntjen posits that the engraving in Boydell's hand portrays Saint George, but concedes that 'there is no indication of a print with this subject in any of the

Boydell catalogs'.²¹³ Rosie Dias offers a different opinion, and indicates that it is Richard Earlom's engraving after Salvator Rosa's *Jason Charming the Dragon*.²¹⁴ Dias correctly identifies the subject of the print, but she misattributes the printmaker. The work was in fact executed by Boydell himself (Fig. 18).²¹⁵



Fig. 18, John Boydell after Salvato Rosa, *Jason*

A clue to this discovery can be found within Green's mezzotint, as on the ledge to Boydell's left, three volumes of his *Collection of Prints, Engraved after the Most Capital Paintings in England* are depicted. Within the 1773 edition of this folio, it is Boydell's name which appears alongside the print of the mythological hero, not

Earlom's.²¹⁶ Though somewhat conclusive, this attribution is supported by other sources. The collector and printerly expert Gilbert Paignon-Dijonval upholds the assignation, whilst a profile of Boydell, written in 1798, declares that a 'man who could engrave such a print as the Medea and Jason, from Salvator Rosa (...) must have been in the very first line' (of his profession.)²¹⁷ This is a finding of some importance. The existence of this design not only demonstrates that Boydell was still active as a printmaker at this point, but the terms he chooses for his representation intimate a clear desire to be identified as a 'practitioner of the art of engraving'.²¹⁸ A programmatic strategy can be said to underlie the image. An engraver's burin rests beside Boydell's arm, whilst his forefinger prominently directs the viewer's gaze towards his unfurled artwork.²¹⁹ Any equivocality as to the intention of the portrait is then quashed by the title line, which reads: 'John Boydell, Engraver.'

A survey of newspaper advertisements from this period reveals a corresponding agenda. Such sheets provided a vehicle for Boydell to commercially package his identity outside of the gallery space, and the guise he opted for was also that of the printmaker. In 1774, Boydell commissioned Richard Earlom to reproduce Claude Lorrain's *Liber Veritatis* whilst it was in the collection of the Dukes of Devonshire at Chatsworth. During the same year, he initiated a series of prints after paintings in Robert Walpole's collection at Houghton Hall. Upon courting subscriptions for these projects through public advertisements, Boydell is listed in the newspapers as an 'Engraver, in Cheapside.'²²⁰ Five years later, and after Lord Orford had sold Walpole's collection to Catherine the Great, Boydell still appears as a 'Graveur, Rue de Cheapside' in his catalogue raisonné.²²¹

Broadsheets grant a valuable insight into the ways in which Boydell wished to be perceived by spectators of the public press. He also provides a longer form of address, unimpeded by the narrow stricture of advertising blocks, in several of his editorial prefaces. These accounts are often employed by the very detractors who wish to downplay the importance of Boydell's work. However, the same accounts can be used to support the notion that Boydell valued his own printmaking. It may seem an incongruity, but the critics who manipulate Boydell's words, and level them against his figure, seem to disregard two important factors. Such opponents not only forgo an analysis of the entire breadth of his writings, but they discount the complex and contradictory tone of Boydell's authorial voice, which manages the 'paradox of humility and self-congratulation.'²²²

An example of this contradiction is provided by Boydell's *Alphabetical Catalogue of Plates*, 1803. Within this stock list, Boydell once again advertises the availability of his *Collection of One Hundred Views in England and Wales* for purchase. He included a new preface to mark the occasion, in which he states that the reason for their collation was 'more to show the improvement of the Art in this Country, since the period of their publication, than from any idea of their own merits'.²²³ On its own, the statement appears pejorative and deprecatory. It is a sound bite often employed by Boydell's critics, and upheld as a confession of his artistic inadequacy, but it is entirely bereft of context. In citing this sentence alone, such writers could be accused of confirmatory bias, as moments later, a counterstatement follows. Boydell's prologue continues to assert that 'To the lovers of the Fine Arts, this Volume (of his engravings) may be an object of some curiosity' (...) (for it) 'has somewhat contributed to bring the Art of Engraving to that wonderful state of perfection in England.'²²⁴ His initial statement is mollified by this boast, and further promotion for his own engraving can be found in the British Museum's 1790 version of his *Collection*, which contains an autograph note from Boydell to the sister of Sir Joseph Banks. In this dedication, Boydell writes 'it may be thought worthy of remark, that it is the only Book, that had the honour of making a Lord Mayor of London.'²²⁵

Boydell's self-effacement is often misinterpreted as self-condemnation. The adoption of a holistic approach, and the investigation of the prefaces to his other publications further emphasises this misconstrual. In the first volume of the *Collection of Prints, Engraved after the Most Capital Paintings in England*, Boydell urges that those of fine taste should look upon the enterprise 'without being too sanguine' in their expectations. He warns against bullish optimism, and states that the practice of English engraving was far from full maturity.²²⁶ A somewhat paradoxical text also presages his *Catalogue of the Pictures in the Shakespeare Gallery*. Despite the enterprise representing the height of his patronage, and a venture of which, by all accounts, he was eminently proud, Boydell employs a depreciative register. Upon admission to the Gallery, viewers were presented with a catalogue which warned that Shakespeare 'possessed powers which no pencil can reach' and that 'it must not be expected that the art of the Painter can ever equal the art of our Poet'.²²⁷

Examples of diffidence permeate these texts, and it appears to function as a ruse to forestall, or placate criticism of the undertakings. Thus when Boydell states that his work lacked merit, it may be more sensible to assume that his register attempted to discourage flippant review, not condemn his own printmaking. Moreover, such self-deprecation would be in direct opposition to the identity of the engraver which he appears to have actively disseminated through portraiture and the press. This chapter has initiated a process of exoneration for Boydell, and I have endeavoured to prove several assumptions as misrepresentative. It is now the role of my conclusion to ascertain if this testimony is enough to prompt a revised interpretation of his career and character, or whether my argument is but a 'repartee after the discourse has changed'.²²⁸

Conclusion

From the same essay in which the epigraph to this thesis derives, Jonathan Swift wrote that if an untruth ‘be believed only for an hour, it hath done its work.’²²⁹ Let us hope that he has underestimated the malleability of history, for Boydell’s printmaking has been plagued by misrepresentation for centuries, and it has been the aim of this paper to rectify such an image.

Given that he has attained vast celebrity through both his publishing and patronage, some may question why this aspect of Boydell’s career is in need of revision. However, it is this very celebration which necessitates the study, as my choice of topic stems from a desire to destabilise the monomathic interpretation of his figure. Despite the reams of material dedicated to Boydell, this is the first investigation which prioritises his printmaking above all other pursuits. In this respect, my thesis serves Boydell’s biography by sealing a conspicuous gap. Yet my inquiry surpasses the scope of biography alone, for the dearth in Boydell’s profile represents a larger absence within eighteenth-century scholarship. This study thus functions as a constituent for the urgent need to repopulate the Georgian era with printmakers. Such deficiency results in part from the predominance of William Hogarth, who is seen as something of a hegemon in discussions of British engraving. By way of a response, studies of this kind challenge Hogarth’s position, and the implicit marginalisation of his contemporaries. This goal is not motivated by any personal antipathy for Hogarth’s art, but by the wish for parity, as he is frequently seen as a leading light in an otherwise torpid environment.

Having hinted at the import of this thesis, I will now briefly relay the course of its approach. The structure was based upon a tripartite method, and divided the analysis into three general areas. These consisted of sections which addressed Boydell’s artistic beginnings; his most notable series of engravings, and the perception of him as a printmaker. My conclusion shall now extricate the more significant findings from their chapters, and apply them to the central objective of my research. I will thus demonstrate how these results intersect so as to present a case against the supposed ineptitude of John Boydell’s work. In aid of this goal, I shall begin with a sequence of judgements which can be made in relation to Boydell’s physical activities as a printmaker, and the historical context of his *Collection of One Hundred Views in England and Wales*.

Boydell’s ability was not gleaned from an illustrious master, nor nurtured in the environment of his apprenticeship. He did not pander to popular taste through reproductions, but married his independence as an engraver with a virtually unprecedented series of landscapes. The expansion of a commercial framework rubbishes any claim of cheapness in Boydell’s printmaking, whilst a survey of contemporary reviews likewise abolishes the charge of maladroitness. Contrary to these accusations, his *Collection* was hailed in both critical and commercial circles, and negotiated the seldom tread middle-ground between profitability and specialist acclaim. From tour guides to sketching trips, the influence of his series was far reaching, and anticipated larval dynamics such as the picturesque and Celticism.

Although they represent but a segment of my analysis, these statements frame Boydell as a printmaker of considerable ability, diligence, and intuition. Such findings not only show that harmful remarks concerning Boydell’s engraving are unfounded, but prove that they began to circulate long after his death. As a result, they

uphold the central premise of my work, and suggest that an element of falsehood has obscured the true worth of his printmaking. From the ensuing investigation, I discovered that three commonly held falsehoods are levelled against Boydell. These concern the view that Boydell's printmaking was pedestrian; that he renounced the value of his own work, and that he abandoned engraving the moment his career in publishing had commenced. By identifying the nature of such criticism, it was then a matter of tracing these myths to their source in order to scrutinise their validity. Any doubt surrounding Boydell's technical sagacity has already been quashed, and though the remaining fictions are more complex in their nature, the seeds for their growth can both be detected in the anecdote of Boydell destroying his *Coriolanus* plate.

Whilst the story began with William Granger's biography, the text in itself is far from deleterious. Instead, I may conclude that Granger's leitmotif provided the foundation for a range of secondary literature, and that his words have been distorted and exacerbated by those who wish to downplay the impact of Boydell's printmaking. Be it intentional or not, these effects have been damning, as Granger's anecdote has been bastardised and abetted in order to sustain the belief that Boydell's career as a publisher was both ineluctable, and an end to justify his earlier means.²³⁰ For Boydell's detractors, the tale provides an opportune moment to mark his abdication from engraving, as it precedes the point of any serious publishing ventures. It also instils the notion that Boydell condemned his own artwork, for he was willing to dramatically hack it to pieces. Boydell's printmaking is thus characterised as an auxiliary pursuit which raised capital and cultivated working relationships. This vocation is interpreted as a mere prologue, and seems to be as swiftly disposable as the fragments of his ruined plate.

There is little truth in this representation, and its contradistinction is provided by the factual discoveries of my analysis. Whilst Granger's anecdote is falsified by the plate's appearance in public notices, the charge of Boydell's abdication is likewise discredited by his vocational title in official registers. A decade later, Boydell still retained the identity of an engraver. Entrants to the Royal Academy were presented with such an image through Josiah Boydell's portrait, while subscribers to the *Most Capital Paintings in England* could delight in his works after Berchem and Rosa. Boydell was a stalwart with the burin, and though the yield of his printmaking waned, the point of its expiry and the moment of his death were almost concurrent.

In light of these deductions, I shall now propose the theoretical implication of my findings. Though this work is modest in its aims, it has the capacity to pave the way for more significant developments. Boydell represents one of the most acute cases of prejudice in British engraving. He has been the subject of neglect and falsification, but given that his merits can be conveyed, this argument functions as an emboldening plea to further studies. If a printmaker as historically maligned as Boydell can be said to have contributed to the advance of art, then this work will hopefully serve to instigate a ripple effect, and facilitate accounts of others who are habitually overlooked. A host of unsung engravers may benefit from a similar analysis. George Vertue and John Pye ostensibly fit this mould, whilst the same might be said for Pierre-Jean Mariette and Charles-Antoine Coypel. As a result, this attempt to amend Boydell's career has the potential to trigger a revision amongst the overall school of eighteenth-century printmakers. This appears to be a fertile area, and may provide a plausible route to continue my research.

The limitations encountered during this study might also present avenues through which I could augment my investigation. To illustrate this point, I will first suggest the need for a thorough examination of workshops and apprenticeships in the Georgian era; as throughout my inquiry, I struggled to find a parallel to support my analysis of Boydell's experience. These spaces represented a frontier somewhere between the artist's studio, and the artisan's factory. Because of this, they constitute a vital, though absent ingredient in the shifting discussions concerning the identity of printmaking. Such a survey would undoubtedly explain if the environment of Toms' firm was widespread, or whether Boydell was the victim of a particularly unique circumstance.

The social scope contained within key works on printmaking is another factor which requires expansion. By focusing upon the upper echelons of both production and consumption, existing accounts shirk an accurate appraisal of printmaking. The incorporation of popular woodcuts; penny pamphlets and chapbooks would thus mean that fiscal parameters were reset in accordance with a more truthful index. This modification would not only act to better inform the pricing of Boydell's prints, but would have a considerable impact upon the upshot of many others. Further supplements to this work may be proposed. A formalistic analysis of Boydell's printmaking might truly refute accusations made against him, whilst synthesising the evidence of my frameworks. An investigation into Boydell's mayoral and civic duties would also serve to complete his biography, though this arguably falls within the gamut of political history.

My thesis has proposed that a layer of falsehood has impinged upon the perception of Boydell's work. Such myth has likewise shrouded his figure; yet both conceptions appear to exist without a firm grounding. In my attempt to debunk these ideas, I have tried to problematise the traditional view of Boydell, and construct an alternative narrative in order to expound the historical significance of his art. Although Boydell's later ventures were undoubtedly more grandiose, an examination of his *Collection* integrates it within an upwards curve of ever-increasing ambition and intricacy. This places the Shakespeare Gallery into its correct perspective, as it was merely the last in a series of extraordinary projects. The Bard himself wrote that 'one man in his time plays many parts', and this sentiment seems particularly apt. From Gaius Maecenas to Cosimo de' Medici, Boydell has been assigned a number of roles by commentators who wish to aggrandise his feats. It is my firm belief that Boydell's status as a printmaker should be regarded in a commensurate manner, though it is for posterity to decide whether he is cast in this way.

Notes

Introduction:

¹ This quote is reproduced in Swift, 1784, p. 15.

² *Morning Post*, 5th May, 1789, p. 3.

³ Northcote states this in a letter to Mrs. Carey, dated October 3rd, 1821, whilst Edmund Burke himself verifies the Monarque line in his correspondence, 1965, p. 465. The event occurred at the Royal Academy dinner of 1789, after Sir Joshua Reynolds had requested a toast to Boydell.

⁴ The allusion to Colbert is contained within Edward Jerningham's poem entitled 'The Shakespeare Gallery', 1791. The Medici reference is more fraught. It stems from an article in *The World* which recounts Boydell's visit to Paris in 1787. Upon impressing the locals with his spirit and taste, 'the people there, who are not apt to be historical in their praise, began to talk of him with the Medici.' 29th October, 1787. Gerald L. Carr suggests that Boydell actively promoted this analogy, 1993, p. 310. So too does Rosie Dias, who argues that the alto-relievo sculpture of the Shakespeare Gallery façade conveys a 'humorous – albeit somewhat outrageous – allusion to the Gallery's proprietor as a modern-day Medici.' 2013, p. 48.

⁵ Found in Clayton, 1997, p. 209.

⁶ The Maecenas quote was also made by the Prince of Wales at the Academy dinner. Burke, 1965, p. 465. It is a remark concerning Gaius Maecenas, a Roman statesman and influential patron. Landseer's comment concerning Mummius is slightly more astute – that is to say – a disguised insult. It was delivered during his *Lectures on the Art of Engraving*, 1807, p. xx, and serves as an ironic example to emphasise Boydell's reputation as a patron and printseller. Following on from this comment, Landseer was hauled in front of a committee of the Royal Institution, chaired by Lord Morton, and asked to defend himself. He was charged for having denied Boydell his credit for advancing the art of engraving, and Landseer's series of lectures was henceforth terminated. This story is related by Farington, volume VII, 1982, pp. 2695 – 2696.

⁷ For an extended commentary on this satire, see Unverfehrt's 'John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery in Gillray's Caricatures', 1996.

⁸ Lippincott, 1983 p. 6.

⁹ Anthony Griffiths alludes to this when he states that the views of Boydell are awfully 'one-sided.' Griffiths, 1984, p. 11.

¹⁰ Friedman, 1976, p. 34. Bruntjen, 1985, p. 3.

¹¹ Dias, 2013, p. 10.

Chapter One

¹² The epigram derives from a quote in William Henry Toms' *A Satire on School-masters and School-mistresses*, 1730.

¹³ This information is provided by an anonymous manuscript in the Victoria and Albert Museum archives: MSL/1961/1740, p. 12.

¹⁴ Boydell, 1925, p. 81. The publication of an equestrian portrait of King Charles seems to have been particularly captivating, and Boydell reveals a palpable delight when describing 'the strokes of the Main and Taile'. The print in question was most likely Robert White's engraving of Charles II.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 81. Whether they were of common fauna or creatures from bestiaries is unknown.

¹⁶ Boydell, 1925, p. 83. A manual entitled *The London Tradesman* gives an insight into the occupation. R. Campbell was the author, and declares that 'They (engravers) ought to be early learn'd to draw, and kept in constant Practise; for there is nothing which the Hand is more liable to forget than the Performance of anything relating to Pictures.' Campbell, 1757, p. 337.

¹⁷ Digital accession number: 1871,0812.4010. The production details confirm that it was from his hand, though it is one of the few works attributed to him from this period. The inscription states: 'Teniers Pin.t' and 'J. Boydell sc. 1741. 2d Pl.'

¹⁸ Furthermore, Toms distributed prints for artists such as Hubert-François Gravelot, so ostensibly maintained some form of shop in Holborn. Clayton, 1997, p. 114.

¹⁹ Blomefield had intended to employ Andrew Motte to complete the designs, but upon the advice of his friend, Timothy Sheldrake, Blomefield chose Toms. Blomefield, Stoker, 1992, p. 39.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 40.

²¹ Hammelman, 1975, p. 29.

²² In addition to these works, Toms filled the succeeding years by producing four prospects of Gibraltar after John Mace, and a set of eight views from the island of Jersey. See Bryan, 1816, p. 486. He created a series of

satires after Egbert van Heemskerck, a portrait of Sir Phillip Percival after Van Dyck, and he collaborated with Thomas Badeslade upon the *Chorographia Britanniae* whilst Boydell was serving his apprenticeship.

²³ Redgrave, 1878, p. 433. This is also the date offered by the Witt Library Index at the Courtauld Institute of Art, 1978 p. 306.

²⁴ Walpole, 1937, p. 225.

²⁵ He executed some plates of siege engines for a British edition of Charles Rollin's *Histoire Ancienne*, but these are essentially his only known works from the period.

²⁶ Clayton, 1997, p. 114.

²⁷ Boydell, 1925, p. 85. Joseph Farington corroborates Boydell's words, and speaks of the 'phrenzy' which consumed Toms during his inebriation. Farington, Volume IV, 1979, p. 1415.

²⁸ In the satire, and located on the wall behind the ladle-wielding schoolmaster, a Latin inscription ends with the phrase 'Risum teneatis Amici'. It is strangely apt, as one cannot help but laugh at the exploits of Boydell's fellow apprentices.

²⁹ Edward Croft-Murray, a former keeper of the British Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings, makes this remark in his unpublished notes.

³⁰ Arthur Pond's Journal of Receipts and Expenses 1734 – 1750, are located within the British Museum print room, MS 23724. This story is also validated by Lippincott, 1983, p. 138.

³¹ Strutt, 1785, p. 194.

³² He writes, for instance, that 'with a piece of tobacco taken from his mouth, he could make an admirable drawing'. Ibid, p. 194.

³³ Boydell, 1925, p. 84.

³⁴ R. Campbell declares that the average work day for an engraver lasted fourteen hours. 1757, p. 337.

³⁵ Boydell, 1925, p. 84.

³⁶ Strutt, 1785, p. 194.

³⁷ Smith, 1895, p. 174. The date of Chatelain's death is commonly located in 1771, but Lucy Peltz provides evidence to the contrary. She demonstrates that William Bellers utilised his passing as a form of promotion, and when the publisher reissued a series of Lake District views in 1759, his advertisement included the words 'engrav'd in the highest taste by the late ingenious Chatelain' as an adjunct.

³⁸ Boydell, 1925, p. 84.

³⁹ Farington, Volume IV, 1979, p. 1415.

⁴⁰ Toms later attempted to commit suicide by cutting his own throat. He survived the act itself, but passed away months later on New Year's Day, 1777.

⁴¹ Boydell, 1925, p. 84.

⁴² These were published in 1742 by the Parisian printseller Michel Odieuvre, *Inventaire du Fonds Français*, 1934, p. 118.

⁴³ Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker reveal that Boitard supplied forty-one large plates for Joseph Spence's 1747 folio of Polymetis. *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler*, 1910, p. 233. He designed a portrait of John Custos and several scenes of his torture for W. Strahan's treatise on Freemasonry; five headpieces for John Gilbert Cooper's *The Life of Socrates*, and a folding plate of a flying machine for Ralph Morris' *A Narrative of the Life and Astonishing Adventures of John Daniel*. For an extended list of his works, consult Hammelman, 1975, 18-19.

⁴⁴ October 1748, p. 182.

⁴⁵ The state of Toms' workshop is perhaps attenuated by the ambivalent position of printmaking, for it represented a frontier somewhere between the artist's studio, and the artisan's factory. However, this theory is weakened by the fact that many printmakers of this time sought to convert printmaking into a gentlemanly vocation. Hallett writes that engravers appropriated the discourse of Jonathan Richardson's *An Essay on the Theory of Painting*, and aspired to the identity of liberal professionals in all avenues of their occupation. Hallett, 1999, p. 18. In light of this, Toms' firm may be seen as somewhat feudal.

⁴⁶ Winifred Friedman is amongst these commentators. Friedman, 1976, p. 34.

⁴⁷ Boydell, 1925, p. 83.

⁴⁸ R. Campbell, 1747, p. 99.

⁴⁹ Whitely, 1928, vol. 1, p. 157.

⁵⁰ Bignamini, 1991, p. 40. Postle expands upon this in his essay entitled 'The St Martin's Lane Academy: True and False Records'. He writes that the attribution must be seen as credulous because of the anonymity of the canvas. 'As a comparison with other eighteenth-century pictures of academies clearly demonstrates, one of the primary functions of such pictures was either programmatic – as in Charles-Joseph Natoire's drawing of the Académie Royale of 1743 – or intended to be a portrayal of the individual members (...) as with Martin Ferdinand Quadal's painting of the life-room in the Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien'. Postle, 1991, p. 38.

⁵¹ Vertue's chronicles are one of the most reliable eighteenth-century sources. Notebook 3, 1968, p. 76.

- ⁵² Egerton, 1988, p. 232.
- ⁵³ Katherine Esdaile identifies its exact location to have been Russell's Meeting House, the former studio of Louis-François Roubiliac. Esdaile, 1928, p.45. Ronald Paulson corroborates this view. Paulson, 1971, p. 94.
- ⁵⁴ Boydell, 1925, p. 83. This is also reiterated Peter Camper's account of the school, reproduced by Bignamini, 1988, p. 99-100.
- ⁵⁵ Boydell, 1925, p. 83.
- ⁵⁶ Myrone, 'St Martin's Lane Academy (act. 1735–1767)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, Sept 2013
- ⁵⁷ Kitson, 1968, p. 94. Rouquet, 1755, p. 23.
- ⁵⁸ Pears, 1988, p. 124. Solkin, 1993, p. 244.
- ⁵⁹ Boydell, 1925, p. 83.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 83.
- ⁶¹ Bignamini draws upon the memoirs of George Vertue and William Henry Pyne, as well as the subscription list for Joshua Kirby's *Dr. Brooke Taylor's Method of Perspective Made Easy*, and proposes that there were at least eighty-three members over the duration of the institution, 1991, pp. 114-117. Edward Rooker produced elevations of Thames-side palaces after Inigo Jones, whilst Johann Sebastian Müller engraved prospects of Vauxhall and Somerset House and Charles Grignion the Elder was readying Canaletto's plate of Ranelagh Gardens for production.
- ⁶² O'Connell, 2003, p. 161.
- ⁶³ Boydell, 1925, p. 83.
- ⁶⁴ Boydell, 1925, p. 83.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid, pp. 81-82.
- ⁶⁶ Donn, 1769, endpaper.
- ⁶⁷ Thomas Breaks' *A Complete System of Land-surveying* designates large sections to perspectival drawing, whilst Samuel Wyld's *The Practical Surveyor* contains numerous diagrams for conducting surveys of façades.
- ⁶⁸ David Solkin states that the technique of Boydell's landscapes attest to his training as a land surveyor. 1982, p. 30.
- ⁶⁹ Boydell, 1925, p. 83
- ⁷⁰ Turner delivered lectures in his role as Professor of Perspective, and his manuscripts demonstrate the influence of Jean Dubreuil's *La Perspective Pratique*. British Library, Department of Western Manuscripts, ADD MS 46151 AA folio 13.
- ⁷¹ Boydell, 1925, p. 83.
- ⁷² Ibid, pp. 83-84.
- ⁷³ William Hogarth commissioned Jean André Rouquet, a Franco-Swiss engraver, to translate commentaries of his prints so as to assist their distribution in France. Reports state that he was decidedly maddened by Rouquet's fee, but any chagrin is placed into perspective by the experience of Robert Sayer and Thomas Jefferys. In 1768, during a pioneering trip to Paris, the print-publishers were unable to communicate with the authorities, and were subsequently arrested for peddling pornography. Pedley, 1986, pp. 20-23.
- ⁷⁴ Clayton, 1997, p. 125
- ⁷⁵ Boydell, 1925, p. 84. Griffiths, 1992, p. ?
- ⁷⁶ Boydell, 1925, p. 83.
- ⁷⁷ Farington, 1819, p. cc. The terms of this negotiation are elucidated in Boydell's autobiography. Once he had paid Toms £30, and engraved a 'large plate of Penzance', the contract was terminated, and Boydell embarked upon his career as an independent printmaker. Boydell, 1925, p. 85.
- ⁷⁸ Farington states that Boydell paid the first half of his years rent 'by selling two plates which he had engraved', IV, 1979, p. 1415.
- ⁷⁹ *The Bookman's Journal & Print Collector*, 1920, p. 274.
- ⁸⁰ Boydell, *Alphabetical Catalogue of Plates*, p. 43 / p. 59. The frontispiece of Boydell's *Set of Sheep* in the British Museum contains the collector's stamp of John Deffett Francis, a Welsh painter, and considerable connoisseur of engraving.
- ⁸¹ Though likewise executed in the same year, Anderdon notes that the print was later displayed at the first exhibition of the Society of Artists in 1761. British Museum Print Room, The James Hughes Anderdon Catalogues, p. 237. The catalogue verifies this, as Boydell's work appears as the seventy-seventh entry.
- ⁸² Boydell, *A Collection of One Hundred Views in England and Wales*, 1790, catalogue no's 15-18.
- ⁸³ An original edition of *The Bridge Book* could not be located. However, a suggestion of its format, and an insight into another of Boydell's early collections is provided by the late Christopher Lennox-Boyd. Lennox-Boyd assembled one of the greatest private collections of British printmaking ever amassed, and catalogued these works in *Revelations*; a bibliographic system in the process of being purchased by the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. The catalogue of Lennox-Boyd alludes to the existence of a contemporaneous album by

Boydell. This work consists of nine etchings which combined original compositions by Boydell with works after David Teniers. The leaves of the folio were bound by string, and the collection bears the words 'Boydell's Landskips' as an inked manuscript title.

⁸⁴ Smith, 1828, p. 249.

⁸⁵ Pye, 1845, p. 57.

⁸⁶ Boydell, 1925, p. 86.

⁸⁷ Boydell's name appears in D.F. McKenzie's publication of the *Stationers Company Apprentices 1701 – 1800*. Under his name, the entry states: '1751, Cheapside, en (engraver), Fd by redemption, 12th Nov.' p. 45.

⁸⁸ Rose, 1993, p. 48.

⁸⁹ *The Case of Designers*, 1735, p. 3.

⁹⁰ Hallett, 1999, p. 128.

⁹¹ This is evinced by George Vertue's chronicles of engravers working in the capital, and through the dramatic proliferation of print advertisements in newspapers of the time, Vol. 30, p. 197.

⁹² Clayton, 1997, p. 82.

⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 89.

⁹⁴ The print industry in France played host to a similar climate. Charles-Nicolas Cochin wrote a text on the economics of piracy, and the savings that unscrupulous dealers could make through copies. See Fuhring, 1985, p. 178.

⁹⁵ Bruntjen, 1985, p. 49.

⁹⁶ Crace, 1868, p. 174.

⁹⁷ In an essay entitled 'Scratching the Surface', Michael Harris outlines their long-standing dynasties. Harris, 1997, p. 97-98.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 97-98. Photocopied records of the catalogues issued by the Bowles family can be found in the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, and testify to the variety of their stock.

⁹⁹ Swift, 1990, pp. 123-39.

¹⁰⁰ Jobert, 2010, p. 180.

Chapter Two

¹⁰¹ This argument is explicitly made by both Timothy Clayton, 1997, p. 115, and Sven Bruntjen, 1985, p. 12. The flood of publications which stress other aspects of Boydell's career also act to uphold this implication.

¹⁰² Richard D. Altick states that historians have never been inclined 'to probe into the manifold relations between art and the society that supported it', and this is especially true of the Georgian period. 1984, p. 1327.

¹⁰³ Clayton explains numerous cultural and artistic practices through the framework of anti-Gallicanism. In an otherwise accessible and encyclopaedic work on the print trade, this attribution becomes increasingly reductive and irksome.

¹⁰⁴ This is the title given to the dynamic by Neil McKendrick. He interprets it as the necessary convulsion in demand to match the increase in supply provided by the Industrial Revolution. McKendrick, 1983, p. 9.

¹⁰⁵ For a detailed analysis of the subject, see: E.A. Wrigley's *Poverty, Progress, and Population*, 2004, Eric Lionel Jones' *Growth Recurring: Economic Change in World History*, 1988, Harold Perkin's *The Origins of Modern English Society*, 1969, and David Hackett Fischer's *The Great Wave: Price Revolutions and the Rhythm of History*, 1996.

¹⁰⁶ See Brewer, 1997.

¹⁰⁷ Lichtenberg, 1969, p. 122. Lichtenberg also remarks upon his a meeting with John Boydell, and speaks with amazement about the proliferation of commercial outlets on Cheapside, p. 63. Smith, 1778, p. 223.

¹⁰⁸ Friedman, 1976, p. 31.

¹⁰⁹ See Habermas, 1991.

¹¹⁰ Brewer, 1997, p. 196.

¹¹¹ For a thorough discussion on the links between Georgian visual culture and commerce, consult Pointon, 1993.

¹¹² Daniel M. Abramson highlights the commercialisation of Georgian architecture from the perspective of the backlash that occurred in the nineteenth-century. He argues that such commercialisation 'underlay the profession's sense of malaise in the 1820's and 1830's.' Abramson, 2004, p. 150.

¹¹³ For an analysis of Chambers' commercial commissions, see Satoh, 1995, p. 15. This quote derives from a transcript of Soane's Lecture XI, delivered to the Royal Academy. See Soane, 1929, p. 180.

¹¹⁴ Alexander, 1993, p. 40. His failure to include the source only adds to the suppositional nature of his comment.

¹¹⁵ Lippincott, 1983, p. 148.

¹¹⁶ See J.H. Plumb, 'Hogarth's Progress', *The New York Review of Books*, xvii, no. 10, 1971, pp. 27 – 8.

¹¹⁷ Griffiths, 1984, p. 11.

¹¹⁸ My sincere gratitude goes to the Wolfson Centre of Research, Birmingham, for granting me access to the letters in their archive. An invoice for some of Boydell's works, sent to Boulton, can be seen in the archive under the catalogue number: MS 3782/6/192/72.

¹¹⁹ Timothy Clayton titles the development as the 'feminisation of the market', 1997, p. 137. Thomas Major and Francis Vivares both capitalised upon this trend, and supplied their prints as decorative wallpaper. Engraving was also used in Japanning and chinoiserie.

¹²⁰ Boydell's *Hammersmith, Looking down the Thames* was priced analogously.

¹²¹ London Chronicle, May 2, 1758.

¹²² August 20th, 1751. However, Sayer did offer the option of 'neat colouring', which cost an additional shilling. Of Boydell's views, Christopher Lennox-Boyd writes that 'examples of his landscapes with contemporary hand-colour are so rare as to lead to the conclusion that he was not interested in this market. Lennox-Boyd, 1996, p. 47.

¹²³ The first prints to be published after Canaletto's paintings of London were engraved by Remigius Parr, and disseminated by John Brindley in 1747. Robert Sayer then monopolised the market. Some of his series was produced from paintings belonging to Thomas West, whilst others were based on drawings by Canaletto, most likely produced at the behest of Sayer himself

¹²⁴ Bruntjen, 1985, p. 17.

¹²⁵ John Torbuck termed Snowdon 'the Fag End of Creation; the very Rubbish of Noah's Flood'. Torbuck, 1742, p. 62.

¹²⁶ See Dixon Hunt, 1997.

¹²⁷ For early English engravers working after Rosa and Claude, consult Manwaring, 1925, pp. 86 – 92.

¹²⁸ This series consisted of four plates. The titles are as follows: *A North View of Blenheim House and Park, A North East View of Blenheim House and Park, A North West View of Blenheim House and Park, and A View of the High Lodge.*

¹²⁹ Bruntjen, 1985, p. 12.

¹³⁰ The information concerning Boydell's Dutch views was provided by the *Revelations* database of the late Christopher Lennox-Boyd.

¹³¹ The drawing, which displays both Boydell's signature and the date, is held in the collection of the Guildhall Print Room, Corporation of London.

¹³² Clayton, 1997, p. 159. This point is illustrated by Thomas Gray, for when the poet undertook a tour of the north in 1769, 'he followed in the steps of printmakers'. Clayton, 1994, p. 16. Gray's letter to Joseph Wharton testifies this, as upon his visit to an alehouse in Malham, he writes that '(Thomas) Smith and (William) Bellers had also been there; and two prints of Gordale (Scar) have been engraved by them.' Gray, 1935, Letter 511a, Journal to Joseph Wharton.

¹³³ Clayton also reveals an amusing irony in this discussion. He states that the misconception for the birth of the picturesque is 'compounded by the misleading dates put on the engravings of Smith and Bellers when they were reissued to renew copyright (...) in 1769.' Clayton, 1997, p. 159. It was Boydell who republished these works, and in doing so, he has arguably contributed to the testament of critics who place its emergence at a later date.

¹³⁴ Smith's series was titled '*Eight of the most extraordinary Prospects in the Mountainous Parts of Derbyshire and Staffordshire*', though is commonly referred to as '*the Peak and Moorlands*'.

¹³⁵ Gilpin, 1976, p. 6.

¹³⁶ This is especially true of Thomas Smith, William Bellers, and Francis Vivares. Such engravers also employed these terms in the descriptions which accompanied their views.

¹³⁷ The series also includes prints of Ceunant Mawr and Rhaeadr Fawr.

¹³⁸ They were initially published on the 3rd April, 1750. This date is revealed by a classified advert in the London Evening Post. They were more expensive than his views of London, and retailed at 1s. 6d. per print.

¹³⁹ Sloman, 2002, p. 155. Clayton, 1997, p. 159.

¹⁴⁰ Defoe, 1725, Vol. 2, p. 89. Camden, 1701, p. 659.

¹⁴¹ Elizabeth Manwaring writes that Thomas Herring's commentary was 'the first instance of true picturesque vision in the eighteenth-century'. Manwaring, 1925, p. 170.

¹⁴² Herring, 1777, pp. 39 - 42.

¹⁴³ *The Torrington Diaries*, 1970, p. 168.

¹⁴⁴ Sloman, 2002, p. 153.

¹⁴⁵ Solkin, 1982 p. 81.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 81.

¹⁴⁷ Hayes, 1982, p. 39.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 37.

¹⁴⁹ The list is reproduced by Timothy Clayton, and reveals the names of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Francis Vivares and Thomas Jefferys amongst others. 1997, p. 177.

¹⁵⁰ Andrews, 1990, p. 112.

¹⁵¹ Ilaria Bignamini recognises these developments, and states that a key flaw in Grand Tour research surrounds the fact that it is ‘developed independently of investigations into the Tour of Britain.’ Bignamini, 1997, p. 32.

¹⁵² Sterne, 1842, p. 296.

¹⁵³ Evans, 1956, p. 118.

¹⁵⁴ The figure of the macaroni was a popular subject for English caricaturists. Named after the Italian pasta dish, the satire was aimed at tourists who had spent a long time on the continent. They were represented as foppish and affectatious. See Rauser, 2008, pp. 56 – 60.

¹⁵⁵ Warburton, 1753, p. vii. Borlase, 1769, p. v. John Warburton was a herald, antiquary and cartographer who wrote on British antiquities. William Borlase was a naturalist by trade, but compiled the first chronological account for the antiquities of Cornwall. He was also an expert in Druidical customs.

¹⁵⁶ *The General Advertiser*, 23rd August, 1751.

¹⁵⁷ Clayton, 1997, p. 163.

¹⁵⁸ Solkin, 1982, p. 30.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁰ One instance of this can be seen in Boydell’s print of Dorchester, contained within the Bodleian Library, as Defoe’s description is almost perfectly replicated by Boydell’s burin. Bodleian Library, Oxford, Gough Maps Folio VI. Defoe, Vol. 1, 1742, pp. 295 – 296.

¹⁶¹ This ability separated him from a large number of printsellers. Aside from a selection of immigrants, as well as Thomas Major - who had trained with Le Bas in Paris – competent French speakers were in short supply. Thus, the employment of these bilingual captions was something of a novelty at the point that Boydell first disseminated his prints. The significance of these inscriptions is represented by the business practice of Robert Sayer, for as the 1750’s wore on, an increasing amount of his views were embellished with such lines.

¹⁶² The captions of these prints are in French alone, and Smith’s views prioritise the appearance of new buildings in London. Little attempt is made for technical quality. Instead, the conveying of information appears to be the primary concern. Timothy Clayton compares these prints to Domenico de’ Rossi’s *Studio d’architettura civile di Roma*, which achieved great success in Paris. Clayton, 1997, p. 76.

¹⁶³ O’Connell, 2003, p. 48.

¹⁶⁴ Hallett, 1999, p. 179.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 179.

¹⁶⁶ Brewer, 1997, p. 459.

¹⁶⁷ Hallett, 1999, p. 179.

¹⁶⁸ Von La Roche, 1933, p. 82 - 84. She rode with a company called ‘The Three Bumpers’. Her coach ‘held five comfortably, was lined with fur cloth, and so well built and lacquered as befitted a stage-coach. Four horses and two postillions’ ferried her around the capital: p. 82.

¹⁶⁹ Hallett, 1999, p. 179.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 178.

¹⁷¹ Adams, 1983 p. 116.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, p. 116. In Harrison’s work, the views suggested by Boydell’s works were drawn by J. Oliphant and engraved by John Royce. They reveal a clear debt to their model.

¹⁷³ Grounds for supposing Boydell’s influence are straightforward, given that the two were apprenticed to William Henry Toms.

Chapter Three

¹⁷⁴ Lemprière, 1810, p. 219.

¹⁷⁵ Pye, 1845, p. 57.

¹⁷⁶ Farington, 1819, p. cc. Ackermann, 1808, p. 122. Rudolf Ackermann’s lithographic press virtually governed the print market of early nineteenth-century London, but he pays homage to a publisher who had come before him. He praises the ‘perseverance and industry’ of Boydell; facets which, according to Ackermann, manifest in the ‘great number’ of prints that he engraved showing the neighbourhoods of London.

¹⁷⁷ Stephens, 1798, p. 426.

¹⁷⁸ *The European Magazine and London Review*, April, 1792, p. 243.

¹⁷⁹ Clayton, 1997, p. 120.

¹⁸⁰ Vertue, Notebook VI, 1947, pp. 182 - 190.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 191.

¹⁸² Vertue most likely refers to Francis Vivares' engraving after Gaspar Poussin, p. 200. James Laver is particularly praiseworthy of this series. He states that their publication marked the moment that the genre of landscape progressed once again following the death of Wenceslaus Hollar. The prospects of Leonard Kniff and Thomas Badeslade, or the views of Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, only accentuated this decline. 1976, pp. 55 – 56.

¹⁸³ Vertue, Notebook VI, 1947, p. 181.

¹⁸⁴ The *Journal Britannique*, published in Den Haag between the years of 1750 – 1753, provided details of certain printmaking initiatives in Britain, though its pages predominantly reviewed literary works. See Uta Janssens-Knorsch's *Matthieu Maty and the Journal Britannique 1750-1755 : a French view of English literature in the middle of the 18th century*. The Academia Imperialis Franciscanus was an Augsburg-based institution which announced printerly schemes through its weekly gazettes. They began in 1756, and ended in 1761.

¹⁸⁵ Clayton, 1997, p. 264.

¹⁸⁶ *Neue Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften und der freyen Künste*, 1766, p. 343.

¹⁸⁷ This list included figures such as Richard Earlom, Thomas Major and James Basire - the master of William Blake. The three names could be regarded as the most skilled British printmakers of their generation.

¹⁸⁸ The *Göttingische scholars ads* was an influential journal which covered matters of cultural and scientific importance. It was based in Göttingen.

¹⁸⁹ *Nachrichten von Künstlern und Kunst-Sachen*, 1769, p. 363. *Idée Générale d'une Collection Complete d'estampes*, 1771, p. 102.

¹⁹⁰ Heineken, 1789, pp. 286-287

¹⁹¹ A version of this print can be seen in the Yale Centre for British Art.

¹⁹² See Griffiths, 1992.

¹⁹³ Basan, 1767, p. 76. This statement is ambivalent. Berchem was heavily copied, so Basan's allusion hints at a certain homogeneity in Boydell's choice of reproduction. However, there is an obverse way of interpreting this. Since Berchem was so widely duplicated, and yet Basan saw fit to make special mention of Boydell's versions, he could be said to have placed Boydell near the apex of Berchem's imitators.

¹⁹⁴ Georg Friedrich Brandes also assembled what was considered to be Germany's most distinguished private library of engravings from the Enlightenment period.

¹⁹⁵ This is somewhat germane. The collection of the Dresden print room largely stemmed from the House of Wettin; a former Electorate of Saxony. It was Étienne François de Choiseul who called Basan 'le maréchal de Saxe de la curiosité'. The quote can be found in Clayton, 1997, p. 177.

¹⁹⁶ Brewer, 1997, p. 479. *Gray's Inn Journal*, 1753, p. 41. Reprinted in *The Gray's Inn Journal, In Two Volumes*, 1756, vol. 1, p. 263.

¹⁹⁷ This poem, penned by an anonymous author, states that 'Boydell, careful of his fame, (had) Grafted it on to Shakespeare's name'. Originally published in *The Monthly Magazine*, January 1st, 1805. Found amongst the Whitley Papers, British Museum Print Room, p. 551. This entrenchment that I allude to derives from the fact that most writers use the Shakespeare Gallery as a point of departure to expound Boydell's career. A brief glimpse at my bibliography attests to this point.

¹⁹⁸ A description of John Boydell's funerary monument can be found in George Godwin and John Britton's *The Churches of London*. Buried at St Olave's Church, his inscription states that 'as an engraver, he attained considerable eminence in his art', p. 366. Although one would assume that Boydell's posthumous reception largely stemmed from his memorial, most accounts circulated soon after his death proved somewhat divergent.

¹⁹⁹ Granger, 1805, p. 1459.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 1459.

²⁰¹ Ernst Kris writes about recurring leitmotifs in artist's biographies. He states that they are explicitly linked with the 'pleasure gain', and continues to explain that 'as a rule, the anecdote deals with a prominent person or a hero (...) so that we can identify with him more easily.' What is related 'presents the great man as one with human foibles, or else shows his adroitness in a new and unexpected light.' Kris, 1979, p. 10. Kris does however conclude that whether an anecdote is true or not is irrelevant; their only significant factor is that they recur frequently enough to warrant a typical image of the artist. I must take issue with this statement, for this 'typical image' of Boydell has practically destroyed accounts of his printmaking.

²⁰² Quin, 1814, p. 30. Chalmers, 1812, p. 303.

²⁰³ The anecdote is for example relayed by Sven Bruntjen; in spite of the fact that his 1985 work is the most definitive account on Boydell's career, p. 54.

²⁰⁴ The *Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, 1757, p. 291. The *Scot's Magazine*, 1757, p. 398.

²⁰⁵ Archenholtz, 1798, p. 180.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 180.

²⁰⁷ McKenzie, 1978. Under Boydell's name, his entry states: 1752, Cheapside, En (engraver); 1766, printseller. Fd by redemption, 12th Nov. 1751.'

²⁰⁸ Ordeanu, 2006, p. 91.

²⁰⁹ Richter, 1933, p. 218.

²¹⁰ Clement, 1874, p. 131.

²¹¹ MSL/1961/1740/ p. 16. Unfortunately, I was not able to photograph the engraving, but an image of Benjamin Smith's stipple of the same work can be seen in the Fogg Museum, Harvard.

²¹² These principles derive from Samuel van Hoogstraten's *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst*, and are illustrated in his *Peepshow with Views of the Interior of a Dutch House*, National Galley, London. Inside of this perspective box, the banderoles of three putti are inscribed with the motivation of an artist: *lucri causa*, *amoris causa*, and *gloria causa*.

²¹³ Bruntjen, 1985, p. 66. John Chaloner Smith and Alfred Whitman (Valentine Green's biographer) also misread the subject, and presumed the print to be of St. George and the Dragon. Smith, 1884, p. 538. Whitman, 1902, p. 52.

²¹⁴ Dias, 2013, p. 105. This is also the theory put forth by Pressly, 2007, p. 60.

²¹⁵ This view is shared by Louise Siddons, who stresses that Boydell's hand gesture in the portrait is 'one of ownership', p. 76. Whilst Siddons concedes that Boydell created the print, she states that his reason for doing so was 'simply to save money', p. 75. Once again, he is chastised by the framework of commerce.

²¹⁶ Catalogue entry no. 24 in the plates after historical scenes. The painting was in the collection of the Earl of Bessborough, and Boydell's reproduction was priced at five shillings.

²¹⁷ Bénard, 1810, p. 54, catalogue no. 1596. Stephens, 1798, p. 427.

²¹⁸ However, a scratched state in the British Museum dates the work to 1765. Dias, 2013, p. 105.

²¹⁹ This is the same pictorial device which is used by Jean Marc Nattier in his portrait of Bernard Picart. In the work, Picart points to a study from his *Gemmae Antiquae Caelatae*. Credit must go to Nelke Bartelings, who drew my attention to Nicolaas Verkolje's 1715 print of the scene.

²²⁰ The adverts can be found in the *London Chronicle* or *Universal Evening Post*, March 24th 1774, and the *Daily advertiser*, July 20th 1775.

²²¹ Boydell, 1779, p. 129.

²²² Friedman, 1976, p. 45. Winifred H. Friedman is one of the few academics who identifies the fraughtful nature of Boydell's prose.

²²³ Boydell, 1803, p. xv.

²²⁴ Ibid, p. xv.

²²⁵ British Museum Print Room. Signed May 29th, 1792.

²²⁶ Boydell, 1788, p. xvi.

²²⁷ Boydell, 1789, p. ix.

²²⁸ Jonathan Swift, continuation of 'Falsehood flies' passage. Swift, 1784, p. 15.

Conclusion:

²²⁹ Swift, 1784, p. 15.

²³⁰ By the same principle, Boydell's own writing has been subjected to several acts of contextomy, and manipulated so as to undermine his art.

A Select Appendix of Artists and Engravers

William Bellers (fl.1749 – 1773) was a landscape painter and engraver. Little is known of his training, though it is believed that he matriculated at the University of Oxford in 1734 as an ‘illuminator’ and ‘privilegiatus’. Bellers was one of the most active engraver-entrepreneurs of the period. He is best known for his engravings of the Lake District, which constitute the greatest part of his corpus. Such views were amongst the substantial number of landscapes that he contributed to the Free Society of Artists exhibitions. Bellers worked from Poppins Court, Fleet Street, for over two decades. In 1774, the land tax registers recorded this house as vacant, though his name did not appear in local obituaries.

Louis-Philippe Boitard (fl.1733 – 1767), designer and engraver, achieved a career of considerable merit. Although he is presumed French by birth, his father, François, was employed as an illustrator for Jacob Tonson’s editions of Shakespeare’s plays. Louis-Philippe’s earliest known work - executed in 1733 - was a print depicting an eight-foot German. He engraved Robert Paltock’s *Peter Wilkins*, Richard Wilson’s *Scribleriad*, as well as a number of political satires directed at the Duke of Cumberland. Boitard supplied designs for the Battersea enamel factory, and his work was also transferred onto Worcester porcelain. A series of freemasonic illustrations in 1767 was his last recorded work, though the date of his death is unknown.

Jean-Baptiste Claude Chatelain (1710 – 1758) was a talented, albeit it dissolute printmaker and topographical draughtsman. Uncertainties persist about his early life, though Samuel Redgrave suggests that he served in Flanders with the Armée de Terre. His earliest plates reveal a debt to Jean-Antoine Watteau, thus intimate the possibility of French training. In addition to his own naturalistic views of English sites, Chatelain produced scenes for George Bickham’s *Beauties of Stow*, and etched works after Marco Ricci. Spasmodically employed by Rocque, Vivares and Pond, Chatelain may also have attracted business as a drawing-master. Such posts were ultimately unfulfilled. He died impoverished, and was buried at the expense of Pest-fields parish, Carnaby.

Joseph Farington (1747 – 1821), landscape painter and diarist. He was educated in Manchester, though left for London in 1763 to train with Richard Wilson. Farington joined the Royal Academy Schools at their inception in 1769; became a full academician in 1785, and held a regular place on the influential hanging committee. His meticulous, accurate topography found a fruitful market amongst tourists, and in 1793, these skills were used to illustrate the official record for the Siege of Valenciennes. A year later, Farington produced seventy-six aquatints for Boydell’s *History of the River Thames*. His diary - which records entries from 1793 until the day of his death - provides an invaluable source on artists and the institutions they inhabited. The sixteen volumes were sold at auction to the *Morning Post* in 1921.

Hubert-François Gravelot (1699 – 1733), engraver, book-illustrator, and a major exponent for the introduction of the Rococo style into English art. Parisian by birth, Gravelot was educated at the Collège des Quatre Nations, and trained in the studio of François Boucher. In 1733, he was invited to London by Claude du Bosc to contribute headpieces for the English edition of Picart’s *Ceremonies*. During this period, his output was considerable in both variety and extent, though works of note include plates for John Gay’s *Fables*; ornamental surrounds for Houbraken’s famous portraits, and designs of the 1588 Anglo-Spanish battles from the tapestry hangings in the House of Lords. He lectured at the St. Martin’s Lane Academy. In 1745, and during the hostile hangover from the battle of Fontenoy, Gravelot returned to Paris amidst fatuous accusations that he was a French spy. Gravelot was still receiving commissions from English booksellers at the time of his death.

Valentine Green (1739 – 1813) was the finest mezzotint engraver of his generation. Having pursued a career in law for two years, Green apprenticed himself to Robert Hancock; a figure who designed engravings for the Worcester Porcelain Factory. He moved to London in 1766, and became involved with the Incorporated Society of Artists. Green was elected director in 1771, and used their exhibitions to provide a platform for his striking technique. In 1773, he was installed as mezzotint engraver to the king. Two years later, and as an upshot of his tour through the Rhineland, Green was also appointed engraver to the elector of the academy at Mannheim and

Düsseldorf. His most noteworthy publications include *A History of the Queens of England*, which was directed under the patronage of Queen Charlotte. He famously reproduced Gainsborough's portrait of Garrick with Shakespeare's bust, as well as Reynolds' self-portrait with Michelangelo. Green engraved companion pieces depicting Regulus and Hannibal after Benjamin West, and replicated the chiaroscuro from Wright of Derby's *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump*. He was selected as keeper of the British Institution in 1805.

Georg Daniel Heumann (1691 – 1759), German artist and printmaker. He was based in Nuremberg, though was also employed as the engraver to the Court of Brandenburg. In 1724, Heumann created a series of views showing the ecclesiastical monuments of Vienna for John Andrea Peeffel. He designed a suite of sword hilts entitled the *Neu Inventirte Degengefass*, and a rare set of prints depicting German tradesmen. A talented anatomical draughtsman, Heumann was the principal engraver for Johann Jakob Scheuchzer's *Physica Sacra* and produced plates for Albrecht von Haller. The 16 year old Christian von Mechel learned the rudiments of his trade as Heumann's apprentice.

Thomas Major (1720 – 1799) was the first English landscape engraver of true renown. He was taught to etch by Hubert-François Gravelot. In 1745, Major accompanied Jacques Philippe Le Bas to Paris, and published his prints from an apartment in Rue St. Jacques. He returned to England in 1748. Upon reproducing two works after Teniers in the collection of the Prince of Wales, he was appointed his engraver. Major was subsequently employed as the seal engraver to the King, and enjoyed the patronage of the Duke of Cumberland. His foremost works were of an architectural nature. These included the *Ruins of Palmyra*, and similar plates from the site of Baalbec. He was made an original associate engraver for the Royal Academy in 1770, and exhibited *The Good Shepherd*, after Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, in 1776.

Johann Sebastian Müller (1715 – 1792), engraver, who trained under Martin Tyroff in Nuremberg. He moved to London in 1744, and his first advertised publication - the print of a 'Tyger' after Johann Elias Ridinger - was issued in 1748. Müller designed a large number of vignettes for Baskerville's editions of Horace and Virgil, as well as illustrations for the works of Swift, Dryden and Milton. He was employed by the University of Oxford, and executed a significant series of prints after the Arundel marbles. In spite of such service, Müller's true passion was botany, or so he claimed in the preface to his most celebrated work: *An Illustration of the Sexual System of Linnaeus*, 1779. Müller entertained commissions for several horticultural guides, and in 1785, engraved all the plates to Lord Bute's *Botanical Tables*. He died at Lambeth, London.

Arthur Pond (1701 – 1758) was an artist and printseller, whose career began under the tutelage of John Vanderbank. In 1725, he visited Italy in the company of Daniel Wray and John Dyer. This sojourn had a profound effect upon his career. His pastel portraits reveal the influence of Rosalba Carriera, whilst his engraving popularised the caricatures of Pier Leone Ghezzi. Pond's promotion of old masters, published in partnership with the Knapton booksellers, established a widespread appreciation of such printmaking. He was elected a fellow of both the Royal Society, and the Royal Society of Antiquaries: the only artist of his generation to do so.

Robert Price (1717 – 1761) was a famed gentleman artist. He was the son of Uvedale Price, and the father of his more famous namesake. Price received his education in Rome from Giovanni Battista Busiri. Inspired by Boydell, and in the company of the naturalist Benjamin Stillingfleet, Price made sketching excursions into Wales and the Wye Valley. His drawing was an important precursor for both the picturesque, and the gothic revival; he also anticipated the schemes of his son with an important development of Foxley Vye.

John Pye (1749 – c.1789) studied under Thomas Major, and specialised in landscape etching. He is largely remembered for his reproductive printmaking. Plates after Cuyp, Rembrandt, Vernet and Kauffmann feature heavily in his oeuvre. Pye enrolled as a student of the Royal Academy Schools in 1777, though much like George Vertue, his artistic writings overshadowed his practical output.

Edward Rooker (1724 – 1774) achieved renown in both art and theatre. Apprenticed to Henry Roberts, Rooker undertook a number of architectural commissions in the late 1740's, and his sectional view of St. Paul's

Cathedral prompted Horace Walpole into terming him the ‘Marc Antonio of architecture.’ From a life-sized engraving of George III’s coronation crown, to his London scenes after the Sandby brothers, he was involved in a number of significant projects. Aside from his printmaking, Rooker attained notoriety as a Harlequin for the New Wells Theatre Company, and was still active in pantomime a month before his death on the 22nd November, 1774.

Thomas Smith (1720 – 1767), artist and printmaker, who made a telling contribution to the rise of English landscape. His first dated work – entitled the Peak – contained eight views of valleys, cliffs and waterfalls at a collection of beauty spots in the Midlands. It was an important precursor to the picturesque sensibility. Smith created views of country seats, including Chatsworth and Haddon Hall. He was also responsible for some remarkable scenes of the smelting complex at Coalbrookdale, 1758. These images record in detail the ironworks of Abraham Darby, and stand as two of the earliest ever industrial landscapes. He died in Bristol, but is known by the moniker, Smith of Derby.

John Tinney (c.1706 – 1761) was an engraver and printseller. He became the pupil of John Stuart in 1721, and after a spell in France, Tinney returned in 1737 to set up shop at the sign of the Golden Lion, Fleet Street. In addition to his *Compendium Anatomicum* – an important early guide to human anatomy – Tinney published a number of topical and satirical collections. He was at ease with a variety of printerly mediums. Anthony Walker and William Woollett were amongst Tinney’s apprentices, and display a debt to his technique.

Peter Toms (1726 – 1777), painter and herald. He was apprenticed to Thomas Hudson, and in 1746, was appointed Portcullis Pursuivant by the College of Arms. Toms specialised in the painting of drapery. Following the death of Joseph Van Aken, he became the leading practitioner of this form, and was employed by Hudson, Cotes, Ramsay and Reynolds. Amongst other works, the drapery in Reynolds’ paintings of Lady Elizabeth Keppel and Master Thomas Lister has been attributed to Toms. He was elected a founding member of the Royal Academy, and exhibited portraits between the years of 1769 and 1771.

Francis Vivares (1709 – 1780) was a highly esteemed landscape engraver. Born in Saint-Jean-du-Bruel, he studied etching in his native France, and then moved to London in the 1730’s to enlist in the Marlborough Street studio of Jacopo Amigoni. He engraved plates after Gaspard Dughet for Arthur Pond, as well as pioneering scenes of picturesque scenery for Thomas Smith of Derby. His first solo publication was launched in 1749, and by 1752, he managed his own print shop on Newport Street. A private retrospective compiled by Viscount Fitzwilliam shows that Vivares would publish two major landscapes per annum. He was widely considered the finest engraver of Claude, and was reproducing *The Enchanted Castle* at the moment of his death on November 26th, 1780.

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List of Illustrations

Figure 1, James Gillray, *Shakespeare Sacrificed;-or-The Offering to Avarice*, Hand-coloured etching, 1789. Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 2, W. H. Toms after Egbert van Heemskerck, *A Satire on School-masters and School-mistresses*, etching and engraving, 1730. Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 3, William Hogarth, *The Fellow 'Prentices at their Looms*, etching and engraving, 1747. Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 4, John Boydell, Title page to *A Set of Sheep after Berchem*, etching, 1746. Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 5, John Boydell, *A View of Westminster Bridge / Vue du Pont de Westminster*, etching and engraving, 1753. Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

Figure 6, Anonymous, *Westminster Bridge*, from Bowles' *Perspective views in and about London*, coloured etching, 1753. Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 7, John Boydell, *View of London Bridge, Taken near St. Olave's Stairs*, etching and engraving, 1751. Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

Figure 8, John Boydell, *Snowden, in the Vale of Llan Berriis*, etching and engraving, 1749. Grosvenor Prints, London.

Figure 9, John Boydell, *Penmaen Mawr, in Caernarvonshire*, etching and engraving, 1749. Sanders of Oxford.

Figure 10, Richard Wilson, *Pembroke Town and Castle*, oil on canvas, 1774. National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.

Figure 11, John Boydell, *A View of Sunbury Looking up the River Thames*, etching and engraving, 1751. Grosvenor Prints, London.

Figure 12, John Boydell, *A View near Twickenham / Vue dessine près du Twickenham*, etching and engraving, 1753. Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 13, John Boydell, *A View of Greenwich Hospital*, etching and engraving, 1751. Royal Museum of Greenwich.

Figure 14, John Royce after J. Oliphant, *View of Greenwich from Deptford*, etching and engraving, c. 1775. Royal Museum of Greenwich.

Figure 15, John Boydell after Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, *The Finding of Cyrus*, etching and engraving, c. 1765. Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 16, Georg Daniel Heumann after John Boydell, *View of London Bridge, Taken near St. Olave's Stairs*, etching and engraving, c. 1755. Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

Figure 17, Valentine Green after Josiah Boydell. *John Boydell, Engraver*, mezzotint, 1772. Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 18, John Boydell after Salvator Rosa, *Jason*, etching and engraving, c. 1765. Trustees of the British Museum.

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Abstract

In discussions of British printmaking, the name of John Boydell is ubiquitous. A plethora of accounts have been dedicated to his role in the formation of an export trade for British engraving, or his efforts to elevate an indigenous school of history painting through ventures such as the Shakespeare Gallery. However, and by some bizarre incongruity, an investigation of his own printmaking has never been attempted. This is the first study which has prioritised the subject.

Such an omission arguably stems from the excesses of Boydell's acclaim, and the subsequently monomathic interpretation of his figure. He is historically lionised for his publishing and patronage, and current academia sustains this panegyric by focusing upon these roles. Whilst research naturally follows the peaks in the vicissitudes of one's career, the example of Boydell is rather exceptional, for the surfeit of his applause has had a directly adverse effect upon studies of his printmaking. Moreover, the analysis of Boydell's work has been further encumbered by a series of myths which were generated shortly after his death, and exacerbated by later commentary. An ironic dynamic is thereby presented whereby the notion of myth colours both the nature of his eulogy, and the cursory statements of his engraving which results from its perpetuation. Thus, the central purpose of this study is to debunk the falsehood surrounding the supposed ineptitude of John Boydell's engraving.

As an upshot of this, there are many disciplinary assumptions concerning Boydell's output. His engraving is dismissed as maladroit and provincial, yet acted to raise the considerable capital with which Boydell began his career in speculative publishing. His prints are frequently invoked as mediocre; but it is an opinion formed by an over-reliance on anecdote, and a reductive analysis of contemporary sources relating to his art. This work is driven by an attempt to problematise the conventional view of Boydell, and the wish to construct an alternative narrative concerning the historical significance of his art.

In order to do so, my investigation proposes a tripartite approach, loosely interwoven within a chronology spanning the central decades of the eighteenth-century. This consists of three chapters which address Boydell's artistic beginnings; his most notable series of engravings, and his posthumous perception as a printmaker. My first section - situated in the 1740's - examines the launching of Boydell's profession as an engraver. The chapter opens by elucidating Boydell's period of apprenticeship under William Henry Toms. It then explores his enrolment in the St. Martin's Lane Academy, and subsequent establishment as an independent engraver at the Sign of the Unicorn, in Cheapside. Various deductions may be drawn from these focuses.

To begin with - and through a series of snippets pertaining to his lifestyle and working habits - the figure of W. H. Toms can be regarded as sybaritic and seldom-employed. His firm was a commensurate scene of farce, and appeared more conducive to depravity than artwork. By virtue of this vice, Boydell sought other forms of education. In contrast to Tom's workshop, my analysis of St. Martin's Lane reveals it to be a nexus of creative development, and an agent through which Boydell established connections with the most ambitious artists of his generation. This more constructive schooling was also augmented by certain strands of auto-didacticism; for

upon finishing at the Academy each evening, he would return home in order to master French and perspectival drawing. My last section then details the combative and hazardous nature of the London market for fledgling printmakers, but shows that Boydell's industry and self-instruction provided him with the requisite qualities to succeed. In closing, it juxtaposes Boydell's aspiration to the identity of an engraver-entrepreneur amongst the perennial and restrictive characterisation of the printmaker as a subordinate craftsman.

Having outlined Boydell's beginnings, my second chapter analyses the historical contextualisation of Boydell's most significant work: his *Collection of One Hundred Views in England and Wales* (c. 1755). Three theoretical paradigms were employed so as to nuance the inquiry, and provide points of departure for illuminating the success of his series. The first section applies a commercial methodology. My study then reinterprets Boydell's views via the constructs of tourism, and the nascent cult of the picturesque which was growing in mid-century Britain.

The importance of this monetary framework must be stressed, for whenever the success of Boydell's engraving is acknowledged, it is mollified by reports which claim its cheapness as the lone factor. My methodology acts to destabilise this opinion, and shows such judgments to be simplistic, as Boydell's printmaking emerged in tandem with a vast upheaval in the sociology and economics of British art. A survey of contemporary broadsheets also demonstrates that some of the finest topographical printmakers of Boydell's generation made similar, if not more drastic allowances to meet this new structure of demand.

By examining the relationship which entwined topography and tourism, my analysis continues to reveal that Boydell utilised Daniel Defoe's *Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* in the creation of his works. He then correspondingly set a precedent for later guides, and popularised outlying vicinities of London before they had been standardised and subsumed by touristic rhetoric. This segment also champions the notion that such views - emblazoned with fashionable French inscription spaces - appealed to Continental visitors, but likewise conditioned domestic buyers to view the country from the externalised position of a tourist.

Whilst this methodology accounts for some of his audience, another portion may be proposed by way of the burgeoning interest in the picturesque. The final section of this chapter addresses such a theme. In doing so, it establishes that Boydell's prints of the Welsh mountains constituted the first ever views of this region, and displayed the hallmarks of this aesthetic ideal decades before it was accredited with its moniker. Moreover, his engravings generated interest in Celtic sites, and provided an oblique template for Richard Wilson and Thomas Gainsborough to shape their own interpretations of the picturesque. Contrary to charges of ineptitude, such an investigation places Boydell's *Collection* at the forefront of several important developments in British printmaking.

In the last chapter of the thesis, my study focuses upon the reception of Boydell's engraving, and the perception of him as an engraver. Three commonly held beliefs stand above all others in this discourse. These concern the notion that Boydell's printmaking was pedestrian; that he renounced the value of his own work, and that he disregarded engraving the very moment his career in publishing had commenced. By way of combatting these claims, each section was assigned its corresponding falsehood.

The first challenges the accusation that Boydell's labours were insipid and artless. With regard to this goal, I collated the reviews of some significant eighteenth-century commentators. These verify that Boydell's work was both celebrated in British biographies and praised by foreign periodicals. In fact, such is the surfeit of this evidence; it demonstrates beyond any equivocality that Boydell was recognised as a printmaker of considerable repute. This also proves that harmful remarks concerning Boydell's engraving began to circulate long after his death. Having identified that Boydell's criticism was posthumous, it was then a matter of tracing these assumptions to their source in order to scrutinise their validity. My investigation then reveals that the two remaining myths share their origin in a nineteenth-century anecdote written by William Granger.

Granger's anecdote alleges that in 1760 - whilst engraving a print of Coriolanus after Sebastian Concha - John Boydell was so frustrated with his own work that he cut the plate into myriad pieces. This was the act which supposedly triggered his retirement from printmaking, and by fuelling the notion that Boydell's renunciation was elective and flippant, its damage is obvious. Given the parasitic character of the Georgian press, it was also widely parroted. However, I discovered that this very same press shows Granger's sketch to be apocryphal, for a number of English newspapers allude to Boydell's publication of the Coriolanus plate. This is significant, and by rendering Granger's story fallacious, my research then proceeds to establish later instances of Boydell's printmaking. Although Boydell's output waned amidst his growing activities as a publisher, it was far from the point of expiry, and he was still practicing long after the deadline ascribed to him. He created notable plates long after the deadline ascribed to him, and was still practicing a year before his death.

Reports of Boydell's abdication not only jar with evidence of his engraving after 1760, but appear to conflict with the figure that he actively promulgated through his writing and portraiture. This is the focus of my final section. Contrary to popular opinion, my analysis shows that a close reading of Boydell's prose unveils a degree of pride in his printmaking. A number of his own quotes are employed against him, but can be dispelled as contextomy by a holistic survey of his editorial prefaces. This notion is further augmented by the artistic identity which Boydell seems to have coveted. Such an identity may be gleaned from his title in advertising pages, and is made more apparent by the 1772 portrait of Boydell by his nephew, Josiah, in which the terms for his representation intimate a clear desire to be identified as a practitioner of the art of engraving.

My thesis proposes that a level of falsehood has impinged upon the perception of Boydell's work. Such canard has likewise shrouded his person; yet both assumptions are easily expelled. Boydell's case signifies one of the most acute cases of prejudice in British engraving. His prints have been subjected to neglect and falsification, but given that his merits can be conveyed, this argument functions as an emboldening plea to further studies. If a printmaker as historically maligned as Boydell can be said to have contributed to the advance of art, then this work will hopefully serve to instigate a ripple effect, and facilitate accounts of others who are habitually overlooked.

John Boydell, Myth, Eighteenth-century, Printmaking.